

BOOKSELLING THIS WEEK

NATIONWIDE BOOK SIGNING  
STIRS INTEREST IN  
STONE SOUP

April 27, 1998



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On Friday, April 17 dozens of independent bookstores in 40 cities were involved in a collaborative signing of *Stone Soup for the World* (Conari), a collection of 100 true stories about community and individual humanitarian acts. Subtitled *Life-Challenging Stories of Kindness & Courageous Acts of Service*, the trade paperback was published to coincide with National Volunteer Week April 19-25 and features a foreword by Ret. General Colin Powell and pieces by Nelson Mandela, Steven Spielberg, Jimmy Carter and many others. All book's proceeds go to the Stone Soup Leadership Institute, dedicated to empowering today's youth to build a better society.

"It was a challenge, but it came together," Conari Senior Publicist Nina Lesowitz told BTW, describing the planning of the nationwide event (billed as "The World's Largest Book Signing"), which she coordinated along with Conari Sales and Marketing Associated Jay Kahn. While describing the day as "a unique concept that went well for the message we wanted to convey," Lesowitz admitted to varying results from the participating stores. "It was mixed, she said.

"Any time you have an event there are variables - the scheduling, the weather, media coverage. But in some stores, the owners and employees really got behind the concept. Patrice Wynne at Gaia, Berkeley, CA really got into it. I attended that one, and it was really fabulous, honoring a local firefighter."

Lesowitz also mentioned two other California stores that had reported excellent turnouts - Book Passage in Corte Madera, where about 50 customers went up to see Ram Dass; and The Capitol Book Cafe, which she said had enjoyed "tremendous success. Over a hundred people attended, and they sold over 50 books. I was pleased that we had so many outstanding stores involved." BTW spoke with some of the other booksellers involved, and, while the results were hit and miss in terms of book sales and attendance, the common denominator was a rewarding experience for staff and customers.

Nancy Braus, Everyone's Books in Brattleboro, Vermont, said she felt fortunate to experience a visit from Frances Moore Lappe (best-known for authoring *Diet for a Small Planet*).

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"She's really nice - a neat person," Braus said of the popular local. It was very enjoyable." About 15 people attended at the Green Mountain bookstore.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, The Bookmark Coowner David Friese called a visit from Jan Boylston "a good experience and a decent turnout," but lamented the one that got away. "We had tried to get Hugh McCall as well, who is the CEO and Chairman of Nations Bank - and the subject of Boylston's piece in the book. We would have had hundreds of people here."

At Bunch of Grapes, on Massachusetts' Martha's Vineyard, bookseller Joe Schreiber commented that the event was good, especially for our first event of the year. We sold about seventeen copies."

Schreiber said that two contributors and the author of Stone Soup for the World reside on the island, and they came to talk about their contribution, The Great Martha's Vineyard Barn Raising," and essay about a community project."

Lisa Greening, a co-owner of Left Bank Books in St. Louis, was very pleased with the proceedings. "We had maybe 45 people, and sold about a hundred books." left Bank was graced with a visit from Hulas King, a St. Louis resident with a career in helping displaced and untrained workers. Left Bank split their proceeds from Stone Soup for the World sales with King's current foundation, The Cornerstone Partnership, which helped update the various job skills of displaced workers. And at New Leaf Bookstore, in Larkspur, California, proprietor Susan Scott was delighted with her store's involvement, despite an unspectacular turnout of about 10 attendees, with sales about the same. "Our experience was wonderful," she beamed. "Masanko Bandko read 'Pathways to Peace' from the book, answered questions, and talked for about 45 minutes." Scott has also been won over by Stone Soup for the World itself. "I love the book," she added. "It was done really well."