

THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

Good News Monday

Brewing Stone Soup in Cincinnati

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On a scale rating inspiration and hope, the recent Stone Soup leadership training in Cincinnati was a weekend of 10s. About 70 teen-agers, educators, mentors, youth workers, business and government leaders and parents spent two and one-half days learning how individuals, working together in public service, can change their schools and communities for the better. Just like the community heroes in Marianne Larned's popular book, *Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Kindness & Courageous Acts of Service*.

People across the country are using the collection of 100 short, real-life stories to teach young people positive values and citizenship, to build character and motivate them to become involved in public service. The materials are used by organizations such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters, churches, schools and others who are guiding young people.

It's adapted from the folktale Stone Soup, about a hungry traveler who

inspires poor villagers to each give something - and create a feast for the entire village. They learn to make soup from a stone, with a little imagination, cooperation and good will. Using the stone soup metaphor, Ms. Larned helps us see that when we work together in a community, we can do way more than we thought was possible to make things better for everyone.

Weekend participants heard some of the real "heroes" featured in the Stone Soup book, share their powerful stories and how they implemented change against impossible odds.

The Stone Soup Leadership Institute is the learning-in-action arm. Through workshops, trainings and fellows programs, they bring the Stone Soup fable to life – using it as a teaching tool about public service and social activism.

Training participants now can move on to Stone Soup fellowships – one to two-year projects where the Stone Soup series is integrated into schools and other community programs. Fellows typically are teen leaders, teachers, religious educators, juvenile justice and child welfare advocates and companies and organizations which want to collaborate on community projects. Fellowships hone skills at creating, organizing and coaching larger groups of people committed to community service.

Anyone witnessing the Cincinnati Stone Soup training would be optimistic about the unlimited potential for Cincinnati to

be a community known for character and compassion. Like the traveler in the folktale, we're reminded that we can all make a difference for good. But often we need a boost, like the Stone Soup one, to rekindle our "can-do" spirit. Even the most apathetic among us would be moved by listening to Will Morales' story. He was a 14-year-old illiterate gang member until a "lifer" taught him to read. Now, at 28, he's a law student, new father, and founder of Boston's Urban Edge Youth Police Partnership.

"Each person can add something to the incredible 'soup' we are creating together," said Cincinnati businessman / entrepreneur Gale E. Smith, founder and CEO of the Smith Family Foundation. He encountered the Stone Soup lessons at Cincinnati's Marva Collins Prep School and wanted it to be shared with others in the region. He hopes Cincinnati, like dozens of other cities, will become a "Stone Soup community."