

**Speech: Mrs. Carter Launch of RCI Korea, March 22, 2010**

I am very pleased to be with you. Jimmy and I have visited Korea a number of times. Our last visit was in 2001 when we worked side-by-side with homeowners and volunteers to build Habitat for Humanity homes. We built in Asan and several other communities; we even built homes in the DMZ. We have developed deep respect for your country, your people and your culture.

Today I am pleased to be back to launch the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving in Korea.

I know firsthand the demands of caregiving. When I was 12 years old, my father became terminally ill with leukemia. I was one of four children, and as the oldest and a daughter, I helped my 34-year-old mother. Not long after my father died, my grandmother died unexpectedly, and my grandfather came to live with us. He was 70 and lived to be 94, bedridden the last few years of his life.

More recently, I have witnessed the importance of caregiving as Jimmy's mother, brother, and two sisters struggled with terminal cancer. All of them died since we came home from the White House. I have had plenty of opportunities to appreciate the many dimensions of caregiving.

My experiences and involvement with issues of caring and caregiving led me to establish The Rosalynn Carter Institute at Georgia Southwestern State University, when almost no one was working on these

issues. The Institute is dedicated to improving the caregiving process. We work with professionals and family caregivers to increase their skills in caring and in working together.

As I've traveled throughout my country speaking about caregiving, person after person has stepped forward to tell me their own stories. So many people giving care to their loved ones feel isolated, lonely, inadequate, despairing, not knowing where to turn for help...Caregivers are often under enormous stress.

One man caring for his wife with terminal illness said, "I cry, but I don't let her see me." Another, a young woman, said, "Even when friends call, they always ask me how he is, my ill husband. They never ask how I'm doing." A woman caring for her elderly, infirm father told me she actually ran away one afternoon and checked into a hotel but soon returned, feeling desolate that she had even contemplated abandoning her father.

At a time when more and more Americans are called on to give care, it is critically important that we do all we can to support both family and professional caregivers...and this is not just an American problem, it is a global one.

The challenge we face is that along with the blessing of longer life expectancy comes higher rates of chronic illness, disability and need for care. Research shows that 30% of those over 80 years of age require daily assistance to remain at home, and that group is the fastest growing segment of the population globally. In both Korea and the United States,

**families will provide the largest percentage of care; up to 80% for seniors and people of all ages with disabilities.**

**Across nearly every culture, family caregiving is a universal, time-honored, and frequently cherished obligation. Yet, the demands often take a toll on caregivers' financial security, their job security, and their health.**

**Caregiving today is more challenging than in the past; it is likely to be of longer duration and involve more difficult responsibilities; family caregivers now are often performing tasks that only skilled nurses did just a decade ago.**

**With these challenges comes the need for leadership, and particularly for leadership in education. Most family caregivers are unprepared for the roles they will assume, and there is a lack of support from government and the private sector for training family caregivers. Through education, we can develop leaders who understand the challenges of caregiving, and we can help equip families and professionals with the tools they need for the demanding roles they will assume.**

**Today, we celebrate an important partnership that promises to make knowledge of caregiving more widely available in Korea.**

**This partnership between RCI and TCUK will put valuable information in the hands of family caregivers, social service and health care professionals, and government and agency leaders. And thanks to technology, caregivers can learn at home.**

**At RCI, we have worked for more than twenty years to better understand and support the work of family and professional caregivers. In this project, RCI and TCUK will work together to develop new curricula that will be taught both in the United States and in South Korea. The curriculum will build on our experiences of teaching in the United States. Each course will integrate a cross-cultural perspective, so that the entire curriculum approaches “caregiving” as a global challenge. We believe this will be the first international curriculum in caregiving.**

**The partnership we begin today is one further step forward in supporting family and professional caregivers, and we are pleased to be entering into this partnership with TCUK. I am confident it will have a significant impact in both your country and mine. Thank you.**