

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' CHAIRPERSON SPEECH**Dianne McKenna -- JANUARY 15, 1991**

There is an old Chinese curse that says "May you live in interesting times." I don't think the times can get much more interesting!

At the end of 1989 as we welcomed 1990, we celebrated the destruction of the Berlin wall, the political changes in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European Countries, the unification of Germany, and the possibility of a sound economic future.

As we rang in the 1991 New Year, we worried about war in the Middle East -- today is the January 15 deadline. We worried about the reversals in Soviet politics. And we worried about our economy and the effects of the recession. Our national deficit has not improved and our state deficit will impact us at a time when demands in services continue to grow.

We are on a roller coaster of political and personal emotions about the future. "The times they are a-changin'," and changing faster than we can respond.

But we don't have the luxury of not responding to the problems we face at the county level because a non-response can be more hurtful than an incorrect response. Thus we find ourselves making decisions about our local future with few guideposts, and with the hope our assumptions are correct.

Something that we know today that should cause us genuine concern about our future is the condition of our children.

A day in the life of our children shows that...

- * every eight seconds of the school day, a child drops out;**
- * every 26 seconds, a child runs away from home;**
- * every 47 seconds, a child is abused or neglected;**
- * every 67 seconds, a teenager has a baby;**
- * every 7 minutes, a child is arrested for a drug offense;**
- * every 36 minutes a child is killed or injured by a gun; and**
- * every day 135,000 children bring guns to school.**

These are statistics from the October 8th issue of Time magazine. A headline in that same issue reads, "America's legacy to its young people includes bad schools, poor health care, deadly addictions, crushing debts -- and utter indifference."

While our county is facing an extremely difficult budget this year - - with no money to expand services and programs -- we are not going to be indifferent to our children.

In fact, I will ask the Board to adopt a resolution to proclaim this the Year of the Child in Santa Clara County.

- * A year where we examine several major issues facing our children and youth.
- * A year where we recognize members of the community who have contributed significantly to children's lives.
- * A year where we expand our collaborative efforts among all sectors of society on behalf of kids.
- * A year where we evaluate our current resource allocations in light of short and long term improvements for the condition of children.
- * A year where we say that our future depends on how we respond to our children today.

To celebrate the Year of the Child in our county, I would like to expand some efforts that already are underway, and to initiate some new efforts.

Unfortunately, studies indicate that people who work with children receive lower salaries and less respect than other professionals. This year I will ask the Board to recognize an individual or organization with the new County Gold Medal for their contributions to children and youth.

I will begin the program by selecting someone from District 5 in February, and then will move to District 4 in March, District 3 in April and so on until at the end of the year the Board will have recognized at least 10 individuals from throughout the county. We will pursue local press coverage for the individuals or organizations chosen.

Additionally, you may notice a blue piece of paper attached to the agenda this week.

It is a calendar for the month of January that calls attention to the legislation, programs, and conferences intended to improve the condition of children. A similar calendar will be attached to the agenda for the first meeting of each month. Important community information about children's programs can be added to the calendar with a phone call to my office.

Also, I have asked our Office of Budget Analysis to prepare a Children's Budget this year.

To find the services the county provides to children you would need to go through the Social Services Agency budget, the Health Department and Valley Medical Center budgets, and the Law and Justice budget, as well as some others. Children's needs do not fit neatly into departmental categories.

A children's budget is designed to cut across individual county departments and target the most pressing unmet needs of children in the county. Thus, a Children's Budget is a necessary first step in initiating a comprehensive planning approach for children. It is also a clear policy statement that the county desires to make children a fiscal priority.

An issue for children and youth that needs our immediate attention involves adolescents.

Within the last three decades, adolescents are the only age group in the U.S. that did not experience an improvement in their health status. This period saw an increase in the rates of substance abuse, homicide, suicide and accidents which are the primary cause of juvenile mortality.

Adolescent pregnancy and parenting is widely recognized by children's advocates as one of the critical problems jeopardizing America's future generation. In 1988 one out of every 28 girls in Santa Clara County between the ages of 10 and 19 had a baby.

- * We know that pregnancy is the number one reason that girls drop out of school.
- * We know that teens have higher risk pregnancies and are less likely to receive adequate prenatal care.
- * We know that two-thirds of teen mothers with children are poor, and that over 50% of welfare expenditures are for families started by teens.
- * We know that poverty is associated with the majority of disadvantages for children which can have a lifelong impact.

Over the past several years, the county's health, public health, and social services agencies initiated studies and new programs for pregnant teens. Our Public Health Bureau assumed the leadership role in coordinating and developing a strategy to address the problem.

However, the county is not the only one dealing with this issue -- and we can not solve it alone.

Therefore, I would like to establish a Teen Pregnancy Task Force to review the studies and to make recommendations to the Board for a plan of action to help reduce unintended teen pregnancy in our county. I believe that Task Force should include broad-based representation from the public, private, and non-profit sectors, and should accomplish its work by fall.

In addition to these new efforts we will continue our ongoing programs on behalf of children. The Board of Trustees of the New Children's Shelter Fund raised \$10 million of the \$12 million needed to build a new children's shelter for the abused, neglected and exploited children in our county. Our goal is to complete the drive this year so we can break ground in the spring of 1992.

I participate with business and community leaders on a Public-Private effort called Kids in Common. Our goals include :

- * Being a link between kids who need help and those who want to help kids.**
- * Being an advocate to kids and for kids with existing and potential providers of help — the public, private and non-profit sectors.**
- * Helping the community understand the needs of kids and how individuals and organizations can help.**
- * Using the information gathered about programs for kids to develop or expand collaborative efforts among the public, private, and non-profit sectors.**

We plan to develop an action plan for collaborative efforts this year.

And, the county's Children and Youth Services' Joint Conference Committee will be exploring ways to develop an integrated system of care for children and their families. Currently we are developing a common screening instrument for county departments, and we hope to test this new intake tool at mid-year.

Of course other members of the Board have demonstrated their commitment to children and youth.

- * Supervisor Lofgren is known for her work at the state and local level to gain funding for children's programs and her special interest in mental health services.**
- * Supervisor Honda's background is in the field of education, and he has already indicated his desire to work at the county level for kids.**
- * Supervisor Gonzales serves on the Children and Youth Services Joint Conference Committee, and his work with the Social Services Agency to recruit foster parents is well known.**
- * Supervisor Diridon works with teachers, social service providers, and non-profit organizations to increase opportunities for kids.**

This Board may not have the money to expand children and youth programs, but one thing is certain -- our valley's children will not suffer from indifference.

While children are our focus this year, there are other issues I also want to see tended to.

The first is establishing a Local Government Task Force made up of representatives of the county, cities, school districts, special districts, and the state legislature to develop a proposal for stable local government funding.

The state witnessed a \$3.6 billion shortfall in fiscal year 1990-91. This translated into a \$16 million cut in state revenues to Santa Clara County. However, in the waning hours of the last legislative session the state passed a bill that authorizes counties to charge property tax administration fees to schools, cities and special districts to make up for the shortfall in state funding. As a consequence, one local government is pitted against another for valuable resources, and it means that the people we jointly serve are the ones who will suffer.

The latest news from Sacramento is that the 1991-92 fiscal year budget will see a \$6-8 billion shortfall. This could mean even greater cuts, conflict, and competition at the local level. We can't let that happen!

I have talked to representatives from cities and school districts, and they are willing to work together on this issue. I have talked to our state representatives and they are willing to work with us on this issue and provide the necessary staff to help us find a solution to this problem.

I believe the opportunity exists now for us to come together, to learn about our individual fiscal realities, to examine the existing complex fiscal structure, to work with members of the legislature, and to develop recommendations for reforming local government finance that are stable, fair, and properly finance the services taxpayers expect of local governments.

Second, in light of the growing world concern about the environment and the need for energy and water conservation, I would like the county to expand its leadership in this area. The county initiated a number of programs to protect the environment:

- *A policy regarding the purchase of products that contain chlorofluorocarbons.**
- *A recycling program for white paper, computer paper, and cardboard boxes.**
- *A pilot program to recycle aluminum, glass and newsprint.**
- *A program that `reclaims and recycles all air conditioner freon from county fleet cars.**
- *A plan that met its 25% water conservation allotment.**

I know that time and resources have limited our ability to expand these efforts. Yet, I think it is time to review our practices and programs to determine if changes are needed in light of increasing environmental or conservation concerns.

Santa Clara County owns or manages approximately 160 facilities which include; parks, office, medical, correctional, and transportation buildings. I think we need an audit of the facilities to determine:

- 1) If our facilities meet existing federal, state, and local environmental regulations.**
- 2) What voluntary environmental or conservation programs are already in place.**
- 3) Identify any new programs or practices that would be beneficial and cost-effective to implement.**
- 4) Develop a program to recognize the accomplishments of county employees in initiating, developing or implementing environmental or conservation programs.**

Another concern of mine that I know is shared by the Board and the Administration is that although we are located here in the technology capital of the world, the county is not taking full advantage of the knowledge and resources of the private sector. We are using antiquated telephone and information systems due in large part to our budget constraints. However, I am not convinced that we are using the resources available in the community and the opportunity to incrementally build a system to meet our informational needs.

In speaking to the Executive Director of the Santa Clara County Manufacturing Group, Gary Burke expressed his support and willingness to participate on the county's Technology Committee. I think it might also be appropriate to ask for the Manufacturing Group's participation on the county's Information Systems Technical Committee (ISTC).

Supervisor Gonzales chairs the Technology Committee and I discussed this briefly with him. He agrees that he would like to see industry become more involved in our efforts and he has additional ideas about how we can move forward in this arena. I am turning this task over to Supervisor Gonzales and the Technology Committee of the Board to reconstitute itself and to develop a work plan for the future.

There are two other issues that began in the last two years that are important to mention because of their potential impact on the future of the county.

The first is the Strategic Vision Program led by Supervisor Lofgren. The Strategic Vision Steering Committee recently published its first report called "Alternative Futures: Trends and Choices." This report describes our county's changing environment, documenting diverse trends and issues that vary in their impact on the community and on County government both now and in the future.

The second phase, which begins this year, will bring together leaders from business, finance, real estate, media, health care, education and community organizations for the purpose of developing solutions to the most critical issues affecting the county's future. Those who participate in this effort will help create some basic strategies to guide decision-making in the areas of the local economy, health care, quality -of-life, the work force, and family life. This important process will have a long-term impact on our valley.

Second, 1991 will bring about the first substantive review of our County's General Plan since it was last reviewed and adopted in 1980. This phase of the General Plan Review will proceed with a 23-member General Plan Advisory Committee representing a broad range of community perspectives and interests. I will serve as Chair of this committee and Supervisor Honda will serve as Vice-Chair. This process will help determine our land use and growth pattern for the next decade.

I believe that 1991 is going to test us as individuals and as members of public sector. Are we going to find solutions to our problems by building collaborative efforts, by sound fiscal and long-range planning efforts, and by competing effectively?

The answer to this question lies in the remarks of Bobby Kennedy: He said...

Our future may lie beyond our vision but it is not completely beyond our control. It is the shaping impulse of America that is neither fate, nor chance, nor the irreversible tides of history that determine our destiny as individuals or as a people. Rather, it is reason, and it is principle, and it is the work of our own hands.

The year is ahead of us to apply our reason, our principles, and our own hands!

That concludes my remarks; however, I would like you to see a brief slide show that will kick off the Year of the Child in Santa Clara County. I want to thank Kathy Price of Lighthouse Media for putting the slides, music and program together, Shirley Fisher for doing most of the photography, and Mike Gibeau from the Mayor's Office, as well as Sandra Pieper and Ken Din from Valley Medical Center, for additional slides. Thank you all for your help.