

## Oakland Youth Leadership Initiative 2002-2004



**Oakland Fire Captain Ray Gatchalian** is a founding Institute board member and served as Institute's faculty in Martha's Vineyard and Cincinnati. Ray invited the Institute to work with him in Oakland. The Oakland Youth Leadership Initiative was launched on the first anniversary of 9/11 where Ray served at Ground Zero. In Ray's story in *Stone Soup for the World* he got volunteers to help with the 1991 Oakland Hills Fire.

**Fall 2002:** The Institute conducted a four-month program in Oakland for high school students to meet and learn from local hero, **Oakland Fire Captain Ray Gatchalian** from *Stone Soup for the World*. Students interviewed local heroes and wrote stories for language arts classes and produced the award-winning video, *Oakland: In Search of Heroes*. This program radically changed these inner-city youth's ideas of what it means to be a hero.



*We are honored that Oakland is the first city to kick off the Stone Soup Leadership Institute's Campaign. This is an opportunity to recognize some of the young heroes in Oakland; their example will inspire all of us to work even harder for a better future for our city and our country.*

**Dennis Chaconas**  
Superintendent Oakland Schools

## Oakland Celebration of Heroes Ceremony

The Institute developed **Oakland Celebration of Heroes Awards Ceremony** honoring young people for doing good deeds in their community. Prior to the event, we organized **Beautify Fremont High Day** as a community service event to spruce up Fremont High School. The school's auditorium hadn't been used in many years – so we painted it and solicited new sound equipment for the event. We planted trees and flowers at its entrance. **Oakland Fire Department, East Bay Conservation Corps, parents, students, teachers, alumni and Fruitvale Starbucks** provided refreshments to everyone.



**Captain Ray** was the keynote speaker and presented awards to **Oakland's Youth Heroes**. **Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown** presented him with the **Institute's Community Hero Award**. **Wendy Tokuda**, television station **KRON** anchor, will be the master of ceremonies. The event will feature musical entertainment from **SoVoSo**, an a cappella hip-hop group; an original performance with **Oakland's Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company**; and the premiere of a TV hero report featuring Gatchalian, the first in a series of reports with Walter Cronkite. Every TV station in the SF/Bay Area covered the event, giving Oakland's youth an opportunity to be proud of their accomplishments. Thanks to the media recognition, one student received \$100,000 towards his college education.

*Now more than ever, our young people need to believe that one person -- that they can make a difference. They need to see them on TV and in the news. The **Oakland Youth Leadership Initiative** inspired my students and gave them hands-on experience: finding, showcasing, and becoming -- a hero in their own community. Together we will stop the violence and build a better world.*

**Michael Jackson, Fremont Media Academy**  
Sponsor: **Grace Family Foundation, St. Helena**

**Youth Heroes of Oakland Project  
Oakland Youth Leadership Initiative  
University of California Berkeley's  
IAM Program: 2004**



**Spring 2004: the Institute's partnered with University of California Berkeley's IAM Program.** The Institute trained college students to use the *Stone Soup for the New World Educational Curriculum* to tutor and mentor 6-7<sup>th</sup> graders from **Lowell Middle School and All City Middle School Council** to improve their reading skills.

Each month, we brought these inspiring stories to life with young leaders: African Americans, Asians, Latinos and Middle Easterners from our new book -- **Kenneth Jones, East Bay Conservation Corps and Victor Marsh, Detroit's Safe Streets Initiative.** By sharing their personal stories, they infused Oakland's youth with a passion for learning and ignited their heroic spirits to give back to their community. The highlight of the program was an interactive event with **Cesar Chavez**, the grandson and namesake of the great Latino leader.



**The Awards Ceremony** was held at UCB's **Alumni House** the room was filled with students, their siblings, cousins, parents, aunts, uncles and guardians – most of who had never been on a college campus. It was a special opportunity for students to dream

about what might be possible if they stayed in school and focused on their goals instead of being distracted by the many challenges they faced every day in Oakland. Tutors shared wonderful and humorous moments about their students. Many received awards for their progress.

**Deszeray Williams** received the Institute's first Ray Gatchalian Scholarship Award and a \$200 savings bond. Deszerey received high honors at Carter Middle School and maintained a 3.0 GPA. She has nearly perfect attendance in the IAM Program. Her positive attitude, willingness to learn new materials and work with the tutors made her very valuable asset to the program. She received this award due to her hard work, team spirit and academic achievement. Every mother and father told us how much this meant to them – caring for their children and giving them hope, tools and opportunities to succeed. **Oakland City Center Starbucks** provided delicious treats.

**Program sponsors: Cloud Nine Foundation  
Hart Family Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation**

*During these tough economic times, we need to find ways to work together, pool our resources so we can help our young people.*

*I believe the **Stone Soup Leadership Institute's** program provides a unique opportunity to inspire people to collaborate – and bring forth the best in our young people.*

*I first learned about the **Stone Soup Leadership Institute** from Ray Gatchalian in 1998. As the local hero in **Stone Soup for the World**, Ray's enthusiasm for the Institute was contagious.*

*I was pleased when he invited you to work with him in Oakland -- and impressed with the quality of the Institute's pilot last fall, and its impact on the community. Your vision of how to execute a plan in 2004 has ignited our staff.*

*I stand ready to assist in any way to coalesce your organization with appropriate sources.*

*By spotlighting our outstanding youth, and providing leadership development opportunities, we will create a powerful multiplier effect. By using the media to spread this message, we can unite students, teachers and citizens to overcome our differences and work together to improve our community.*

**Sheila Jordan  
Superintendent, Alameda County Schools**