

ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY NOV. 16, 2005 A.D.

Thank you, Bill and Ann (Craven), for chairing tonight Good Counsel's 9th Annual Awards Celebration. Thanks Kevin McCullough for being a friend and bringing us together on the air at WMCA and here at the Metropolitan Club.

I just want to add another word about Wellington Mara. I was with Chris Godfrey, Super Bowl XXI lineman, the other night, who remarked how much of a fan Well was. A fan is not only a supporter, but a promoter and in a certain sense a player of the game. Well was certainly that when it came to the Life issues. He gathered others to the cause and promoted the protection of Life and that came through to anyone who knew him.

Tonight is truly a gathering of friends, of partners for life, of those who want to spread and defend a Culture of Life. I always fear I won't even be able to say hello to everyone. I have to thank each and everyone of you for making the effort to come and making this another wonderful, successful night for our moms and their babies.

We are here at the Metropolitan Club again thanks to a dear friend who always comes through, Gill DiLucia a long-time personal friend of both Fr. Benedict's and Good Counsel. Of our corporate chairs present, who give so much in support and encouragement let me point out Robert Cavalero, President of Catholic Books Publishing.

How are our moms and babies doing?

In addition to individual and group counseling, individual and group training in Personal Finance, Health, Nutrition and other Life Skills, we are using more technology. Women are going on line every day being tested for their educational and vocational abilities, as well as looking for work and doing their school work. We like to measure these achievements and grade the mothers and grade ourselves on how well they're doing. We always see room for improvement in both areas. What we can't measure is the conversion of hearts and minds and souls.

Last year I spoke of one Good Counsel mom came to us alone, told not to have her child because the baby would be sickly and die soon after birth. She was strongly encouraged to abort by so-called friends, doctors, nurses, social workers. It's not uncommon at all, regardless of one's economic background, to get the same advice when doctors think there's something wrong with the pregnancy. She gave birth. Her son was very, very sick. He was moved from intensive care unit into another.

Finally her son died. He was buried and sent back to God with many prayers and tears.

This mom showed much maturity in her young years and Sr. Mona O'Connell, who cannot be with us tonight due to eye surgery, saw great potential in her. Sr. Mona hired her as one of our assistant house managers. Today she's been working in this field nearly 7 years. Good Counsel has four other mothers working with us today, too in other areas.

She was married last month and continues to work helping mothers and babies and sees herself as an example for other mothers to follow.

Last year at this time, a mom walked into our Harrison home for special needs with a 10 year drug habit. Ten years of getting high, blackouts, Promiscuous behavior to feed her habit. Night brings no relief as cravings never stop. She never thought her gruesome life could be any different.

This is how Carol described her life when she first came to us.

Then she became pregnant. She couldn't believe that after all she'd done to her body, that she could actually conceive. This conceived child broke a whirlwind of failure and despair. She knew this baby must be special. How else could it have been conceived? She worried about what harm may have already come to her baby. She was fearful, but she decided that she was going to raise this child, whatever it took.

Many would tell her that the child shouldn't be born. Others would look and see that there was no hope for any kind of life for either mother or child. No one else could take her in with her 10-year drug habit.

She needed a place where she could get help. Our Daystar program is specifically designed for pregnant, addicted mothers. I don't think Carol even knew that when she called Good Counsel. But God is good, for those who seek, *do* find.

She was grateful for this haven and willingly did her chores, took her turn cooking dinners and went to 12-step meetings every day. "One day at a time" became her life-saving motto. Amazingly, her pre-natal care showed no worrisome signs, even though she was prepared for the worst. Still, she could never quite shake the fear that something must be wrong with her baby.

Carol gave birth to a healthy and quite beautiful baby boy this past spring. She has gone to work as a veterinarian's assistant. She moved out to her own apartment.

Recently she's come back to our home, not only to visit and to say she's doing well, but most of all to ask if she could speak with any moms who might be struggling to recover as well. "I'd like to be a mentor to anyone you think needs me," she said. Taking another step higher, she's giving back what she's received.

Today she's speaking with a mom, just like her. She's offering support and sympathy. She's offering hope and helping another mom heal. Isn't God good?

We've all been given and forgiven much. You show that by being here, by spreading the good news about Good Counsel. You show that by your prayers. Knowing there are many, too many, young, single, pregnant mothers in need, I knew, we all know, that Good Counsel needs to reach more, to help more.

I thought we needed someone with corporate experience. I didn't know how or what could be done, but I knew it was beyond my ken. It still is. John Beck and Dick Reeder, didn't come along at the same time, but it's interesting to note that they are both converts to the Catholic faith and in all things always were learners. They are committed pro-life men, two rescuers in fact, they're prayerful, leaders, dedicated men of the Church, faithful and constructively critical.

John had 34 years at IBM before taking early retirement.

In 1993 John Beck, whom I knew from pro-life parish work asked if I knew if there might be more meaningful work he could get involved in. I don't think he nor I would have ever expected how far this would take us.

He not only can express complex problems simply, he can offer a solution all on one page.

And it's not just that John is never satisfied because he sees room for improvement, but he's an example that he sees room for improvement in himself and by example works on himself and others to improve. It's an honor, a great help and truly a blessing to work with John Beck.

John's bride of 47 years is with us here: Jane, and their two children John Jr. and Barbara along with their spouses. As a small token of appreciation and esteem we have the Good Counsel Reflection Award for John.

Dick Reeder spent 32 years with Exxon as a mechanical engineer and in management. Dick was always seeking perfection in the spiritual life as well as the material world. He showed us how to ask for and extend forgiveness for the imperfections in saw in himself and others.

It was at the time of our First Annual Awards Celebration, which was at the Union League Club, when Dick and I were speaking about our need for a Development position. Before the end of 1997, Dick became our first Director of Development. He said the only way he could do this was with a good data base and ours wasn't.

More importantly, his mission was to spread the Good News and speaking about Good Counsel was a way to offer a blessing. A blessing to do good for God's children.

Dick's dear bride of 43 years, Sheila, who always attended all our events along with Dick and has worked as hard as anyone doing anything we need is with us along with Tom and Lizzie Strauss two of their four wonderful children.

Sheila, as a small token of appreciation and esteem we have the Good Counsel Reflection Award for Dick.