



National Awareness Week for Children With Cancer, 1989

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Cancer causes more than 10 percent of all deaths among children in the United States between the ages of 1 and 14. It is second only to accidents as the leading cause of death in this age group.

Families confronted by the specter of childhood cancer face one of the most difficult experiences they will ever know. These families both need and deserve the best medical and emotional support we can provide; some may need considerable financial help as well. Every family touched by childhood cancer needs the patience and understanding of its friends, neighbors, teachers, and clergy. Parents need the support and compassion of their employers, and brothers and sisters of young cancer victims need special attention—not only at home, but also at school.

Fortunately, dramatic progress has been made in the early diagnosis and treatment of childhood cancers. The number of children who die from cancer has declined by approximately one-third since 1973—a significant change over a relatively short span of time. The number of children who survive even such serious forms of cancer as Hodgkin's disease, acute lymphocytic leukemia, Wilms' tumor, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma has increased markedly since 1960.

Many private sector organizations and government agencies have been responsible for our Nation's progress in the fight against childhood cancer. The National Cancer Institute (NCI), part of the Department of Health and Human Services, is the Federal Government's principal agency for cancer research. Members of the NCI's Pediatric Branch and pediatric oncologists at universities and research institutes throughout the country are working tirelessly to develop improved methods for diagnosing and treating children with cancer.

Scores of other national and local health care organizations and charitable associations play a vital role in supporting such cancer research. These organizations also help young patients and their parents cope with the emotional and financial stress caused by cancer treatment, and their efforts deserve our praise and support. Through the generosity of these groups, children suffering from cancer may be able to spend time at a special summer camp or realize a heartfelt dream; they and their parents may receive free air travel for treatment; or parents may benefit from low-cost lodging while their children obtain care far from home. Across the United States, concerned Americans have rallied to help young cancer patients and their families by founding and supporting wonderful programs like these.

Nevertheless, we still face many challenges in the fight against childhood cancer. Scientific research and advances in medicine and technology have improved our ability to detect and treat the disease, but current methods must be refined and new ones must be explored. We also must continue to support rehabilitation programs, which are particularly important for young victims of the disease. Work of this kind can help bring hope and healing to all cancer patients.

This week, we pause to recognize in a special way the brave children and their parents who struggle against cancer. We also salute the physicians and scientists who are leading research into the disease, as well as the thousands of private organizations and individual Americans who are dedicated to serving young victims and their families.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim the week beginning October 15, 1989, as National Awareness Week for Children with Cancer. I invite the Governors of the States, Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa, and the Mayor of the District of Columbia to provide for the observance of this week. I also ask the people of the United States—in particular, health care professionals, educators, and concerned community groups—to join in reaffirming publicly our Nation's commitment to controlling childhood cancer.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourteenth.

George Bush