

FOR RELEASE AFTER 6:30 P. M.
WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 1967

Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON UPON RECEIVING
HEAD START CITATION FROM THE CITIZENS' COMMITTEE
FOR CHILDREN OF NEW YORK
HOTEL PIERRE - NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Mr. Mayor, Mrs. Gordon, parents and loving hands of Head Start:

I am deeply honored to be given this Head Start Citation and deeply grateful to this group which has done so much to help the program in New York City.

The President asked me to bring you his grateful thanks for lending hand and heart to this program.

Nothing inspires him so much as to see the results and the progress of the poverty program, and no one knows better than he that its chances of success depend so much on knowledgeable leadership such as yours -- and on action-taking public servants like your Mayor.

Tonight, my mind goes back to a day -- February 3, 1965 -- two years ago, when a small group of us gathered in the Red Room of the White House to talk about the whole concept of the poverty program.

I'll never forget the answer which Anthony Celebreeze -- then the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare -- gave when Sargent Shriver threw out the question, "Will it work?"

It didn't take him long to answer: "You ask if it will work to invest some time and money in the kids of this country? I remember 40 years ago in Cleveland. There was a group of young boys -- out on the streets. They were ripe for trouble. But a young teacher, Miss Jesse Duff, gathered them up and said: "Why don't we have a club?"

So their energy was directed toward basketball, and discussions on civic problems and responsibilities, and for the next few years they met each Tuesday night and called themselves The Teddy Roosevelt Club.

"Today," Secretary Celebreeze continued, "three of those boys are lawyers. One became a doctor, another a general in the army, one is vice president of a large bank, and another became mayor of the city and is a member of the President's Cabinet. And you ask me if it will work?"

That day in the White House ushered in many of the programs which are familiar daily history to you -- the Job Corps, the Community Action programs, and most especially, Head Start.

The sense of excitement we all felt that day has been rewarded with the results.

Head Start more than any other program, shows the results most vividly because this is the time -- with four and five-year olds -- when the cycle of poverty can be broken most effectively. At this age, there is less to be UN-done. And yet, it is at this age that children, unconsciously and innocently, are developing... the pattern of their entire lives. Without their knowledge, decisions are being made for them as to the kind of jobs they will be able to fill in the years ahead, the kind of health they will have, the kind of relationships they will form. These are vital years indeed!

Since the summer of 1965 when the first Head Start children began their medical examinations, take note of the results:

98,000 children with eye defects discovered and treated;

90,000 children with bone and joint disorders discovered and treated;

7,400 children discovered to be mentally retarded and referred for special handling;

2,200 active cases of T. B. discovered and treated;

900,000 dental cases discovered with an average of five cavities per child;

740,000 without vaccinations against polio then immunized by Head Start;

More than 1 million not vaccinated against measles and then immunized by Head Start.

These are only the medical results.

Just how much their correction can dramatically affect one life I saw first-hand in the person of a little Mexican-American boy named "Pancho." So startling is the change in this child that a movie has been made about him, and he came one day last March to the White House to see it.

What a contrast this alert and happy little boy, who couldn't stay out of the bowl of strawberries on the State Dining Room table, was from the apathetic, listless and bloated child we saw in the film!

Pancho's problem--easily treated once discovered--was a severe glandular condition.

It meant that he had to be carried to the bus, that he shrunk from playmates; that he couldn't tolerate sunshine. Treatments were started, and in one year, he grew five and one-half inches, and his I. Q. showed a marked improvement.

Now, the chances are good that he will make a contribution to society rather than be a burden to it.

Multiply this life by 1,400,000, and we know how important it is to release other Panchos from the city ghetto or the loneliness and abandon of Appalachia.

The things I have spoken of have been recognized for many years by the Citizens' Committee for Children here in New York. Their talents, dedication and understanding have paved the way for programs such as Head Start. They offer precious support to people and organizations concerned with the welfare of children of poverty. Their efforts have pointed up one of the oldest truths of mankind -- you don't really own your life until you are able to share it.

Everyone here tonight is pledged to that goal, and this is company in which I am very happy, and very proud to be.

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