

**Conference: 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Grassroots Conference — Health  
Action 2005: Closing Plenary  
January 29, 2005**

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**MALE SPEAKER:** The next health action conference, Health Action 2006 mark your calendars is January 26 to 28<sup>th</sup>. We want you all there so please think of coming. We hope you enjoyed this. Before I introduce some folks I do want to reintroduce our prodigal son. Our prodigal son has returned. I don't even have to mention his name and people are applauding. For those few of you who have been asleep the last few years, it is Jeff Kerrs. Jeff is the only person I know that he wasn't even here and people applauded for him yesterday and it is kind of strange for me to be doing these announcements because Jeff would be doing these announcements so it is a great pleasure to have Jeff back.

Before we get started I want to recognize a few people who made this conference possible. Since Jeff left two years ago we actually took a raffle on the staff as to who would organize the conferences in the future. The first prize was they would organize the next conference and second prize was they would organize the next two conferences. The winner of the second prize was Peggy Denker. One of the reasons that it was logical to have Peggy do it is because she has no other responsibilities. The people who are laughing the loudest are the Families USA staff who know all of our publications run through Peggy's shop that she leads. She manages our website and all of our electronic communications and we did have one or

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two publications over the course of the last year. Is that right? Despite all of that, Peggy with grace and a little cajoling of the staff did a marvelous job. There is nobody who could have done it better. It is really a thrill. Peggy will get a raise. Don't worry. That is because the rest of the staff works pro-bono. Please give a really of all of the applause I don't care whether it was for Hilary, Barack Obama, or John Kerry or you are going to give to Joe Trippi in a moment, please give really strongest round of applause to Peggy Denker. It is the third time in the conference I can say I am pretty popular.

There are several other people who really need to be mentioned because of their outstanding work and I have to immediately go to Regina Wise. All of you I think know Regina. Regina is right over here. She is grandma Wise on our staff. She is both a grandma and she is very wise. If we did not have Regina on the staff, we would have to clone or invent her. Regina oversees all the nitty-gritty details. She keeps track of the millions of details that goes into putting in a conference like this. She does it with warmth and affection and she is going to be—we just signed a contract with Regina for the next twenty-five years and she got a bonus. She is actually allergic to flowers.

Next I want to introduce Ellen Tupps. Ellen is actually, believe it or not, is not on our staff and yet she

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has been working this conference for the last six years. Ellen has done all the key things dealing with the hotel, dealing with the set-up, and badgering each one of us to get our job done. She does this with aplomb. She is now part of the extended family of Families USA. Please give her a warm round of applause to Ellen Tupps.

Next I want to introduce someone who had the nerve to get me on the dance floor last night and she cuts a mean figure on the dance floor. Marian Whittaker oversaw the registration process of the conference work and worked closely hand-in-hand with Regina and with Peggy and with Ellen. We could not have done this thing without Marian. She is just wonderful. I think she has now been two years on the staff and she has added so much to our operations. Please give a warm round of applause to Marian.

I've got two more people. I wanted to especially thank Nancy Magill. All the stuff you see. The materials, the design, the layout - in fact all of the materials that Families USA does goes to the thoughtful, creative hands of Nancy Magill. She is a great singer too if you heard her last night. Nancy is just the greatest pleasure to work with and she means so much to us in terms of the conference and our overall work. Give a warm round of applause to Nancy Magill.

The last person I want to single out is a person who is not formally on our staff. She is an intern on our staff and

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she undertook what all of you I am sure you know by leafing through it is an incredible task and that is putting together this ballominus toolkit that I was told this year that only three people had a hernia picking it up. Danielle Huff took this task on this year and she did it with unusual grace with a great deal of pressure. Due to her work all of these materials will be online Monday and she is taking care of all the URLs. I don't even know what URLs are so please give a warm round of applause to Danielle Huff. By the way, the staff is giving me a cactus. That gives you a sense of what they thing. What I would like to do is I would like the Families USA staff to stand up. Every single person on the Families USA staff helps to make this possible. They develop the workshops. They work with the speakers. They do the clean up later. They really, among all the different things like finding the Medicaid cut backs and preparing for implementation of Medicare all of the things that we have been talking about substantively, they somehow find the time to work on this conference. So I would like to ask the Families USA staff to stand up. It is truly a blessing to work with this staff. I have the great pleasure to introduce somebody that I only got to know two months ago. Truth be told on November 4<sup>th</sup> two days after not exactly D-Day I was supposed to fly to California and I was walking around at Dulles airport in a daze. I knew I needed something to pick me up and I went to the bookshop. Normally, the bookshop doesn't

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have the best material but thankfully right in the front I saw this thing on the head on the lead title "The Revolution will not be Televised". I have to say Daniela, our Communications Director, and our two spouses and I went to see a movie about a year ago. It was a movie called the *Revolution will not be Televised*. It is about the attempted coup in Venezuela and so the title caught my eye. It has a longer title. The subtitle is "Democracy, the Internet and the Overthrow of Everything." That was one heck of a title and it caught my attention. Then I saw Joe Trippi's name under it. I didn't know Joe but I read about Joe in so many different ways and had been a distant admirer of his work. He is a genius and I said this is going to pick me up. Sure enough I could not put down this book and by the way I get no commissions for saying this. I want that to be clear. Joe is going to have a book signing outside. We have a whole bunch of books. Please read this book. It will make a real difference in all of the work we do. The book tells us obviously about things about the Howard Dean campaign and whether Howard Dean was your top choice, as a candidate makes no difference. You have to say that may have been the most remarkable campaign of the presidential election history and Joe ran that campaign. I have to say he got a little bit of help including this beautiful person seated just to the right of Phil Villers, Kathy Lash who worked in that campaign. If you read Joe's book you will know what a heroin throughout

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the campaign. I don't think I have seen such a warm effervescent smile that Kathy has in such a long time but when you read about her in the book, Joe actually treats her pretty well in the book, you will see what a remarkable person she is.

Let me give you a little background about Joe and I will close with something about his book. Joe was heralded on the cover of the *New Republic* as the man who reinvented campaigning. He started his career working on the political campaign of Ted Kennedy when he ran for president in 1980. He has worked on a lot of presidentials, which is not exactly the best choice for keeping up your health. Isn't that right Joe? Did I get that right? Things like the Walter Mondale, Gary Hart, Dick Gephardt, Howard Dean and then for relaxation he runs campaigns for governors and senators. That is how he recuperates. He works on these inconsequential campaigns that determines who is in the Congress and in State Houses. In 2004, of course, Joe was the National Campaign Manager for Howard Dean's presidential campaign pioneering the use of online technology to organize what became the largest grassroots movement in presidential politics. Through Joe's innovative use of the Internet for small donor fundraising, Dean for American campaign ended up raising more money than any Democratic presidential campaign in history. All with donations averaging less than \$100 each. Lest you think that effort was all about fundraising, of course, that is not true.

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You know that all the (inaudible) that took place and all the different ways that people across the country were empowered to help in the campaign and Joe was the genius along with some wonderful people on his staff to make this happen. The reason I wanted Joe to come here and was really was thrilled that he took the time in between conversations with Tony Blair, but not about campaigning and not about Iraq, it is about trying to push better health care system in the UK is that in Joe's book, you not only read very rich antidotes of what happened in the Dean campaign but Joe has a theory that the Dean campaign showed so clearly about how current technology can empower the building of movement. I think that is a lesson all of us need to learn. It is a lesson we at Families USA are learning from Joe and his associates. We hope in the next few months we will be announcing a major enterprise together. I would love to have you hear to speak and that is why we've invited him here today. Please give a warm round of applause to Joe Trippi.

**JOE TRIPPI:** I am a little confused because Ron has left me a little note up here. It says, "Thanks for that introduction Ron. You are an awesome dancer." Seriously, it is here. Anyway I really appreciate the opportunity and Ron's invitation to speak today and all the work that Families USA and all of you have done and continue to do every day to be a voice for affordable health care for all and how important that is. I wanted to talk to help sort of think through what I

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think is a seed change in what is happening not just in our politics but in our society. If we understand and grasp that seed change is about how we harness it to get health care for everyone in this country. We are not in the information age. You need to erase that concept out of your memory banks. It is the wrong way to think about where we are. We are in the age of empowerment at the very first steps in that age. The best way to explain this to you is that we live in a top-down society. The corporations are top-down; the government is top-down, our parties are top-down. Just about everything in this society is top-down command and control kind of entity. In a top-down society information is power and there are some really weird consequences of that that happen as an information power society starts calcifying. Institutions start doing really weird things like the FBI does not share its information about Al-Qaida cells in the United States with the CIA because if they keep that information and they are the ones who tell the president about it, they are the most powerful security in the United States. The CIA doesn't do the same thing. You start seeing these things actually happen throughout government and corporations throughout the country. The problem or the solution or at least what is happening is if information is power and the Internet distributes information equally and democratically to everyone who has access to it, then it is not distributing information anymore. It can't be. If information

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is power and the Internet is distributing information then the Internet is distributing power. The cool part is that it is distributing power to the bottom in a top-down society and that is giving power to the bottom to change this country in amazing ways. The first sign of this is not the Dean campaign. The first sign is a thing called Napster. A bunch of kids and folks out there who were upset with the top-down recording industry was trying to feed them music and used the power of the Internet to wreak havoc on a top-down recording industry. Napster may have lost or they like to say it lost but the fact is the distribution of music has been changed forever because of how people came together to share that power. The Dean campaign was a bunch of people at the bottom to reek havoc on a political system that has failed the American people and this is going to affect everything. It is wide. For instance, Dan Rather is no longer the anchor at CBS News. It is why four producers who produced the segment where they questioned President Bush's service in the National Guard using documents that weren't real. It was, again, in this instance the collective power of people on the right using the Internet to expose that falsehood and have it spread in 12 hours to mainstream media and that is why probably one of the most well-known and respected news anchors in American history is no longer anchoring and why what have been considered some of the best producers at the top of that network are gone. Now the

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issue is that is what is going on and it is going to happen across every part of our society. There is no putting that genie back in the bottle. What we have to do is realize in our community that we have this amazing tool. This amazing tool that lets us use the power collectively at the bottom to actually change the health care system in this country. That is how it will have to be done. Every major social change, whether civil rights, women's rights was a movement. We now have the tools to build a new movement and to build it much quicker.

The Dean campaign started with 432 known supporters nationwide. We had seven national staff people and we had \$98,000 in the bank. That is what we started with. Thirteen months later it was 650,000 people and \$59,000,000 and one of the most amazing grassroots movements in presidential history. That is now within the power of the health care community. People who are concerned about health care want to build a movement. We have that power to do this. We finally have the tools to do this. By the way, I want to explain a little bit about how it happened. There is a reason it is happening now. Television kind of ruined everything. It was the Nixon-Sheppard speech kind of like you know - the guy is in trouble - Ike Eisenhower tells him he is going to boot him off the ticket because Nixon's been caught with his hand in the cookie jar and all these people are giving him money and bags of cash of stuff

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and jewelry. Nixon asks Ike if he can go on television and talk to the American people. Ike says sure if you do all right you can stay on. So just for anybody who wasn't around, Nixon looks into the camera and says, "You know I want to talk about this with you because I want to tell you they are all bashing me for all these lobbyists and things. I just want to tell you about one of them. This crate came up from a lobbyist in Texas and when we opened up that crate because we were curious. When we opened it up there was this little bitty white and black spotted puppy. It was the cutest little puppy did see. Well, Trisha picked up that puppy and she named it Checkers. You know the girls just loved that puppy. I don't care what they say about those lobbyists. We aren't sending Checkers back." America teared up. America was at home teared up and just like that in an instant bullshit had its own medium. So that is what and with that medium what happened was it became a huge (inaudible) buying TV ads both parties nuking each other getting people not to vote because this is such a negative mess. Which got less people to vote, which meant you had to spend more money on television nuking each other. That is the cycle we have been in. Along the way the American people became convinced that they as individuals couldn't make a difference. That is the sorry state of what television did and the cycle of politics did to us. What the Dean campaign was about and what the Internet is about is basically being able to

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say to 432 people, "We know you don't think you can make a difference and you know your \$25 and four hours work in the neighborhood talking about health care against all that money that is out there and all the lobbyists you are right. You can't make a difference. But if all 432 of you go out tomorrow morning and get \$25 or go talk for four hours in your neighborhood about health care and get one more person to care, we can change everything." What happened in the Dean campaign was we went from just telling people that we went from 432 people to 10,000 people in a month to 159,000 by June. People talking to each other. Actually believing and learning as they did it that gee those people in the Dean campaign are right. My \$25 by itself I don't know but look at all of us doing this. If we all do this together we can change anything and we did change the political system. Not enough, but we made the first step. The most interesting thing about the campaign was the seven days in June where we told people for seven days in their email that we were at 99,000 people and we said to them, "Look. Close your eyes. Just close your eyes and if every single one of the 99,000 people sends in \$25, \$30, or \$10 or \$50 when we all wake up on the final day one week from now on the final day of the filing period, we will shock this country. But, you all have to close your eyes and do it." Well, 50,000 of them did it. That is the quarter that we had \$7.6 million come in and had more money than John Kerry, John Edwards. NBC, ABC, CBS,

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the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times* and the *LA Times* said banner headlines "Howard Dean breaks record in quarter." Amazing things. 100,000 people - all that stuff. The interesting thing with the 50,000 people who did it sent us email saying, "I knew you guys were right. I knew we could do it. I did close my eyes." That wasn't the important thing. The important thing was getting emails from the 49,000 people who didn't do it because those emails and comments were. I knew I should have done it. It worked and I believe now and the next time you do this I am going to be there for you. That is why every time we did something we woke up a whole bunch of Americans that they could do something too.

So, I want to talk for a second about what this really is about and I have to say I did not know this. It never would have hit me this way. The Neil Abercrombie, the congressman from Hawaii, comes into my office one day, midway through the campaign. He is all excited. He has this kind of eureka moment going on. He is like Joe do you understand what you are doing here and I went yeah we are running a this cool Internet kind of grassroots community campaign for president. He looks at me like I am an idiot, which I can sometimes be and he says, "No, this is about Americans having faith in strangers again." I am like what are you talking about. He goes, "Joe, think about it. What American in their right mind is going to go out and put on a telephone pole, I am Joe Trippi. I live at 1313

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Elm Street. Here is my phone number. Here is my address. Come to my house. Let's talk about health care or let's talk about Dean for president. Or let's talk about the future of our country. Who would put that up and have perfect strangers come to their house? No one." We are triple locking our doors, no way. We are looking at the news at night and we know we are not going to do anything like that. So he goes that is what people are doing. We have these get local tools on our website that say I am having this thing at my house at 1313 Elm Street. Please come, and forty strangers would show up at the person's house. Forty strangers would actually get together and talk about what was going on in this country and decide together that they were going to go next week leaflet this or phone that or raise [inaudible] coffee or something and then they would leave. I will tell you what is the most amazing thing about this was not just the great American conversation that was going on at 170,000 homes in this country, which is pretty amazing thing. The most amazing thing and the thing that startled us was that once everybody left the host went back into her house and the jewelry was still in the jewelry box, the silverware was still in the silver drawer, and the china was still in the china cabinet. The American people were good and it is about having faith in strangers again. How this happened was some people or companies out there have to get a lot of credit out there for this. For this to happen companies

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like IBM and Apple had to get a machine in everybody's house and the ISP had to get everybody hooked up. Whether you like these companies or not it had to happen. AOL, Amazon and Ebay had to get people to use their credit cards and realize the book was going to show up a couple of days later and that you are going to get what you paid for. No one is going to steal your identity. One of the companies that actually if you think about this as building this is Ebay. Ebay really helped build this trust. We have now 145 million Americans out there who know that when Joe with a baseball in California, they trust them that they send them the \$10 and the baseball actually comes. I understand there all kinds of fraud and a lot of things but there are real companies out there that broke this barrier that then allowed the Dean campaign this era of empowerment to exist. That is where we are at today.

I want to tell you where I came up with this and where it hit me. It was in 19—and why I feel so strongly about this and why I feel so positively about what we are able to do today if we start to build it together. It was in 1995 and I had about ten minutes on the Internet a day. I would read my email. I would go to a news site like CNN.com and look at the news and then there were three or four minutes that was Joe Trippi's away from the rest of the world reading what he wanted to read. That was a motley fool bulletin board for a company called THQ. The Motley Fool, first of all is a stock trading

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bulletin board. You need to know that. I am kind of disgusted with myself too. Then to get a little bit more disgusted THQ was a company that makes games for Game boy, Play Station, and X-Box, and yes, I enjoy playing those games and that is why I hung out on the board. So, there was a guy on this board. Thousands of people would post on this board things about the company. Things about the latest games but we all kind of knew each other and we all had our favorite people to read. One of mine and a lot of other people on the board was a guy named David Haynes. David went missing for five days. I mean just this guy was posting three or four times a day and all of a sudden for five days nothing. Everybody is up in arms. We need to read our David Haynes and where is he. Five days later he comes on and says I am really sorry I was missing. My wife just gave birth to our first child, a baby boy named Christian. It was an unbelievable experience. I can't believe it. It is life changing and by the way this last game by THQ really sucks. So, he would for two years I would come on that board and as soon as I got on that board I would look through things and see if David was there. If he posted I would read it. I learned that he was an amateur tri-athlete that never won a race that he ever entered and the next game sucked too. Then I learned he had a dog named Bruin, a cat Sophie, and this THQ game is pretty good. Eighteen months later with everyone else on the board that his wife had given birth to a daughter.

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Three months after the daughter was born someone came on the board and said I have really tragic news. David Haynes died today of a massive heart attack at age thirty-one. This was 1995. What hit me was how all of a sudden thousands of people across this country started to eulogize David Haynes on this board as if he was their best friend. It dawned on me that I knew more and they knew more about David Haynes than his next-door neighbors knew about him. The next thing that happened was that someone came on and said we are his friends.

Christian is eighteen months old. His daughter is three months old. Should we start an education fund for his children? It was an amazing thing. Somebody opened up a bank account and thousands and thousands of Americans started sending money to this guy for his family. It hit me right then and there if a community like that could self organize itself for something as dumb as a game station game company why can't you do that to get health care for every American to change and strengthen our democracy or to elect a president of the United States or to build a campaign and a community to do that? So, that is what we have to build. It is about Americans caring about each other. They want to do something to make a difference. They have been taught for way to long that they can't. We have the power in this room to start the process of telling them that they can, and if they band together in a community who cares about each other and has a common purpose of achieving health

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care for every American, we can build a movement using these tools. It can be done. I know it can be done. I saw it happen on a Motley Fool board that had nothing to do. The company didn't know we existed and Motley Fool didn't know we existed. We came together on our own. Right now across this country the fastest growing group at (inaudible). com is single moms. Single moms on their own are coming together on the first Wednesday of every month and communicating around this country. The talk about how they deal with that. How they deal with working two or three jobs because they are all on their own raising this family. People want to do something, and we have the infrastructure and technology now to do it. What I close on is when our founders wrote the constitution Jefferson and Madison had, when you read a lot of the Federalist papers, they were concerned about one thing. They were worried that the constitution of the United States was not strong enough to deal with the moment they feared the most. The moment Jefferson and Madison feared the most was they believe in capitalism. They believed in it. They thought it was the greatest engine ever and would sustain this nation for generation and generation, but they believed too every cell in their body that capitalism had to be subservient to democracy. It could not be the other way around that if democracy ever became subservient to capitalism, capitalism would devour everything in its way. They feared the moment when economic

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power would seek to grasp political power in this nation. That to me is where we are today. We are living our founder's worst nightmare, but I will also tell you something really bizarre. I am reading this stuff and Madison says - I mean they basically throw their hands up - all we can do is give the people the right to vote and pray that when this happens they are able to do something about it. Madison actually writes a really interesting passage that his hope that when that moment comes that the American people will develop tools to spread the knowledge that it is happening and that those tools will empower them to prevent it. I am thinking that this guy is 17 something. How did he know the Internet would be around in 2005? I think Madison is right. We have that tool. That we have to spread the word. It is our duty and responsibility to build a movement together to give and empower the American people to change the health care system for themselves. That is how you change America. The American people change it and we have to get the word and the tools out to enough of them to join our cause and carry us on their shoulders to get the health care that they deserve and we desperately need in this nation. So thank you very much, [inaudible]

**MALE SPEAKER:** You were worried about speaking in the same program with Hilary and Barack and John Kerry? You were fabulous. Thank you so much.

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