

Speech for W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Welcome to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's *Able to Play* seminar. I'm so excited to be here to welcome you on behalf of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. You represent remarkable communities from across the state of Michigan, communities that are committed to positive changes that address the critical needs of all citizens. What makes your presence at this seminar so important and so inspiring is that you are here on behalf of your children -- children who without your interest, your passion and your energy would never experience the joy, camaraderie and essential learning opportunities that may now be literally beyond their reach.

I am referring to children with disabilities, children with the same needs as able-bodied children -- for fresh air, exercise, acceptance and valuable learning experiences. Children who have the need, no the *right*, to a place where loud voices are not just tolerated but encouraged and exuberance is the norm, not the exception. A place where a physical challenge represents a chance to succeed and an opportunity to strengthen both the body and the mind.

That place is someplace as simple as a playground, but not just any playground, but a playground where children with different physical abilities can play together, grow together, learn together and develop together, side-by-side with friends and family.

We are all here today because we understand the power of play and the significant life-long benefits that come from integrating children with disabilities into the mainstream of their community. It is well documented that when children with disabilities are segregated they suffer damage that may set the stage for a lifetime of discrimination. As advocates, policymakers and leaders in your communities you recognize the value of the individual to the collective, which is why you are here today.

At the W.K. Kellogg Foundation we also understand that wisdom and that is why we are so proud to be partnering with you in the *Able to Play* initiative. I can't think of a better way to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and its mission, "*to help people help themselves through the practical application of knowledge and resources to improve their quality of life and that of future generations.*"

In 20 communities across Michigan, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation has helped build playgrounds where all children are Able to Play. But there is so much more to do, that is why we are so pleased to be part of the statewide campaign to help Michigan communities build integrated, universally accessible playgrounds. Our partnership ensures that children of all abilities reap the benefits of playing, learning and developing together so that each individual achieves their potential and all children in your community and mine are valued.

Thank you and welcome to the *Able to Play* seminar.