

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 929

By Massey

A RESOLUTION to commemorate September 9, 2024, as "Sara O'Meara Day" in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we should salute those citizens who, through their extraordinary efforts, have distinguished themselves as community leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy person is Sara O'Meara, who, for sixty-five years, has honorably devoted her time and talents to ensuring the utmost safety of children, fighting against child neglect and abuse; and

WHEREAS, born in Knoxville on September 9, 1934, Sara O'Meara was born Sara Buckner; she attended Briarcliff Junior College in New York, Endicott College in Massachusetts, the Sorbonne in France, and Pasadena Playhouse in California; and

WHEREAS, a distinguished leader in her community and abroad, Ms. O'Meara has served on several boards for international organizations concerned with child welfare; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, while on a government-sponsored goodwill tour to support troops in Tokyo, Japan, Ms. O'Meara helped found Childhelp, an organization founded to support eleven Japanese-American children who were found wandering the streets and unable to get into an orphanage because of their mixed heritage; and

WHEREAS, within three weeks, the organization grew from supporting eleven children to one hundred children, and for the past sixty-four years, more than twelve million children have been helped through the organization's efforts; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, Sara O'Meara, along with co-founder Yvonne Fedderson, launched the nation's first Child Abuse Hotline, which has received more than two million calls since its inception forty-one years ago; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Ms. O'Meara has received several awards for her support, including the Arizona Foundation for Women's Sandra Day O'Connor Award; the Clarins USA Most Dynamic Woman of the Year Award; the United States Department of Justice Award, presented by President Ronald Reagan; the Kiwanis World Service Medal; an award from the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs; the National Caring Award; the Hubert Humphrey Memorial Award; and the Lifetime Achievement Award, presented at the National Charity Awards Dinner; and

WHEREAS, she was part of an international collaboration to prevent child abuse, which was presented by Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom; and

WHEREAS, additionally, Sara O'Meara, along with her Child Abuse Hotline co-founder Yvonne Fedderson, has been nominated four times for the Nobel Peace Prize, a most befitting honor that recognizes her dedication to community service and a more peaceful world; and

WHEREAS, with an immense love for her hometown of Knoxville, Ms. O'Meara helped launch one of Tennessee's first Child Advocacy Centers in Knoxville in 1995, and in 2000, she played an important role in implementing therapeutic foster care services; she also worked alongside former Governor Phil Bredesen to pass one of the first laws to mandate a child advocacy center in every judicial district, putting Tennessee among the nation's leaders in child abuse services; and

WHEREAS, highly regarded and sought after for her expertise, Sara O'Meara oversaw the launch of several new programs, including the Mental Health Clinic, which serves an average of 207 children each week; the Relative Care Program, which serves nearly 500 children; and Speak Up, Be Safe, a prevention program for East Tennessee communities, which will serve more than 9,500 children in 2023 and more than 12,000 children in 2024; and

WHEREAS, Ms. O'Meara is a devoted civic leader who truly epitomizes the spirit and commitment that are characteristic of a true Tennessean, and she should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby recognize and honor Sara O'Meara for sixty-five years of astute service in preventing child abuse and neglect, and in honor of her ninetieth birthday, we join our fellow Tennesseans in commemorating September 9, 2024, as "Sara O'Meara Day" to honor and celebrate Ms. O'Meara for her invaluable service to communities across the nation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.