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June 23, 2012

Stone Soup Leadership Institute
P.O. Box 4551
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Dear Youth Delegates,

I am extremely privileged to have the opportunity to welcome you to the eighth annual Stone Soup Youth Summit, and the third Youth Summit to be held on Martha's Vineyard. I am also aware that this year marks the launching of a sister program in Hawaii, and that there are several representatives from the Big Island here today. I want to extend a special welcome to those of you who have traveled a great distance to attend this unique event, and I want to personally welcome you all to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

You have all expressed different reasons for choosing to attend this conference. Some of you are here because you are curious about other islands and their ways of life. Some of you are here because you want to protect and preserve the fragile ecosystems on your island. Some of you are here because you have recognized local, national, or international problems, and you want to do something to address these issues. Among all of these noble reasons for your attendance, I see a common thread: you are all here because you are willing to confront – and to solve – some of the most difficult and perplexing problems that our world faces.

Your impressive program includes seminars on Sustainable Business, Sustainable Energy, Sustainable Agriculture and Sustainable Building. Through these types of conversations, this year's Vineyard Youth summit promises to continue helping talented young people tackle the most difficult problems faced by our global community.

Today, our planet faces several grave threats: poverty, rising sea levels, pollution, lack of medical resources, and dependence on nonrenewable energy resources. However, perhaps the most perilous problem today is that of inaction. Much more must be done to preserve the vitality of our world. In 1892, John Muir, a Scottish emigrant to the United States founded the Sierra Club. When describing what inspired him, he said he wished, "to make the mountains glad." As individual driven to take action, Muir laid the foundation for future conversations surrounding environmental awareness. It is now up to you as our new leaders to make mountains glad by saying "NO" to complacency.

This Summit presents a tremendous opportunity to use your imagination and creativity in ways that will translate into real results. Whether this means pursuing entrepreneurial ventures through Beads for Life or making connections with other youth throughout the world through the Walter Cronkite Global Technology Initiative, all of you have the power to create substantive change for the future of our planet.

Noted cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

I urge you to have the courage to be that group of committed people, and to take seriously the opportunity to meet and collaborate with the many delegates from Martha's Vineyard, Hawaii, Vieques, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Gorda, just to name a few. Your concerted efforts will help us overcome the challenges of today and with strong foresight we can find the solutions for tomorrow.

The Stone Soup Leadership Institute is continuing the legacy of past environmentalists by fostering youth leadership throughout the world. Launching the "Green Revolution" from a grassroots base will be integral to future policy making; it is up to delegates such as you to lead this movement. Use this Summit as a tool to help hone your already budding leadership qualities into a strength that can help you connect with people from all walks of life.

I hope you enjoy your time in Massachusetts, and again I want to sincerely thank and applaud you for all that you have done, all that you are doing, and especially all that you will do in the future to build a more sustainable world. Our task is a difficult one, but with young, inspired leaders that are willing to lead the fight, I have no doubt we will prevail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John F. Kerry". The signature is stylized and fluid.

John F. Kerry
United States Senator (MA)

JFK/nc/mjf