

Fax

To: David From: Jane
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• Comments: Big, excellent
speech (yet
another!)

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"Heart of a Woman" Fashion Show and Luncheon Benefit for the Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service

I want to start my comments today by noting exciting things are happening in communities across Oregon. More and more, we are seeing that those best qualified to take care of kids and others who need help are not the bureaucrats in Washington DC, but instead are those right here at home.

And before I say another word, I want to take a minute to recognize the person who put this whole event together.

President George Bush came to Portland a while ago to talk about how individuals can come together — like 1,000 points of light — and make a difference. Debbie Herron was in that audience, and she took his words to heart. She decided that she would step up to the challenge.

Because of her confidence that she COULD make a difference, we have come today as a community to say NO to domestic violence.

Debbie, thank you for making a difference.

Now, let's talk about communities, and why we are better equipped to come up solutions that work.

- **We know what the issues are.** Debbie, for example, has lived in Salem all her life, and knows that the Women's Crisis Service has done a wonderful job in stopping domestic violence.
- Who better to tailor a program to help women and kids than those who know the about the underpinnings of domestic violence and child abuse? Not academics in Washington 3,000 miles away, but people who are on the front lines in the communities.
- **We have the tools to fashion long-term solutions on the local level.**

- We need always to remember that **caring human relationships**, not pre-packaged programs or cookie-cutter projects, strengthen an abused child or that reassure a battered spouse.
- Person-to-person relationships must be made in the **neighborhood**, and cannot be mandated from on high.

That's why every day people, like you and your neighbors, can do a better job of solving problems than a government task force 3,000 miles away.

Now I want to spend a minute to talk about how the individual **CAN** make a difference.

You know, it's funny, when I first started in Congress, people would say to me all the time, "Darlene, you're a freshman, you're in the minority party and you're from a little state. Do you really expect to make a difference?"

I just don't buy that attitude!

At least half the battle is being optimistic, and expecting that your efforts will make a difference. The other half of the battle is to keep to task — hour after hour, day after day.

And I promise you one thing — I am optimistic!

In the past couple of weeks the world has focused on two individuals who made a difference. Mother Teresa, who died owning little more than two dresses and a tattered sweater, affected literally millions of people through her help to the poor. Today the world's leaders are honoring her life and vowing to keep her legacy alive.

Last week Princess Diana was buried, and we saw the outpouring of emotion that is being translated into millions of dollars devoted to charities.

But we don't have to look to Great Britain or India for examples; we have them right here in Salem.

Since I started in Congress I have met so many people who are giving their time and talents to make this a better place. There is no way I could list each person, so let me list just shine the spotlight on a few leader who are going above and beyond to help children:

Marky King at Salem Housing Authority pours her heart into providing children and families not just houses — but homes. Her innovative thinking brings together businesses, schools and recreational facilities together to create environments where families thrive and where gangs and crime don't have a chance.

Lloyd Tolle at the Boys and Girls Club. Stop by there on any weekend and you'll see literally hundreds of kids having fun and engaging with adults who care. Lloyd's message is that human relationships are what help kids through these tough times. He and his board of directors and the legion of adults who volunteer are making real differences in kids' lives.

Randy Lewis at the YMCA is doing the same kind of thing on Court Street in Salem. When the Y says it strengthens children and families, it's not just sloganeering. When I visited there I saw all it does to care for kids, to help with parenting and to keep families happy and intact. Randy, Board President Vicki Berger and the other board members and volunteers are all individuals who are making a difference.

And all the churches in Salem who rally mentors for kids who could use a sympathetic person to help with homework, read stories or just to sit and listen — these folks all make a difference.

And another person who decided to put his money where his mouth is and make a difference to kids: Larry Tokarski, who told me that he made a decision years ago to devote much of his good fortune to helping kids in need. Larry is footing much of the bill to establish a permanent home for kids who would otherwise be shunted from one foster home to another — he is making a difference.

And look around the room.

Every one of you here today has the capability of changing the world.

Each one of you has the power to turn around a life in jeopardy.

I would like each one of us here today to take a minute to reflect on our special talents and think about what commitment we can make to this community

— and then step forward to make a difference!!!