

X THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING A GOOD EDUCATION IS VERY SERIOUS BUSINESS IN OUR SOCIETY TODAY. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT THAN IT'S EVER BEEN. WE ARE IN AN AGE OF TRANSITION. WE STAND ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE 21ST CENTURY, READY TO BE CATAPULTED INTO AN AGE OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY WE NEVER IMAGINED.

THE MOST IMPORTANT INVESTMENT PENNSYLVANIA CAN MAKE IS IN ITS CHILDREN, IT'S STUDENTS. FOR THEY ARE THE FUTURE. YOUNG PEOPLE ARE OUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE. EDUCATED CHILDREN ARE THE KEY TO OUR FUTURE ECONOMIC STRENGTH. LEARNING CREATES THE BRIDGE TO EMPLOYMENT AND OPPORTUNITY.

X IT IS ESSENTIAL TO RECEIVE A BASIC--EDUCATION....TO LEARN THE 3 R'S....BUT THAT'S NOT ENOUGH. WE LIVE IN A VERY COMPLEX AND SPECIALIZED SOCIETY. WE MUST PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE BY GETTING AN EDUCATION IF WE ARE TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN OUR COMMONWEALTH'S, AND OUR COUNTRY'S, PROGRESS.

X EACH OF US HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE..TO MAKE AN IMPROVEMENT IN THIS WORLD. WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE, NOT ONLY FOR OURSELVES, BUT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS AS WELL.

IN ORDER TO MAKE THAT CONTRIBUTION, EACH OF US MUST FIND OUR OWN NICHE. AND EDUCATION HELPS US MOVE TOWARD THAT GOAL. PRESIDENT KENNEDY ONCE SAID: "OUR PROGRESS AS A NATION CAN BE NO SWIFTER THAN OUR PROGRESS IN EDUCATION..THE HUMAN MIND IS OUR FUNDAMENTAL RESOURCE."

EVERYDAY WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW IN EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE. "YOU LEARN SOMETHING NEW EVERY DAY" AND "A MIND IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE" MAY BE WELL-WORN CLICHES, BUT I BELIEVE THEY'RE TRUE. AT LEAST, THEY SHOULD BE. NOT ONLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, BUT FOR ALL PEOPLE.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THOSE OPPORTUNITIES. DON'T LET THEM PASS YOU BY. TOO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE DONE THAT AND THEY END UP STANDING ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN ON LIFE. THEY ARE KNOWN AS "DROPOUTS."

PENNSYLVANIA IS NOT UNAWARE THAT STUDENTS DROP OUT OF SCHOOL YEAR IN, YEAR OUT. THE LEGISLATURE, REALIZING THAT THE LACK OF AN EDUCATION DOOMS OUR YOUNG PEOPLE TO A LIFE OF STRUGGLE AND LACK OF OPPORTUNITY, SETS ASIDE MONEY IN OUR STATE BUDGET TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM. THIS YEAR, JUST AS LAST, \$500,000 IS APPROPRIATED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS WITH HIGH DROPOUT RATES.

LAST YEAR, THERE WERE 13 SUCH PROGRAMS. THIS YEAR, 26 ARE PLANNED UNDER THE PROPOSED 1988-89 STATE BUDGET. CURRENT PROGRAMS WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION SO THAT MORE SCHOOLS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO STATE MONIES IN THE FORM OF GRANTS FOR THIS VERY WORTHWHILE PROJECT. (FYI: STATS--STATE DEPT. OF HUMAN RESOURCES SAYS 10 PERCENT OF WHITE STUDENTS DROPPED OUT IN 1986; 37 PERCENT OF BLACKS--FROM 1986 GRADUATING CLASSES AND NEVER GRADUATED).

IN WHAT OTHER WAYS CAN WE RESPOND TO THIS PROBLEM IN PENNSYLVANIA? WE CAN IMPROVE EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS SO THEY ENJOY GOING TO SCHOOL, ENJOY LEARNING. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO "DISCARD" ANY OF OUR STUDENTS. AND THAT HAPPENS IN MANY WAYS AND FOR MANY REASONS. AND SCHOOLS ARE NOT ALWAYS RESPONSIBLE. THE DROPOUT SYNDROME AFFECTS MANY PEOPLE WHO, IN ESSENCE, GET "LOST IN LIFE" AS THE YEARS DRIFT BY. FOR, IN DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL, THEY DROP OUT OF LIFE IN A SENSE AND NEVER REALLY AMOUNT TO ANYTHING OR EXPERIENCE REAL FULFILLMENT IN LIFE.

ENSURING THAT THE BRIDGE TO OPPORTUNITY AND EMPLOYMENT IS BUILT FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IS A JOINT RESPONSIBILITY. IT INVOLVES PARENTS, TEACHERS AND STUDENTS. IT'S A THREE-WAY PARTNERSHIP THAT SAYS EDUCATION IS A "FAMILY AFFAIR." TOGETHER, WORKING WITH FELLOW STUDENTS AND YOUR PARENTS AND TEACHERS TO BE THE BEST YOU CAN, YOU BECOME PART OF A NETWORK THAT'S FORGING THE FUTURE.

TAKE PART IN THE PARTNERSHIP AND LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR FUTURE WITH A SENSE OF
SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-WORTH, SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU ARE PREPARED, ARMED
WITH A GOOD EDUCATION.