

PO Box 2557 Vineyard Haven MA 02568

October 28, 2010

Farm Neck Foundation  
PO Box 1656  
Oak Bluffs, Ma. 02557

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to have been asked 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.

As a former high school counselor and current County Commissioner I am generally enthusiastic about leadership programs for our young people. The Vineyard is a unique place that, while offering some wonderful advantages, also presents burdens to developing youth. The Youth Task Force emerged out of a need to address substance abuse that on the Vineyard is in excess of many mainland towns. Because we are an island, there is a problem of limited access to the wider resources available on the mainland. And we have learned that we can't provide the many options available elsewhere. 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 mission of SSLI 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*

Melinda Loberg