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October 7, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to have been asked again this year to write a letter of support for the grant request of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute for funding to continue its programming here on the Vineyard.

The mission of island sustainability has been embraced by the Martha's Vineyard Commission, the Agricultural Society, the Slow Food group, MV Shellfish Group, and other island organizations. It is very encouraging the Institute is inspiring (and being inspired by) island youth as they, too, embrace the challenge of sustainability. Their plan to develop a 2020 Sustainable Vineyard Report and Map is one such innovative idea. As our island develops scattered individual demonstrations of sustainability in energy, agriculture, etc., it is the Institute that seeks to knit them together in a meaningful, unique and educational way through their Map project. Sharing what they learn will have a magnifier effect on future collaborations and inspire others to become more engaged in sustainable living on the Vineyard.

As a member of the Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee, I am painfully aware of the budget crunch in local school funding as the state decreases its local school support. This results in cut backs in our schools of all but the state-mandated programs leaving important programs that support other developmental needs of our youth underfunded. This, combined with lower donations to non-profits in a down economy, makes it challenging for well-intentioned adults to fund valuable programs for kids.

I am impressed with the Institute's mission as it provides a positive program of character development while providing needed experiences and opportunities for youth. I applaud the enthusiasm and persistence of the adult leaders who want this program to succeed and grow. Many of our island leaders have been born and raised here and have a unique understanding of island ways. It is important to our future that we nourish and support our future leaders. I hope you will consider this a worthy organization to support.

Sincerely,
Melinda Loberg
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