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'One good deed leads to another'

by: Derrick Henry April 18, 1998

Ordinary people can make an extraordinary difference.

That's the message Marianne Larned manages to capture in "*Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Kindness & Courageous Acts of Service*" (Conari Press, \$ 15.95), a compilation of 100 inspiring stories of people helping others.

Publication of "*Stone Soup for the World*" this week coincides with the observance of National Volunteer Week, a celebration started 25 years ago by President Richard M. Nixon. "My primary goal was to show that there is something each one of us can do," says Larned, who spent three years compiling the stories. "I wanted readers to be exposed to the goodness in the world and to have people they can look up to as role models."

For example: **Isis Johnson** saw a photo of starving children on television. Only 4, but wanting to help, she went door-to-door with her grandmother, asking neighbors to donate food for hungry children in **New Orleans**. Before long their home had become a small warehouse of food and supplies. Isis had found her calling. Now 13, she continues the war against hunger through her own foundation, the Isis T. Johnson Foundation in Memphis. **Will Morales**, an illiterate gang leader and felon, changed his life after his brother was shot to death. He learned to

read, formed a group called X-HOODS, and helped create the **Boston Urban Edge Youth and Police Partnership**, bringing together inner-city kids, the police and the church. It was the first outreach program in Boston's history run by teenagers. Today, X-HOODS organizes crime watch programs in troubled neighborhoods. **Arn Chorn** spent four years in a child labor camp in Cambodia, witnessing the murder of thousands of children by the Khmer Rouge. Escaping into the jungle, he was rescued in 1979. As the first Cambodian orphan permitted entry into the United States, Chorn shared his story at the United Nations, before Congress and across the nation. He helped create **Children of War**, which today assists young people who have been touched by violence.

"I wanted stories ordinary people can read and say, 'If they can do it, I can do it,' " says Larned, who created and heads the **Stone Soup Leadership Institute** in Martha's Vineyard, Mass., a nonprofit educational organization committed to empowering youth to become leaders in building a better world. Her hope is that through teamwork and cooperation, ordinary people can make dramatic differences in the lives of people who are struggling.

"One good deed leads to another," Larned says.