

**The original documents are located in Box 44, folder “Retarded Children” of the Betty Ford White House Papers, 1973-1977 at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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## MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Mrs. Ford's interest in the mentally retarded developed after her first visit to the Hospital for Sick Children. Her heart just went out to these children as it was shocking to her to see these children just left in this hospital and so helpless. She had worked with the blind and handicapped but not the mentally retarded. She felt as if she wanted to be a foster parent or do something for these children. Therefore she decided she would do everything she could to building up their image and publicity and to bring attention of the public to this situation which she thought was so tragic. She felt great empathy because she was blessed with four perfectly healthy and normal children. Her interest grew after this visit because she has learned a great deal about them for reading, observing and listening to the trainees at the Hospital for Sick Children. She now knows that the sooner they get a child the better results they will have. She saw two little boys who were brothers--the older one you would think would be doing much better than the younger but the ~~ik~~ older one was not doing nearly as well. The quicker they can start working with these children, the better the opportunity to advance the potential they have. Her heart went out to them when seeing them try to walk, crawl or talk. And the sad part is that most of these children are not wanted by their families--so many try to hide them. They don't ever go to visit them. "They are the forgotten children." "Somebody's got to help them. Her mother made a tremendous influence on her life as she had always worked with crippled children, but that is



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quite different--They are accepted by our society and have a chance to work, etc. For some of the mentally retarded, just getting out hello in a drawl is a major accomplishment. The wonderful thing about the trainees at the hospital is that they always seem to have hope that these children through a miracle will be able to learn and be self-sufficient. One little boy they had taught [redacted] to walk and after that you just couldn't keep him quiet. She had the greatest respect for those that work with the children, and although she is unable to at least she would like to raise money of something to help them.

