

"WHY JOIN A SCHOOL IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS"

FOR YEARS AMERICAN CORPORATIONS HAVE CONTRIBUTED HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS ANNUALLY TO INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING. CORPORATE SUPPORT OF OUR UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES THROUGH A VARIETY OF GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS PROGRAMS HAS BEEN -- AND STILL IS -- GOOD BUSINESS,

HOWEVER, IN RECENT DECADES OUR SYSTEM OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION HAS BEEN ROCKED BY CRISIS AFTER CRISIS. WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF ONE RIGHT NOW. THE ACCUMULATIVE EFFECTS ARE ALL TOO APPARENT. THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LIFE THAT OUR CHILDREN EXPERIENCE FROM THE ELEMENTARY GRADES THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL HAS SUFFERED. IF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAN'T TURN OUT WORK-READY OR COLLEGE BOUND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES, THEN THE BASIC SOURCE OF STRENGTH AND STABILITY FOR OUR NATION -- OUR YOUNG PEOPLE -- IS IN JEOPARDY.

IF IT IS GOOD BUSINESS FOR CORPORATE AMERICA TO SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION THEN HOW CAN WE IN BUSINESS IGNORE THE CRISIS OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

I AM NOT SUGGESTING THAT THE PRIVATE SECTOR SHOULD BEAR MORE OF THE FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THAN IT. NOW DOES FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS -- THIS IS A RESPONSIBILITY SHARED BY US ALL BUT, CORPORATIONS CAN HELP -- WITHIN THE PRACTICAL CONSTRAINTS OF TIME AND MONEY -- IN NEW AND CREATIVE WAYS SUCH AS JOIN-A-SCHOOL. AND WE OWE IT TO OURSELVES TO PURSUE THIS OPPORTUNITY WITH DEDICATION AND VIGOR.

THE CASE THAT CHANCELLOR MACCHIAROLA AND JOE CALIFANO MAKE FOR JOIN-A-SCHOOL IS VERY PERSUASIVE. CAN A MODEST AMOUNT OF CORPORATE VOLUNTARISM, INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT HELP PROPEL THE FACULTY AND STUDENT BODY OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL TO HIGHER LEVELS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT? WE THINK SO. WE ARE COMMITTED TO GIVING IT OUR BEST TRY.

AMERICAN CAN IS DELIGHTED TO JOIN WITH EQUITABLE LIFE, MANUFACTURERS HANOVER TRUST AND IBM IN HELPING TO LAUNCH THE NEW YORK CITY JOIN A SCHOOL PROGRAM. WE, AND THOSE OTHER CORPORATIONS WHO JOIN THE PROGRAM IN THE YEARS TO COME, WILL EACH PURSUE OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH A HIGH SCHOOL IN OUR OWN SEPARATE WAYS. EACH HIGH SCHOOL IS DIFFERENT; EACH CORPORATION IS DIFFERENT. SO, EACH PARTNERSHIP WILL BE UNIQUE. BUT THE MESSAGE WE WISH TO SEND IS THE SAME -- WE CARE ABOUT OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS -- THE STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND COMMUNITIES. WE WANT TO HELP.

OUR PARTNERSHIP IS WITH AN EXCELLENT SCHOOL -- MARTIN LUTHER KING HIGH SCHOOL. WE HAVE ORGANIZED OUR PARTNERSHIP AROUND THREE GOALS: IMPROVED TEACHER MORALE, IMPROVED STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND A BETTER COMMUNITY IMAGE FOR THE SCHOOL. WORKING WITH STUDENTS AND FACULTY, WE NOW HAVE MORE THAN A DOZEN PROJECTS ALREADY UNDERWAY TO HELP ATTAIN THESE GOALS.

WE CANNOT PROVE SUCCESS OVERNIGHT, NOR IS IT OUR INTENTION TO TRY. OUR COMMITMENT TO THIS PROCESS IS LONG TERM.

LET ME REEMPHASIZE THAT WE DID NOT ENTER JOIN-A-SCHOOL TO SUBSTITUTE CORPORATE FUNDS FOR PUBLIC FUNDS. IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO MISINTERPRET THE BENEFITS OF THIS VERY FINE JOINA`SCHOOL CONCEPT IN SUCH A WAY AS TO JUSTIFY REDUCTIONS IN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION.

I AM OPPOSED TO CUTBACKS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING. SUPPORT OF OUR SYSTEM OF PUBLIC EDUCATION REMAINS A KEY RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT. IT IS AN ESSENTIAL COMMITMENT WHICH MUST BE FULFILLED.

THE JOIN-A`SCHOOL PROGRAM IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR BUSINESS TO ENRICH THE PUBLIC EDUCATION EXPERIENCE. IT ALLOWS US TO MAKE A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE PUBLIC GOOD. WE ARE ALSO LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM, AND THIS PROCESS IS AN IMPORTANT REMINDER OF JUST HOW CRITICAL GOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE TO THE FUTURE OF OUR NATION. THIS IS ALL THE MORE REASON WHY JOINA`SCHOOL IS A GOOD INVESTMENT FOR AMERICAN CAN OR ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

I FULLY EXPECT CHANCELLOR MACCHIAROLA TO ATTRACT AT LEAST 106 OTHER CORPORATIONS TO JOIN THE CITY'S OTHER 106 PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS, AND BECAUSE I THINK JOIN-A-SCHOOL IS "GOOD BUSINESS" I INTEND TO HELP HIM IN THIS EFFORT AS BEST I CAN.