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SICK PENGUIN HARBINGER OF A HEALTHY FUTURE- FOR THE REST OF US

A new year is upon us and it is probably safe to say that not many of us are sad to see 2009 draw to a close. We are a nation at war that has serious economic woes, and are facing some critical issues, including health-care. Despite all of the bleakness, I am optimistic, and it is because of a penguin.

Many of you will have read about the penguin at Newport Aquarium that has cancer, and is being treated with the help of donations, including donated rides to and from his treatment clinic in a refrigerated truck. (Newport Aquarium, by the way, is a fine institution, but is for profit.)

Why does our sick penguin friend make me optimistic for tomorrow? It's simple really. You see, I figure if we can come together to help the penguin get over its cancer, surely we can come together to ensure that the most needy in our communities get adequate health-care? I know that there must be plenty of people in Northern Kentucky with cancer in desperate need of treatment and financial help, but they did not make the front page of the Enquirer. Not one of them. And yet, I have hope that our penguin friend is a symbol of our caring, deeply, for other living beings, and that we would not deny our fellow humans the same chance as the penguin. Surely we would not.

Our penguin also gives me hope for other reasons. If in these tough economic times, companies can find ways to squeeze in a free round trip for the penguin in a refrigerated truck to the treatment center, for example, surely things are on the mend. There is hope in this economy because someone cares enough to spend

some of the profit on a penguin. There is a profit and so things must be picking up. Someone sees a light at the end of the tunnel.

That sick penguin shows me that we are capable of joining hands over something that matters to us. What is my wish for 2010? That we, as a society, join hands to show the world that we are strong; that we are strong enough to care for a penguin, and strong enough to care for our fellow Americans. Be they someone poor, someone without healthcare, and especially, our veterans. I want the world to see that we are not only strong enough to join hands over a sick penguin, but strong enough to unite and dispense justice, on our terms and on our soil, to terrorists who want to destroy us. I want the same can-do attitude that is treating that penguin to pervade every level of American business: let's do it, get it done, and start now. The details will sort themselves out along the way. This is the attitude that will pull out of this recession. That will make for a very happy 2010.