

THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

Stone Soup for Cincinnati

Monday, October 18, 1999

All Greater Cincinnatians involved in the education and nurture of young people - teachers, parents, youth agencies, others - should know about a book and project called *Stone Soup for the World*. More than 130 communities, schools or groups already use this collection of heart-warming true stories to teach young people character-building and citizenship lessons and motivate them to get involved in service to others.

The book includes 100 short tales of modern heroes - ordinary people doing extraordinary things and extraordinary people (like Mother Teresa) doing ordinary things to make the world a kinder, better place.

The book, created by Marianne Larned, a former teacher, has spawned an educational curriculum, a leadership training institute and a fellow program.

Stone Soup for the World: Life-changing Stories of Kindness and Courageous Acts of Service is adapted for the 16th Century folktale Stone Soup, about a traveler who inspires poor villagers to create a feast with a little imagination, cooperation and goodwill (see below).

The Stone Soup Leadership Institute collaborates with companies and organizations to provide training to people who want to use these education tools in their communities to motivate young people.

Now, Cincinnati is on the Stone Soup stop - thanks to businessman and entrepreneur Gale E. Smith, founder and CEO for the Smith Family Foundation. He spotted Stone Soup lessons at Cincinnati's Marva Collins Preparatory School and says it's too good not to share.

He dreams of Cincinnati becoming a "Stone Soup community" - one in which business, community groups and individuals use Marianne Larned's learning principles and stories "to transform our youth into tomorrow's leaders and transform our city, too."

So Mr. Smith, with help from some others, is bringing the Stone Soup Leadership Training program

to Cincinnati on Oct. 29 - 31.

Who should attend? People who work with kids, teachers or tutors who want to inspire students to service, mentors, companies, groups involved with volunteerism, after-school and any youth program seeking a program that'll hook kids, etc.

The stories, short and clear in message, transcend culture and ethnicity, and one reviewer noted, can "touch alike the alienated urban child and the most jaded suburban teen."

Through dramatic renderings of real individuals' struggles and success, the young reader takes away a vision of victory and hence, more hope than he can prevail in his own life. It also shows many ways than one person can make a big difference for good, even against formidable odds.

Will Morales, for example, was a 14-year-old illiterate gang member until a "lifer" taught him to read. Will is now a 28-year-old law student, home owner, new father, founder of Boston's Urban Edge Youth Police Partnership and Director of Egleston Square YMCA in Massachusetts. He's one of the book's heroes who'll speak at the Cincinnati training seminar.

The book is for everyone. The Leader's Guide shows how to talk about every story and the values they teach - generosity, innovation, patience, etc. If you care about character building in children, read this book and share it with a young person you know.

For information about the Stone Soup Leadership Institute:
www.soup4worldinstitute.com

If you or your school, organization, etc. wants to be a catalyst for this kind of education here, ask about sending or sponsoring someone to the Oct. 29 - 31 Stone Soup training. Scholarships are available.

The Folktale

There once was a man who had been traveling for a long time. Having run out of food, he was weary and hungry. When he came upon a small village, he thought, "Maybe someone could share some food."

When he knocked at the first house, he asked the woman, "Could you spare a bit of food?"

The woman replied, "I'm sorry, but I have nothing to give you." The traveler went from door to door, and each time he was turned away.

But then one villager said, "All I have is water." The traveler smiled gratefully, "We can make some stone soup from that water."

He asked the man for a pot and started building a fire. As the water started to boil, a passing villager stopped and asked him what he was doing. "I'm making stone soup," he replied. "Would you like to join me?" The curious villager agreed.

"First we must add a special stone," said the traveler. "One with magic in it." He reached into his knapsack and carefully unwrapped a stone and put it into the simmering pot.

Soon people from the village heard about this strange man who was making soup from a stone. They started asking questions. "What does your soup taste like?" asked one villager. The traveler admitted, "Well, it would taste better with a few onions." The villager said, "Oh, I have a few onions."

One by one, each villager brought something to add to the pot. What had started as just some water and a magic stone, had now become a delicious soup, enough to feed the whole village.