

strengthen and uplift us. Among the most precious of these are our families.

Families come in many forms and sizes. They can number several generations or only one; they can include birth parents and stepparents, foster children and adopted children. Families are created by ties of blood or law, but they are sustained by ties of love and caring.

Few people in our lives will have so profound an effect on us as our family members. From the day we are born, the people who live with us, nurture us, and guide us play a crucial role in shaping the kind of men and women we become. They challenge us to look beyond ourselves and to respect and care for others. At their best, they help us to be our best. Families are the most basic—and the most important—unit of our society.

Recognizing this, we realize that many of our dreams for America begin with strong families. We want to be a caring people, and the lessons of tolerance, sharing, and compassion are best taught in the home. We want to be a peaceful people, and we look to families to teach our young people how to respect one another's differences and resolve disputes without resorting to violence. We want to be wise people, so we need families that value education and acknowledge the importance of lifelong learning.

Nothing is more important to our future than preserving and promoting strong, loving families. This week, as we gather with our own families to celebrate Thanksgiving, let us resolve to do all we can as individuals, and as a Nation to help families who are in need, to provide support and encouragement for troubled families, and to promote policies at the local, State, and Federal level that will help America's families to flourish.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 23 through November 29, 1997, as National Family Week. I call upon Federal, State, and local officials to honor American families with appropriate programs and activities; I encourage educators, community organizations, and religious leaders to celebrate the strength and values we draw from family relationships; and I urge all the people of the United States to reaffirm their family ties and to reach out to others in friendship and goodwill.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7055 of November 22, 1997

National Family Caregivers Week, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

During this season of thanksgiving, when we reflect on the many blessings that have been bestowed on us as individuals and as a Nation, we are espe-

cially grateful for the love of our families and friends. One of the most profound ways in which that love is expressed is through the generous support provided by caregivers to those who need help if they are to remain in their homes and communities.

Caregivers reflect family and community life at its best. Thanks to their efforts, Americans with disabilities and a growing number of elderly Americans are able to stay in familiar surroundings and to maintain their dignity and independence. Caregivers not only enhance the quality of life for those they serve, but also greatly reduce the demands on the formal system of caregiving services in our Nation.

The statistics describing caregivers in America today tell an extraordinary story of generosity and compassion. Nearly one in four households is involved in caring for a relative or other loved one in need, providing a range of assistance from personal care to household help to transportation. Thirty percent of caregivers are caring for two or more people, and 64 percent hold down jobs while providing such care. Caregivers share not only their time, but also their resources, spending some \$2 billion a month of their own assets for groceries, medicine, and other aid.

There is another side to caregiving in America today. Many older relatives now take care of children whose parents, for whatever reason, are no longer able to provide that care themselves. These generous men and women, who in many cases have already raised families and are looking forward to pursuing their own interests in retirement, embrace the challenges of parenting a new generation of young people. They give millions of our most vulnerable youth the opportunity to grow up in stable, loving homes.

These everyday heroes among us deserve our lasting gratitude and respect. This week, as we honor the many contributions that family caregivers make to the quality of our national life, let us resolve to work through our community, religious, social, business, and other organizations to offer programs and services that will provide caregivers the support and encouragement they need to carry out their vital responsibilities.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 23 through November 29, 1997, as National Family Caregivers Week. I call upon Government officials, businesses, communities, educators, volunteers, and all the people of the United States to acknowledge the invaluable efforts of caregivers this week and throughout the year.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON