

separate Veteran's Corps designed to help veterans meet the needs of their fellow servicemen and women; such as providing programs that help provide education, mentoring, and job training to fellow veterans.

More than 4,400 seniors in Rhode Island contribute their time and talents in one of three Senior Corps programs which will be expanded within the Serve America Act. Foster Grandparents in Rhode Island serve more than 3,200 young people who have special needs. I am pleased that this bill authorizes \$115 million to encourage these efforts not only in my state of Rhode Island, but nationwide. In addition, The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act will allow seniors to earn a \$1,000 education award for 350 hours of service, that may be passed on to their children, foster child or grandchildren.

I am pleased that this bill provides new incentives for middle and high school students to volunteer in their communities, and will allow them to earn up to \$1,000 in education awards to be used for college. The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act will also establish Youth Engagement Zones, a service-learning program to engage low-income high school students and out-of-school youth in volunteer efforts.

In my home state of Rhode Island, programs like YouthBuild Providence will benefit from this important legislation through funding for the recruitment, training and professional development of coordinators for the program. The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act will also increase the number of AmeriCorps volunteers and increase the education reward to \$5,350 for 2010, to match the maximum Pell Grant scholarship award.

Currently, more than 14,000 people of all ages and backgrounds are helping to meet local needs, strengthen communities, and increase civic engagement through 53 national service projects across Rhode Island. This year, the Corporation for National and Community Service will commit more than \$7,300,000 to support Rhode Island communities through national service initiatives.

The benefits that this legislation would bring to our struggling communities, across this country, and in my home state of Rhode Island, are endless.

Like its namesake, this bill dedicates itself toward the promotion of solidarity, selflessness and courage. I will be proud to vote in favor of this bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

HONORING THE VOLUNTEER EFFORTS OF CHEYNE VALENTINE AND PAMELA FAWNS WITH THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARD

HON. DENNY REHBERG

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Mr. REHBERG. Madam Speaker, I rise to congratulate and honor two young students from my district who have achieved national recognition for exemplary volunteer service in their communities. Cheyne Valentine of Bigfork, Montana and Pamela Fawns of Corvallis, Montana, have been named as Montana's top youth volunteers by The 2009 Pru-

dential Spirit of Community Awards program. This is an annual honor conferred on the most impressive student volunteers in each state and the District of Columbia.

Mr. Valentine was nominated by the American Red Cross of Montana in Great Falls, and Pamela was nominated by the Ravalli County 4-H in Hamilton. As State Honorees, each will receive \$1,000, an engraved silver medallion and an all-expenses-paid trip in early May to Washington, D.C., where they will join honorees from each of the other states and District of Columbia for several days of national recognition events. Ten of them will be named America's top youth volunteers for 2009 at that time.

As a member of the American Red Cross of Montana and a senior at Bigfork High School, Cheyne helped spearhead a community campaign that collected \$4,400 to purchase two heart defibrillators for his school and provide CPR training for coaches, after his best friend suffered a heart attack during football practice and later died. When his friend, Jeff, collapsed on the field, Cheyne discovered that school personnel had neither the training nor equipment to deal with such an emergency. "I am certain that if the coach had been trained in CPR and there had been a defibrillator on the field, the outcome for my friend would have been different," he said. Cheyne began seeking donations to pay for two automatic external defibrillators and training for his school's coaches. He and his mother posted 500 fliers, spoke to hundreds of community members and wrote columns and letters to editors of local newspapers. The defibrillators purchased with the donations from the fundraising drive were presented to Bigfork High School in December, 2008. Meanwhile, Cheyne also has begun working to persuade state legislators to pass a law requiring AEDs at all school athletic events and training for all coaches in Montana. "I have started the ball rolling in this community," said Cheyne, "and it will continue until all schools in Montana make these safety changes."

Ms. Fawns, a member of the Ravalli County 4-H and a seventh grader at Valley Oak Academy High School in Corvallis, creates floral arrangements to promote and raise funds for 4-H and other school projects. "I have always had a joy in creating art with flowers because flower arrangements lighten up your mood and can make people feel happy when they are ill or sad," said Pamela, who comes from a long line of horticulturists. To gain more experience in floral design, Pamela persuaded a local florist to let her work as a volunteer intern. After learning first-hand about selecting, processing and arranging flowers, she started to think about ways she could use her skills to raise money for community projects. Through flower sales, Pamela was able to generate funds for a community meal project and new sports equipment for her school. She also realized how effective flowers are in motivating volunteers, so she began making arrangements for adult volunteers in her community. "I recognized that flowers, unlike other gifts, could really have a brightening effect on people's lives," she said.

In light of numerous statistics indicating Americans today are less involved in their communities than they once were, it is vital that we encourage and support the kind of selfless contributions these young citizens have made. People of all ages need to think

more about how we, as individual citizens, can work together at the local level to ensure the health and vitality of our own communities. Young volunteers like Cheyne and Pamela are inspiring examples to all of us, and are among our brightest hopes for a better tomorrow.

The program that brought these young volunteers to our attention—The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards—was created by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1995 to impress upon all youth volunteers that their contributions are critically important and highly valued, and to inspire other young people to follow their example. Over the past 14 years, the program has become the nation's largest youth recognition effort based solely on community service and has honored more than 80,000 young volunteers at the local, state and national level.

Mr. Valentine and Ms. Fawns should be extremely proud to have been singled out from the thousands of dedicated volunteers who participated in this year's program. I heartily applaud both of them for their initiative in seeking to make their communities better places to live. Their actions show that young Americans can—and do—play important roles in our communities.

HONORING JEANNETTE VARELA

HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Jeannette Varela, a successful entrepreneur with a commitment to her community.

Born in Barranquilla, Colombia, Jeannette was the second of eight children. At the age of eighteen, Jeannette left her home country with just thirty dollars and a limited grasp of English. She came to the United States seeking a new life in the "land of opportunity." Jeannette found work in various jobs to make ends meet, eventually working in the heavy equipment industry in Miami, Florida.

She has a heart for helping others, has been recognized for her philanthropic endeavors and is a respected community leader.

As we celebrate Women's History Month, I ask you to join me in honoring Jeannette Varela.

HOMELESS VETERANS RE-INTEGRATION PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 30, 2009

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1171, "Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Reauthorization Act of 2009." I want to thank my colleague Congressman JOHN BOOZMAN of Arkansas for introducing this legislation.

I firmly believe that we should celebrate our veterans after every conflict, and I remain committed, as a Member of Congress, to both

meeting the needs of veterans of previous wars, and to providing a fitting welcome home to those who are now serving. All too many of our veterans are left without the help and support they need to transition from the horrors they bravely face on the front lines of battle to successful civilian life.

H.R. 1171, "Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Reauthorization Act of 2009," reauthorizes, through FY2014, the Department of Veterans Affairs homeless veterans reintegration programs such as job training, counseling, and placement services to expedite the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force. Furthermore, this bill directs the Secretary of Labor to make grants to programs and facilities that provide dedicated services for homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children, and requires grant funds to be used to provide job training, counseling, placement services, and child care services to expedite the reintegration of such veterans into the labor force.

Veterans are some of America's most valued members of society. These are people who served our Nation in a time of need, people who risked their lives to protect our own. Yet, many of these same veterans who fought so bravely and risked so much in lands far abroad have come back to their Nation and are now homeless. The problem of homeless veterans is far more prevalent than we would like to believe. About one-third of the entire adult homeless population has served their country in the Armed Services. On any given day, as many as 250,000 veterans, both male and female, are living on the streets or in shelters, and perhaps twice as many experience homelessness at some point during the course of a year. There are approximately 16,000 homeless veterans spread across the state of Texas.

Many other veterans are considered near homeless or at risk because of their poverty, lack of support from family and friends, and dismal living conditions in cheap hotels or in overcrowded or substandard housing.

This legislation is necessary not only because this problem is so devastating and prevalent, but also because homeless veterans have special needs that are unique from those faced by the rest of the homeless population. Almost all homeless veterans are male, with three percent being female, the vast majority are single, and most come from poor, disadvantaged backgrounds. Homeless veterans tend to be older and more educated than homeless non-veterans. But similar to the general population of homeless adult males, about 45% of homeless veterans suffer from mental illness and slightly more than 70% suffer from alcohol or other drug abuse problems. Roughly 56% are African American or Hispanic.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 1171 helps to address the homeless veteran population by increasing and extending through FY 2014 the authorization of appropriations for homeless assistance to veterans furnished through the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 gives authority to the Department of Veterans Affairs through FY 2014 to make grants to furnish assistance to homeless veterans through: outreach; rehabilitative services; vocational counseling and training; and transitional housing. I hope we will all take the time to show appreciation to those who have answered the call to duty. As Winston Church-

ill famously stated, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

I urge my colleagues to support the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 because this comprehensive program is needed if we are to fight this scourge that is a blight upon our Nation. Our Nation's veterans did not risk their lives abroad so that they could come home and feel a cold shoulder. We must all have outrage that so many of our Nation's veterans live this way, only then can we find a way to correct this injustice.

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE AND
LEGACY OF PEDRO ZAMORA,
WORLD RENOWNED HIV/AIDS ED-
UCATOR AND ACTIVIST

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution that pays tribute to Pedro Zamora, a world renowned educator and activist who moved millions to confront their fears and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community.

Pedro Pablo Zamora y Díaz was born on February 29, 1972, in the outskirts of Havana, Cuba, the eighth and youngest child of a tight-knit family. Like countless others, the Zamora family left Cuba's shores for a better life. And on May 30, 1980, Pedro, his brother, sister, and parents boarded a crowded boat and began the 25-hour treacherous voyage to Hialeah, Florida, a suburb of Miami. Pedro was eight years old.

Five years later, tragedy struck the Zamora family when Pedro lost his beloved mother to skin cancer. The precocious teenager responded by immersing himself in academics and extracurricular activities, becoming an honor student, president of the science club and captain of the cross-country team, and was voted "most intellectual" and "most all around" by his peers.

However, it was Pedro's actions outside of school which changed the course of his life. Struggling with being gay and seeking to fill the void that was created by his mother's death, the 14-year-old honor student began having unprotected sex with multiple men.

Unbeknownst to Pedro, the first Surgeon General's report on HIV/AIDS was issued around the same time. At the height of the Reagan era and the "War on Drugs" another war was being waged against a new disease that was killing an alarming number of people in the gay community and beyond.

Ironically, the Surgeon General's report stated that comprehensive sex education was the most powerful weapon against HIV/AIDS and should begin at the lowest grade possible. The report also mentioned the importance of teaching children about healthy heterosexual and homosexual relationships, and acknowledged that HIV/AIDS had a disproportionate effect among Latinos and blacks.

And yet, this lifesaving message failed to trickle down into many classrooms across the country. The sex education that Pedro Zamora received within his Miami school stigmatized

HIV/AIDS, portrayed homosexuality as shameful, and failed to provide him and other students with a relevant, factual and thorough understanding of HIV/AIDS.

On November 9, 1989, Pedro Zamora received confirmation that he had contracted the HIV virus. He was 17 years old.

Refusing to let the devastating news dampen his spirit, Zamora joined a Miami-based HIV/AIDS resource center called Body Positive, where he met others who were living with HIV/AIDS. A new desire to educate others about AIDS was ignited, and Pedro decided to devote his talents as a thinker and communicator to a career in AIDS education.

Pedro began raising awareness about HIV/AIDS within the Latino community in South Florida. He lectured at schools from the primary to collegial level, churches, community centers, and other venues around the country. He spoke about the need for evidence-based education for preventing and managing HIV/AIDS, forming healthy relationships, de-stigmatizing HIV/AIDS and combating homophobia.

In mid-1993, Pedro Zamora sent his audition tape to the producers of MTV's television reality series *The Real World*. Out of more than 25,000 applicants, he was chosen to live in front of the camera along with six other cast-mates in San Francisco for over four months.

In the following year, Zamora made history on *The Real World* as one of the first openly gay men living with HIV/AIDS featured on a television series in the United States. Pedro's activism, charisma, struggles with HIV/AIDS and relationships were captured on film—including a blossoming romance with Sean Sasser, another man of color living with HIV/AIDS. In another historical first, the two pledged their love to each other in a commitment ceremony on the show.

Soon, Pedro's story and efforts received national attention from *The Wall Street Journal*, *Geraldo*, and *Oprah Winfrey*. But, Pedro had his sights set on Washington, D.C. In 1993, Zamora spoke about living with AIDS as a gay man of color at a Capitol Hill reception, and in 1994, he testified during a Congressional hearing on HIV/AIDS prevention. In the following months, President Bill Clinton and Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala personally recognized and thanked Pedro Zamora for his leadership and work on the AIDS Action Council Board and for humanizing and personalizing those living with HIV/AIDS.

However, this gifted and courageous young man, like many others, was uninsured. And his lack of insurance proved to be as deadly as the virus that was plaguing his body. In August 1994, Pedro Zamora checked into St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City and was diagnosed with a rare and fatal viral inflammation of the brain resulting from a severely suppressed immune system. At the age of 22, Pedro was told that he had three to four months to live.

On November 11, 1994, Pedro Zamora died in the company of his family, partner Sean, and friends. He was buried two days later in Miami Lakes, Florida. Numerous memorial funds and fellowships have been established in Pedro's memory, and in 2008, a film that dramatized his life and legacy was completed.

Madam Speaker, 15 years after Pedro's death, HIV/AIDS has become one of the most