

HONORING THE CHRIST CHILD SOCIETY OF SOUTH BEND, INDIANA

HON. JOE DONNELLY

of Indiana

in the House of Representatives

Wednesday, July 30, 2008

Mr. DONNELLY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the **Christ Child** Society of South Bend, an all-volunteer organization that has served the community for over 60 years. In 1947, a group of women gathered in the home of founder Puddy Crowley to make baby clothes for a few needy families. Since then, the **Christ Child** Society has grown to a membership of over 500 and a client list of over 4,000 at-risk children and is one of the largest and most active of the 41 chapters in the United States.

The South Bend chapter is an affiliate of the National **Christ Child** Society, founded in 1887 by Mary Virginia Merrick in Washington, DC. An invalid, Miss Merrick turned her attention from her disability to helping the poor children of Washington. For her selfless work she received the Laetare Medal from the University of Notre Dame and the Papal Cross, among other honors, and has been declared a ``Servant of God," the first step toward canonization.

Following the model of Miss Merrick, the South Bend Chapter gives infants, born to needy mothers who are often just children themselves, a bountiful layette containing items such as blankets, clothing and baby items. Children, ages one through twelve, are referred by local agencies, churches, or schools to receive new winter clothing. Each child receives a wardrobe which includes a winter coat, hat, mittens, underwear, socks and shoes, and two outfits.

The **Christ Child** Society expanded its services to include a project that provides backpacks containing necessities and comfort items for children removed from homes due to abuse and neglect. Volunteers from the **Christ Child** Society are tutors and mentors and act as classroom helpers at one of the neediest schools in South Bend. The increased need for clothing and the expansion of services led the **Christ Child** Society to move to its new location, a former school which has been filled to capacity with children's clothing. The dedication of the new clothing center marks a new chapter in the history of this vital and compassionate organization.

The **Christ Child** motto is "Challenging poverty, one child at a time." The dedicated members work tirelessly at purchasing, sorting, and distributing clothes and fundraising while demonstrating genuine love and concern for the children they serve. The self-esteem and joy brought to the children is one step out of the cycle of poverty. So, today, on behalf of the citizens of Indiana's Second District, I honor the members of the **Christ Child** Society of South Bend and extend my hope for a better life to the children they serve.