

## WE HAVE RESPONSIBILITY

*Here is a copy of remarks attributed to Ina Hughs, courtesy Jim Stiehl*

We have responsibility for children  
who put chocolate fingers everywhere,  
who like to be tickled,  
who stomp in puddles and ruin their new pants,  
who sneak popsicles before supper,  
who erase holes in math workbooks,  
who can never find their shoes.

And we have responsibility for those children  
who stare at photographers from behind hungry eyes,  
who can't bound down the street in a new pair of sneakers,  
who never "counted potatoes,"  
who are born in places we wouldn't be caught dead,  
who never go to the circus,  
who live in an X-rated world.

We have responsibility for children  
who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions,  
who sleep with the dog and bury the goldfish,  
who hug in a hurry and forget their lunch money,  
who cover themselves with Band-aids and sing off-key,  
who squeeze toothpaste all over the sink,  
who slurp their soup.

And we have responsibility for children who never get dessert,  
who have no safe blanket to drag behind them,  
who watch their parents watch them die,  
who can't find any bread to steal,  
who don't have any rooms to clean up,  
whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,  
whose monsters are real.

We have responsibility for children  
who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,  
who throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick at their food,  
who like ghost stories,  
who shove dirty clothes under their bed, and never rinse out the tub,  
who get visits from the tooth fairy,  
who don't like to be kissed in front of the carpools,  
who squirm in church and scream on the phone,  
whose tears we sometimes laugh at and whose smiles can make us cry.

And we have responsibility for children whose nightmares come in the daytime,  
who will eat anything,  
who have never seen a dentist,  
who aren't spoiled by anybody,  
who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,  
who live and move, but have no being.

We have responsibility for children  
who want to be carried and for those who must,  
for those we never give up on,  
and for those who don't get a second chance,  
for those we smother,  
and for those who will grab the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it.

Those hands the children reach for are our hands – and when we reach out and join our hands with theirs, we see the stars, and our course through the icebergs becomes clear.