

**DEA Action Administrator Tim Shea's Remarks at DEA/USPS Drug Free USA Stamp
Dedication Ceremony
October 27, 2020**

(Remarks as prepared for delivery)

Initial welcome at beginning of ceremony:

On behalf of the nearly 10,000 men and women of the Drug Enforcement Administration that are serving today across the United States and in nearly 70 countries around the world, I want to welcome the United States Postal Service, and all of you watching via livestream, to DEA Headquarters and this important event to dedicate a new first class postage stamp. This event is the first we've hosted since our renovation so I'm thrilled to have you all here.

Formal remarks later in ceremony:

Thank you Chief Postal Inspector Gary Barksdale,

Welcome to the unveiling of the newest United States postage stamp, which encourages all Americans to live drug-free.

It's no coincidence that we are unveiling this stamp during Red Ribbon Week, which started in 1985. That's the year when DEA Special Agent Kiki Camarena was tortured and killed by Mexican drug dealers. High school students in Agent Camarena's hometown started the first Camarena Club. They wore red ribbons to honor him and fight back. This was the beginning of the largest, longest-running drug abuse prevention campaign in America--ever.

Lots of things have changed since 1985 ... the rise of the opioid crisis, of course, but also the recent resurgence of cocaine, methamphetamine, and other synthetic drugs. In fact, in 2018 alone, an average of 184 Americans *a day* died from drug overdoses.

And lately, we've also seen the close connection between violence in our communities and drug trafficking. I've always felt that those who say drug trafficking is a non-violent offense are just wrong. Traffickers are flooding our communities with lethal drugs, violent gang activity, and high rates of assault, robberies, and murder.

But since 1985, one thing hasn't changed: Our mission. We continue to actively prevent drug abuse in the first place, to compassionately help those in the grip of addiction, and to relentlessly enforce the law against those who prey on the innocent.

One way to accomplish that mission is to encourage all Americans--especially young people--to take the Red Ribbon pledge that you just heard from Miss America, Camille Shrier. I invite you to join millions of other Americans who have promised to do three things:

- To lead a safe, healthy, and drug-free life by understanding the dangers of drug use and abuse.
- To respect ourselves and be drug free.
- And to spread the word to family and friends about the importance of being healthy and drug free.

That's why the Red Ribbon pledge is so important--because each of us can have a direct impact on the health and safety of our communities by staying drug free. Community outreach and drug abuse prevention programs mean fewer fallen agents like Special Agent Camarena and fewer victims of drug trafficking and abuse.

Throughout the month of October--but really all year long--people all over America make the decision to wear a red ribbon that honors the call to courageous service others have made ... and the promise we ourselves make to lead a courageous, drug-free life. And now with this drug free forever stamp, we can continue to raise awareness about drug abuse and what each of us can do to stop it.

Together, we've made great strides since Agent Camarena's death, but we still have a long way to go. We cannot do it alone--and so we are honored to partner with the U.S. Postal Service today, to bring our message of hope and courage to all Americans ... for a better, stronger, drug-free America.

Thank you very much.