

STONE SOUP
FOR THE WORLD



MARIANNE LARNED

Three Rivers Press

New York



STONE SOUP
FOR THE WORLD

LIFE-CHANGING STORIES OF
EVERYDAY HEROES

A complete list of credits appears on page 397.

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DEDICATION

To my brother Chris, the tenth and last child in our family. From the moment he was born, he was larger than life, weighing eleven pounds, with curly blond hair and a twinkle in his eye. With his take-charge attitude and great sense of humor, he lived life to the fullest. What I remember most are his hugs. Real ones, as though he meant it.

Chris would do anything for his friends. He always stood up for what he believed in, and he challenged people to live up to his high standards. As captain of his high school football team, he got his teammates to quit drinking and taking drugs when he did. Once he sent a letter to a wayward teacher, challenging him to set a better example for his students.

Chris had a fierce loyalty to his family and brought us together in times of trouble. Just before he died, he organized a family reunion. It turned out to be his own going-away party.

Chris wasn't always this way. When he was just five years old, our dad died, leaving him with a hole in his heart and a chip on his shoulder. Without a father to guide and stand up for him, he struggled to find his way in the world. Growing up, he protected himself with his temper, so no one would get too close.

Until one summer, when he went to camp. Chris always loved being with his friends—playing basketball, sailing, water-skiing, and climbing mountains. But that summer he had a revelation that helped him put things in perspective and began to fill the hole in his heart: The words “God so loved us, that he gave . . .” really clicked with him. From that summer on, Chris came to see that life was

about giving. When he gave to others, his life became more meaningful, purposeful, and fulfilling.

Just before Chris died, he wrote a letter to his friend Toby:

Sitting here, talking to my roommate, listening to Pink Floyd, eating round Doritos. Midterms are coming up this week. I'm hoping for the best. I'm also working for the best, too. Tonight I asked God to show me the right ways to go about preparing for each test, to help me avoid distractions and to give me the strength to do my best. I think He listened. I really ask a lot of Him . . . and often feel that I have too little to offer in thanks. I think that by helping other people in this world to utilize the unique assets He gave them, I could help Him as He has helped me. It is easy to say.

Through the ups and downs of his brief life, Chris became a young hero in our community. He believed that if we each pitched in, we could all do just about anything. With his infectious smile, he invited you to join him. When he was killed at nineteen in a car crash, his high school created the Chris Larned award, presented each year to the student who gave the most of him- or herself.

Losing my brother at such a young age left a huge hole in my heart, but his spirit now lives on in the hearts of those lives he touched, through every generous act. His tragic death reminded me of the preciousness of life and inspired me to live mine more fully. It also challenged me to do whatever I could to help build a better world for our children. Chris was and is my hero; he gave me the courage to write this book and guided me in my quest to help other young people open, as he did, the gift of giving.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this book has been an amazing Stone Soup experience. Many people generously gave of themselves, their time, their ideas, their support. A special thanks to those featured in this book for your trust in me, your faith in the process, and your commitment to building a better world.

To Claire Nuer, who touched my heart and strengthened my commitment to help build a more humane world. To Nathan Gray for opening my eyes to the fragile beauty of the global village. To my mentors Willis Harmon, John Gardner, and John McKnight for learning to build healthy communities. To my parents for inspiring my lifelong commitment to service, especially to my mother for her profound faith and courage.

Thanks to Three Rivers Press, especially my editor, Stephanie Higgs, for championing this book. To my literary agency, Lit West, Linda Mead, Nancy Ellis, Andrea Brown, and Robert Preskill for helping to make the dream come true.

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Thanks to the hundreds of friends and colleagues who generously gave their ideas, suggestions, and support. To the community of Martha's Vineyard, especially Nancy Aronie, Susan Fieldsmith, Pam Benjamin, and Doris Gaffney. To Jack Canfield and the Chicken Soup staff for encouraging me to write this book. To story nominators, story reviewers, and everyone whose lives have been touched by these stories. For all those who provided this project a home: Charles and Marion Guggenheim, Doris Hutchings, Nancy Michelson, Gail Evanari, Laurie Anne and Kevin Waddell, with special thanks to Carol Saysette and Bob Reynolds.

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To my family for their love over the years, with much appreciation for all the children in my life, especially my nieces and nephews. You are my greatest teachers—showing me how to laugh at life, sing for joy, and give from my heart. May God bless each and every one of you.



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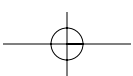
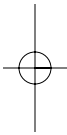
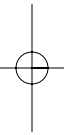
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INTRODUCTION

Walter Cronkite

As we begin a new millennium, and face a critical time in our nation's history, it's a good time to take stock and ask ourselves some important questions: "Where have we been? Where are we going? What do we want to accomplish in the next hundred years—for ourselves and for our families? And who will chart our course?"

Creating an educated constituency of Americans is the most critical issue of our time. Our country needs people prepared to address the urgent challenges facing our world.

We wonder how the events of September 11, 2001, could have happened. We wonder why "they" hate us so much. It's hard for most Americans to imagine how people on the other side of the world live—in desperate poverty, without hope, without opportunities. We are separated from them geographically, and by the growing distance between the haves and the have-nots. As we strive to build a more peaceful world, we must learn more how to work with all other people on this planet.

Throughout history, we've thought that fighting wars would bring peace. We've passed this legacy of war on to our children. After September 11, we wonder if, in the long term, this approach will really work. Polls tell us that our children believe that the world will be less safe and prosperous when they grow up. What can we do now to change things so that they can have a more hopeful vision of their future?

We've all been touched by the power of the examples set by legendary heroes like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, Nelson Mandela, Eleanor

Roosevelt, John and Robert F. Kennedy, and Mother Teresa. These men and women of kindness, courage, and action set the course for the twentieth century, yet they are famous not because they possessed superhuman brains, wealth, or privilege, but because they embraced humanity and dedicated their lives to empowering every human being. They did this with hope, self-sacrifice, and hard work. They envisioned a better world, and left a legacy of service for us to follow.

Stone Soup for the World is a blueprint for building a better world. Its heroes are ordinary folks in America and twenty-nine other countries who, by conviction, imagination, innovation, persistence, frequently hard work and not infrequently moral or physical courage, have lifted neighbors and their communities. They challenge each of us to respond in kind. By their actions, neighborhood by neighborhood, village by village, they break from the destructive patterns of our past and transform the world. The secret to their greatness is the magic ingredients in *Stone Soup for the World*—the simple truth that by working together we can accomplish much more than any of us could have on our own.

In today's world, young people are hungry for role models and modern-day heroes they can look up to and follow. Marianne Larned works with the Stone Soup Leadership Institute, training young people to become heroes. Future and emerging leaders work side by side with heroes from the book who share their time, their life stories, and their insights into the toughest issues facing their communities and our world. I've enjoyed working with Marianne and her team. Grounded in local values, her work is spreading across the country.

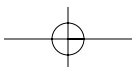
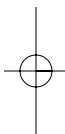
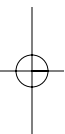
As the only superpower, we must be the best country and the best global citizens we can be. That means offering a hand up to the good guys—and forging new directions for the global economy. In the last century we've shown the world how we can attack and solve perplexing problems with technology. Imagine if we were to apply that same intellectual power to solving the world's greatest problems—poverty, overpopulation, pollution, and medical insufficiency, as well as our dependence on nonrenewable energy sources. With the resurgence of patriotism in America, this is an ideal time to launch such a bold national

initiative. It could become this generation's version of putting a man on the moon.

Around the world, revolutionary forces are already at work, and they have humankind's dreams on their side. It is up to us to assume leadership of that revolution, to channel it in a direction that will ensure freedom's future. We can help assure success by celebrating the heroes in our midst who by their example can lift up the spirit of our people. Their leadership will realize the true values of humankind and put to shame the false values that simultaneously exalt and trivialize our society. Their spirit is the spirit of America, and of the human experience. For humans will be nothing if they are not their brothers' and sisters' keepers.

We all can take the hero's journey. It begins with a single step, the moment we decide to stand up for something we believe in. *Stone Soup for the World* asks each of us to take that first step. It's time to roll up our sleeves. It's a time to share our stories and teach our children that they too can be heroes. It's time to build a better, safer place for all people. It's time to take action—and chart the course for our future.

And that's the way it is.



FOREWORD

Edward James Olmos,
Actor and Activist

Growing up in East L.A.'s barrio of Boyle Heights, I was blessed by people who showed me that helping others is a way of life. My mother, Eleanor, worked for twenty years in the Los Angeles County General Hospital AIDS ward and my father, Pedro, helped coordinate Little League baseball. For our family, these were labors of love.

Over the years, I've met many everyday Latino heroes who, by the power of their example, taught this important life lesson. Like math teacher Jaime Escalante, the real star I played in the movie *Stand and Deliver*, who gave Hispanic youth the opportunity to get real jobs, with a real future. Carlos Santana, Rita Moreno, and I work with the Hispanic Education and Media Group to honor our heroes and educate our communities, to promote Hispanic culture and ways of life.

And like my friend Cesar Chavez, one of the greatest Latino heroes of our time. Cesar dedicated his life to helping our people. A humble leader, he told us, "Only by giving our lives do we find life." Even in the toughest times, Cesar would remind us, "*Sí se puede!* Yes, we can!" *Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes* honors Cesar Chavez and the can-do spirit of many other Latino heroes.

Nane Alejandrez carries on Cesar's legacy at Barrios Unidos. He gets kids off the street, gives them jobs, and helps them make something of themselves. When Nane saw what Cesar did, he said to himself, "I can do this," and he's found that, given the chance, young people agree they can, too.

Alejandro Obando is a hero to some of the six thousand Nicaraguan children

left orphaned and homeless by their country's long civil war, since he and his New York City students and their families built them a school.

At La Clinica del Pueblo in Washington, D.C., Dr. Juan Romagoza helps people from Central America heal themselves by helping one another. "We are a people of weavers," he says, quoting Guatemalan Rigoberta Menchu, "weaving a better future from our suffering and pain." People return to the clinic with a passion for giving back. "*Se tiran la casa por la ventana.*"

Don Francisco unites 100 million Spanish-speaking television viewers around the world every Saturday night on *Sabado Gigante*. At a time when too many TV shows prosper by exploiting human frailties, Don Francisco's shows, such as *An American Family* on PBS, teach people the value of giving and helping others, and the strength of community roots.

The stories in *Stone Soup for the World* testify to the Latino tradition of giving back. I am honored that mine is one of them. One of the most important gifts we can give our children is to read stories about those who went before them. Our children need to know about the sacrifices Cesar Chavez and others made for them, and their responsibility to give back to future generations. Who will they learn this from, if not from us?

The Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning in California is the first state holiday dedicated to a Latino. Teachers share stories about Cesar's life from the *Stone Soup for the World* educational curriculum and, on March 31, they initiate cultural, artistic, environmental, and human service projects to help their communities. If other states follow California's example, we can pass Cesar's legacy on to all of our nation's youth and inspire them to be heroes, too.

Young people need hope, and hope comes with a vision of the future. With 31 million Hispanic people in America, we can create a great future. My hope is that after reading these stories, each one of you will be inspired to move beyond what you already think is possible by helping one another take ownership of your lives and your futures. I hope that with me, with *Stone Soup for the World*, you will hear Cesar's words: "*Sí se puede!* Yes, we can!"

"*Nos estamos moviendo para adelante.*" As we say, we are all moving forward.

FOREWORD

Jack Canfield,

coauthor of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

The world is hungry for positive, uplifting, and inspirational stories. I know this because, over the last decade, the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books have struck a powerful chord with millions of people all across the country and around the world.

Everywhere Mark and I go, people now ask us, “What’s next? I feel so much better about myself and my life; I want to give something back—but I’m not sure how.” Once we feel better about ourselves, we naturally want to reach out to help others.

Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes is a handbook for humanitarians, showing us how we can contribute to our communities, giving us hundreds of ideas for what’s next and where to start making the world a better place.

In these hundred stories, you will meet ordinary people doing extraordinary things, and extraordinary people doing ordinary things. They remind us that we can each make a difference, and that when we work together, we *can* change the world.

These encourage us all to stretch ourselves and our own little worlds and reach out to our fellow human beings. They show us that with a little imagination, teamwork, and cooperation, we can do things we never thought possible.

Over the twenty-five years that I’ve known Marianne Larned, we’ve become great friends, connected by our shared search for practical ways to inspire people to help make the world a better place. Marianne is one of those people who truly believes that we can solve the world’s problems. Whenever we get together,



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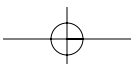
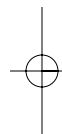
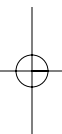
FOREWORD

Marianne shares inspiring stories about people she's worked with across America and in faraway countries, who are doing great things. Until now, many of those stories have not been widely known. Thanks to *Stone Soup for the World*, millions of people will tune in to these stories and be inspired to take action, to join in and help build a world that works for everyone.

From the millions of teens who have read our books, we know that young people love these kinds of stories. They yearn to know that their lives matter and that the world will be a better place because of them and their efforts. I encourage all of you who read this book to share these stories with kids. Read them these stories, give them this book, and challenge them to find their own ways to contribute.

After you read these stories, you'll have lots of new ideas. So pick up the phone or a pen and get involved today. But wait—I'm getting ahead of myself. First you need to read the book you are holding in your hands. You are in for a wonderful treat, a wonderful meal of *Stone Soup for the World*.

Enjoy!





THE STONE SOUP FOLKTALE

There was once a man who had been traveling for a long time. Having run out of food, he was weary and hungry from his journey. When he came upon a small village, he thought, “Maybe someone could share some food.”

When the man knocked at the first house, he asked the woman who answered the door, “Could you spare a bit of food? I’ve traveled a long way and am very hungry.” The woman replied, “I’m sorry, but I have nothing to give you.”

So the traveler went to the next door and asked again. The answer was the same. He went from door to door and each time he was turned away. Each of the villagers had good reasons.

But then one villager said, “I have some water.” “Oh, good,” said the traveler. “We can make stone soup.”

He then went to the center of the village and started building a small fire. From his backpack he pulled out a small pot and his magic stone and placed them in the pot. As the water started boiling, a passing villager stopped and asked him what he was doing. “I’m making stone soup,” the traveler replied.

“What does it taste like?” the man asked curiously. “Well, it would be better with a few onions,” the traveler admitted. “Oh, I have some onions,” he replied, heading off to his home.

People from the village heard about this strange man who was making soup from a stone. They started gathering around the fire. One of the villagers offered, “I have a few carrots from last year’s harvest.” Someone else said, “I’ll get some potatoes from my garden.”

One by one, each villager brought something special to add to the pot. Pretty soon, right before their eyes there was a delicious soup—enough to feed the whole village. They all sat down together to enjoy their soup—and the miracle they'd help to create.

ANONYMOUS,
adapted from a sixteenth-century folktale



INTRODUCTION

Marianne Larned

Can we really change the world? From the youngest child to the oldest senior, each of us wants to make a difference in the world. We want to feed the hungry, care for the elderly, and teach the children. We sometimes wonder how to start. With too little time and money to solve all the world's problems, one person can feel alone. We may even feel like giving up.

Since September 11, 2001, though, more people have been asking, "What can I do?" We looked for ways to help. We gave our blood, our money, and our time. And each time we did, we felt just a little better.

With each holiday after September 11, we found new meaning in our giving. At Halloween, American children raised \$4 million for Afghani kids by trick-or-treating for UNICEF. On Veterans Day we all felt a profound sense of gratitude to those who'd helped protect our country and preserve our precious freedom over the years. When local food banks were struggling at Thanksgiving, people responded with a last-minute flood of donations. And in New York City, a Secret Santa from Kansas City gave out hundred-dollar bills to thousands of people on the streets. A New York City woman thanked him with all her heart: "You are doing God's work in the most personal ways, seeking out hurting eyes and faces and replacing them with bright smiles and thankful hearts."

The children's story "Stone Soup" reminds us that when we each give something, we can feed both the hungry of the world and the hunger in our souls. In this simple story, a hungry traveler makes soup from just a stone and invites each poor villager to give something to the pot. Together they cook up a feast, more than enough to feed the entire village. It's a story that is shared in many lands.

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INTRODUCTION

Stone Soup for the World is a collection of one hundred stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Their stories show us that greatness grows out of simple acts of giving. They remind us that with a little imagination, cooperation, and goodwill, we really can make the world a better place for everyone. Magic happens.

When 11,500 ordinary local heroes carried the Olympic torch across America, it was one of the first truly joyous national events since September 11. I was privileged to see it twice—with my family in Montpelier, Vermont, and again, with the Mill Valley, California, community. We smiled brightly into the sun as history passed before us. The Olympic flame has always been a symbol of our global unity, our common humanity, and our collective possibility for a more hopeful future. This year we held the torch especially high.

Now, more than ever, we need this kind of hope in the world. Since September 11, we are examining our lives and changing our priorities. We are realizing that having money isn't enough; we want more meaning and purpose. We want to spend more time with our loved ones, living each day as if it could be our last. We are grateful just to be alive.

How the world changes depends on each one of us. The decisions we make *today* will determine our future, for our children and for our children's children. We do have a choice: to be paralyzed by fear, to protect ourselves from "them," or to remember that we're all in this together and we all want to live in a safer, healthier world. Did September 11 change us forever? Let's hope so. Let's face the challenge and make the choices for all humanity.

There is a deep reservoir of energy and goodwill in our country and in the world. With more funds being spent on disaster relief, increased security, anti-terrorism efforts, and rebooting the economy, there are fewer resources available for local communities. Now, more than ever, we need to work together with our neighbors, to help each other, and to invest in our communities, especially in our children. The greatest gift we can give them is to teach them, by example, to give back, to show them how to make democracy work for everyone.

INTRODUCTION

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This book is a collection of stories about what is working in the world. Use it as a toolbox and a guide, for in it you will find all the hope and ideas and direction you'll need to change the world. Like the hungry traveler in the folktale, we each have a magic stone: the power to give, the joy of getting together and getting involved. The time is now; the place is here and everywhere you go; and the everyday heroes in this book will light the way.

I hope these stories will fuel the flame of hope burning in your hearts. Carry the torch of possibility, hold it high, and pass it to the next generation.

Somewhere on this planet,
someone has a solution to each of the world's problems.

It just might be you!

What can you do today, tomorrow, next week, next year to build a better world?

Remember the Stone Soup folktale:

When we each give a little, we can feed the whole world.

