



OCTOBER 6, 2000

New Island Initiative Encourages Volunteerism



Speaker Morgan Hauck

"What's a word for helping others?" Morgan Hauck asked Chilmark students "Volunteer," said seven-year-old Dakota del Viento.

Morgan traveled from Providence, R.I., to speak at seven school assemblies this week, sharing her excitement about helping others through City Year.

After graduating from the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, she decided to give two years of her life to City Year and help disadvantaged kids. Inviting students to participate in Make a Difference Day, she said, "If I can do it five days a week, you can do it for one day," adding, "You can make a difference, too."

For the last 10 years, millions of people across the country have been organizing service projects in their communities on this national day of service. The Stone Soup Foundation is working with teachers, parents and community organizations to create the first Make a Difference Day, set for Oct. 28 on Martha's Vineyard. "It's about bringing people together to accomplish many things in one day," says Ted Morgan, co-chairman of the



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event. "I can't say enough about it. It's such a worthwhile venture."

Mr. Morgan was one of the Stone Soup Community Heroes who spoke at the assemblies, sharing his wisdom with students. "Be a volunteer," he encouraged the kids. Another Stone Soup hero, sixth-grader Anna Markwica, shared her story about helping a Brazilian classmate. She said, "I just thought I was a friend, and I was a hero." Arthur Wortzel gave students an appreciation for our country's unique legacy of service. "We are the only country in the world that encourages volunteerism." His closing remark to all West Tisbury students was: "It's never too early to volunteer."

Make a Difference Day coordinators Tisha Capello and Colleen Leland

described the various service projects: creating an environmental museum of native plants at Sheriff's Meadow Sanctuary and helping rid the sanctuary of alien invaders (non-native plants); painting a wildlife mural with English and Portuguese labeling at Felix Neck; helping with Habitat for Humanity's first house by readying the Habitat work truck; or reading to children. "Reading to children enriches my life;" said Ethel Sherman.

"My three grandchildren visit once a year, so I miss them," she says. Ethel invites others to join her for the Make a Difference Day Readathon at all six libraries, the Tisbury Senior Center, Hillside Village and the Family Center. Other organizations are creating special projects for this day. The Trustees of Reservation are holding



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their second annual "Conservation Works" volunteer Day; high school students will participate in City Year's Servathon; and the Boys Scouts and schools are organizing beautification and other service projects.

At the school assemblies, students learned about the value of community service and teamwork. Morgan asked students at the Charter School to participate in a team building exercise and then asked them, "What did you learn?" Jason Willoughby replied, "Teamwork." Others said flexibility, communication, cooperation.

"Make a Difference Day will be a lot of fun -and you can fulfill up to eight hours of your community service requirement," explained Edgartown teacher, Betsy Hauck. Most middle

school students are required to perform 18 hours of community service to graduate. Guidance counselor Jeff Agnoli reminded high school students what colleges look for on student profiles. In his remarks at the high school assembly, he noted that in addition to good grades, colleges look for community service activities.

Students were given fliers to bring home to their families. Edgartown Principal Ed Jerome told students, "The assembly was created to make you aware of Make a Difference Day. Now it's up to each one of you to make a decision about helping." When Colleen Leland told Oak Bluffs students about the Felix Neck wildlife mural with bilingual labels, three Brazilian students immediately signed



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up.

"My daughter learned a big lesson when raising money for Kosovo refugees. She could make a difference, and many people were ready to help her," says Tisha Capello. "Teaching our children about their opportunity - and responsibility - to give back to our community is the key to a better world." Everyone is invited to do something for Make A Difference Day. You can drop off yard sale items at the After School Program (Cottager's Building) or lightweight, summer baby clothes and sewing supplies for Muriel Laverty's trip to Nicaragua at the Tisbury School or help stock the Island Food Pantry shelves. "On Monday morning, it would be great if students and everyone on the Island were talking about the fun they had and the

difference we all made on that one day helping our community."

"My dad was a Barnbuster," Margot Becker proudly responded when asked if anyone knew the story about the building of new Agricultural Hall. "That's great!" replied Colleen Leland. "We'd like to invite all the Barnbusters to join us for a reunion on Make a Difference Day." A community potluck celebration will be held on Oct. 28, at 5 p.m. Make A Difference Day kicks off the Celebration of Heroes project, a year long initiative with schools and the Vineyard community. This fall, everyone will have an opportunity to be a "hero." In the winter, students will learn about "the hero's journey" by listening to Stone Soup Community Heroes and reading stories from Stone Soup for the World. Next spring, students will again invite the



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community to vote for their favorite heroes, and next summer, those heroes will be celebrated in a community event.

Vineyard teachers - including some who have participated in the Stone Soup Leadership Institute - will use the book, *Stone Soup for the World* and the Educational Curriculum Leader's Guide to integrate the day's themes - environment, literacy, hunger, art, seniors, global village, a day of service into their curriculum. A volunteer database is also being developed to connect students and others with volunteer opportunities throughout the year.

"By coming together and recognizing the needs of the Island, we will help our kids, the elderly and our

community," says Bob Tankard, West Tisbury School principal and project co-chairman. "It's about caring. About teaching people to care for each other."

If you are interested in being part of Make a Difference Day by volunteering with one of these projects or using this day to create a project with your organization,

*e-mail: soup4worldinstitute@gmail.com
www.stonesoupleadership.org*

