

AMCHP Conference 2009

**A Vision for Transforming our Public Health and Healthcare System
to Better Serve America's Women, Children, and Families**

February 20-27 2009

MIKE FRASER: I just wanted to make sure she got down all right.

Well, good evening. Thank you all for being here. We usually start bright and early on Monday morning, but this year we decided we're going to start on Sunday night so we can have a little party afterwards, which Nan will be hosting our open bar downstairs [Laughter]. No, I'm just kidding. We're going to have a great party for everybody after our opening session, and Nan will tell you a little bit about that as we move forward.

We have quite a group here. I think we were looking at registration numbers. We haven't had this many preregistration since 2004 at our AMCHP conference, so congratulations, and thank you [Applause]. Because I was really concerned it was just going to be me and a couple other folks giving all the horror stories that we're hearing about travel restrictions and budget constraints. I think it's wonderful that you all made that extra effort to be here,

and we really, really do appreciate it, appreciate your commitment, and what we can do together is so powerful.

We're so glad that you're here. I want to acknowledge our planning committee. The list of our AMCHP conference planning committee is on page 59 of your conference brochure, 59-page conference brochure. It's actually longer than that. So there's lots to do over the next few days.

It has been an incredible year as AMCHP's CEO, and we have a wonderfully dedicated and inspired board of directors, we have an engaged and talented staff. And I'm not going to go through all the highlights that we've done, but there is a year in review document in your conference bag that summarizes some of our highlights and successes and challenges over the past year, so I urge you to take a look at that.

You and I and all of us are in Washington at a great time of change, and there's a lot of new energy, and there's a lot of hope. But there's also a lot of anxiety. We don't know where the economy is going to go. We have huge expectations of our elected officials, and policymakers are continuing to debate how to best solve our country's problems. But despite all the change that we've seen in Washington, the work that you do to improve

the health of women and children in your states and in your communities has never been more important.

Title V was born in times like these. Title V was rooted in the Great Depression, rooted in the New Deal and the Social Security Act in 1935, and here we are, almost 75 years later, living through what some are calling the modern Great Depression and calling for a new New Deal. And so where are we going to go next? What is going to happen to maternal and child health in this new era?

The signs are mixed. The budgets are tight. The resources are scarce. People are scared. And I don't think we can meet the challenges that we face today using only the solutions that we've depended upon in the past. Our MCH traditions have served us very, very well, but the past is a place of reference, not of residence.

And for us to move MCH forward, we're going to need to try a lot of new strategies, develop a lot of new techniques, and employ a lot of new tactics. And so doing things the same way that we've always done them and expecting different results is the definition of insanity. Doing things differently is going to allow us to explore some new opportunities,

to innovate and to create and hopefully bring us opportunities that we can seize very, very, very soon.

And that's what this conference is all about. What are the opportunities that we have for the future, and how can we bring together new thinking to old problems.

At the conference last year I had a quote, a slide, that said "The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it but that our aim is too low and we reach it." And so over the past year AMCHP has aimed really, really high. We have renewed our advocacy efforts for Title V, we've made major headway in our legislative work, we have completely engaged our program staff in everything we do to make sure that they are providing tools and resources to improve the work that you do in your states, and we've reconnected with partners, with family leaders, with other friends of Title Vs to have a much more inclusive, broader agenda for maternal and child health. And we've made some great strides this year, but we have a lot to do.

I had lunch today with a group of new directors, new Title V directors, and some Title V mentors and some members of our board, and we had fortune cookies for desert. And I cracked mine open, and my fortune was -- and this is no joke, I have it in my room if you

want to see it -- "Determination will get you through this." Determination will get you through this. And I'm thinking, through this lunch, through this conference?

But I really think it's about this new era of MCH. And that's not just my fortune, it's all of our fortunes in this room, because, as I said before, Washington, we are in a great time of change. There's a lot of new energy, there's a lot of new hope, but there's a lot of new anxiety, and I think we need to use that energy and use that hope and, yes, even use that anxiety to launch us forward.

Some say that success occurs when opportunity meets preparation. Opportunity meets preparation. And that's what this conference is for us. It's our preparation to seize on these opportunities so that we can enjoy success in the very near future. We can't do that by ourselves. We need all of us in this room to commit to that and to help us move forward as we seize these new opportunities and we launch MCH in this new era here in Washington and across our country.

So with that, let me invite Nan back to the stage to introduce our next guest. Thank you very much for being with us tonight.