

Recipient Speech Hitchcock Humanitarian Award

Thank you all for being here tonight, and thanks to the DC Chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation for considering me worthy of the Hitchcock Humanitarian Award. I am honored to receive it, and honored to have the opportunity to speak with you about one of the ways we can help disadvantaged children in our community.

As some of you know, and others are about to find out, I have dedicated much of my life to improving the quality of life for disadvantaged children. Over the past 20 years, I have raised 20 million dollars for children's charities, and I've had the privilege of serving on the Boards of many non-profits. Traditionally, my focus has been on education, on leveling the playing field for all children so they can have an equal shot at a successful and fulfilling life. But my efforts have also included health care for disadvantaged children, because health is a big factor in measuring the quality of every life.

This brings me to the reason I'm here tonight – and it's not just to add another award to my bookshelf (*humor*). (pause) I'm here because the term "disadvantaged" isn't only an economic reference, it also refers to the health of children. (pause) 60 percent of people suffering from CF are kids. They didn't ask for it - they were born with it - and from the day they're born, they must live with it. And that is a serious disadvantage.

When a child is sick, everything about their lives is affected – their playtime, their interactions with other kids, their schooling, and, most importantly, their freedom to dream. It's hard to dream about what you want to be when you grow up if you've got to focus on staying healthy enough TO grow up.

Nobody is to blame for the fact that 30,000 children in this country suffer from CF. What we're born with is an arbitrary matter (pause) but, the help that a child gets from the community in which they live is not an arbitrary matter... it is here that we do have a responsibility towards these children.

When the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation was started, a child born with CF wasn't expected to live much past the age of 5. (pause) Today, nearly 40 percent of people with CF live to be in their thirties. (pause) This didn't just happen by itself. It happened because of the support of the Foundation, and because of the support of people like you.

It's important to understand why our contributions are crucial. You see, relatively few people in America suffer from CF, and so research into cures and medicines haven't been all that popular with the pharmaceutical companies... Why spend millions developing a drug that only 30,000 people will end up using? Not much of a return on their investment, right? (pause) Wrong. That's not the way this Foundation sees it -- And the advances made in treating CF have been mostly thanks to their efforts... their grants. Without the work of the Foundation, who knows, these kids may still have only 5 years.

I've always believed that life can be broken down into two parts, 10 percent is what happens to us, and 90 percent is how we react. (pause) But, I've got to admit, sometimes this just isn't the case. The children who are affected by CF don't easily fit into this equation, for their illness - or "what happens to them" - dominates their lives. And how they deal with their illness - or "their reaction" - is NOT the deciding factor in overcoming this obstacle. They need the help of others, the need to rely on other people's reactions, (pause) Hour reactions. These kids can have a positive attitude, they can do everything they're supposed to do to take care of themselves - but without research and medicines... the things our support provides - their reaction to their illness just isn't enough.

Enhancing the quality of life for children in our community, children who need help so that they can have the same opportunities that so many of us take for granted, is very important to me. Whether in regard to education or health care, it's important because in so many cases, kids just can't help themselves. (pause) And I look at it this way, if we can help these kids to grow into responsible, educated, and healthy adults, the reward is the contributions they will someday make to the communities from which they came. In the long run, they enhance the quality of life in these communities, they give back to them - and it's important to remember that these communities are Hour communities.

Of course, there's another reward, the reward of gratification. I'm not going to kid you, another motivation for helping children in need is also the way it makes me feel. You all know what I mean by this. When we help others, we get to see our money being used in ways that improve the quality of life for all children. And when we give of ourselves in this way, it feels good. It's good for our egos. And that's not a bad thing. (pause) In the end, I think our legacy is more about how much we gave than about how much we made or consumed. (pause) So why not feel good about doing good? It sure beats feeling good about doing nothing.

So, it makes me feel good to be here tonight. It makes me feel good that the work I have done in advancing the cause of quality of life for children has

warranted me the Hitchcock Humanitarian Award. But tonight, for this award, I really do feel that the parents of these children deserve it as much, if not more, than I do. So I accept this award on behalf of all of them.

It is my hope tonight that you will gain from my words, and from my example, a renewed sense of compassion and generosity. We are leaders in our community, and we know the perks of our position, (pause) but we must also recognize the responsibilities that come with it. The responsibility to support those in need, to do what we can – and we can do a lot – to raise the quality of life and to level the playing field for disadvantaged children. It is for them that I make this ongoing request (pause) Give deep... Give... for your contributions to charity really do have the power to lift kids out of poverty and sickness, and to fill their lives with the promise of a better tomorrow.

Thank you.