

Chili Affair Remarks by JMR September 14, 2001

Welcome to the 15th annual Chili Affair of Travelers Aid Society. My name is Jonathan Ruga and, as Matt mentioned, I am the President of the Board of Trustees of Traveler's Aid. Let me first sincerely thank you all for coming. This is our largest fund raising event – I mean party – of the year, and it is so good to see such participation in and support of our continuing effort to help people that are experiencing homelessness. I would like to especially thank our many sponsors, particularly American Express and Wells Fargo, as well as the organizing committee and our many other volunteers, with whose kindness and generosity this grand event is made possible.

Tonight we attend this function under a cloud of sadness. The events of last Tuesday morning have profoundly and forever affected each and every one of us, and have shaken our country to its very core. But we are Americans, and that means many very special things. It means that we come together and support one another in times of need. It means that we care for the injured, comfort those who have lost loved ones, and assuage the fears of our children who need to know that it is still safe to live in America. It means that we immediately assume the task of cleaning up the aftermath of the senseless destruction, of rebuilding that which has been destroyed, and of working closely together to build a better future. It also means that we don't allow atrocities and tragedies to inhibit the performance of our other worthy responsibilities – like those falling under the umbrella of Travelers Aid. At Travelers Aid, our mission is to help those in our community experiencing homelessness to transition back into our community as productive citizens, good employees, and worthy parents. We do that by (i) providing shelter, (ii) providing extensive case management services, (iii) collaborating with other service providers involved in the homelessness arena, and (iv) educating our community about and advocating for those experiencing homelessness. We live in a world where there is both monumental good and unspeakable evil. But as our president has recently stated in response to the incomprehensible acts of terrorism, GOOD WILL PREVAIL. That becomes so apparent when I look around this room and see so many people willing to give of their time and money to those less fortunate in our community. I feel and know, as each of you feels and knows, that it is a privilege to be an American, and it is a privilege to be associated with the good work of Travelers Aid.

Once again, on behalf of Travelers Aid and our community as a whole, I thank you for your demonstrable support.

Before I turn the time over to Mr. Minkevitch, I would like to have two very special children assist me in lighting two candles in recognition of today as the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance [Ashlyn and Sydney, would you please come up here]: the first candle, is a special tribute to our fellow Americans who have suffered such devastating losses this week, and who remain in our thoughts and prayers, and the second, is a symbol of the beacon of freedom and the light of democracy and hope for which our great country stands. Although we as a nation have suffered greatly from the unthinkable acts of violence, we will recover from this trauma; and from the ashes of disaster, we will emerge a stronger, more caring, and even more united people.

At this time I have the pleasure of introducing Mr. Matt Minkevitch, who has been the Executive Director of Travelers Aid for almost one year. Since his first day, Matt has immersed himself in all facets of our organization and, through his extreme commitment and relentless effort to help others, has accomplished a great deal in a short time. But, as he has told me on so many occasions, there is still much more to do. Please let me turn the time over to Matt Minkevitch. Matt.

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