

Celebrating the Second Annual Walter Cronkite Awards

On Sunday, July 17, the Stone Soup Leadership Institute held the 2nd Annual Walter Cronkite Awards at the Old Whaling Church in Edgartown. With Master of Ceremonies Ed Jerome, the Vineyard's legends first spoke of this great man and his love of the Island.

Ray Ellis shared stories about their collaboration of fine art books that celebrate America's coastlines, including "Martha's Vineyard: An Affectionate Memoir." Ted Morgan spoke of sailing with him and sharing stories about World War II. "Walter would have been so proud of these award winners who are addressing issues that mattered to him—children's rights and especially the Institute's mission of training young people to build a better world," said Rose Styron.



Kathy Cronkite, daughter of Walter Cronkite, presented the Walter Cronkite Awards. "One thing Dad was passionate about was the need to educate young people to be global citizens," she said. "He was a passionate patriot and believer in our constitutional democracy. He knew that a democracy cannot work without an educated people. He loved this Island and knew that the problems here were a microcosm of problems facing the world community."

Cronkite Award-winner Len Morris, Galen Films won for his "integrity, courage, commitment, leadership and vision, using the power of the media to awaken the world to the causes and best practice solutions to child labor, children on the streets and chronic poverty." In response, Morris said, "Today, more than any time in my memory as a journalist, we need to revisit the spirit and values of Walter Cronkite's brand of journalism." He encouraged people to support Media Voices for Children, the global community for children's rights.

Youth Award winner Meagan McDonough, a Martha's Vineyard Charter School senior, aspires to become an educational media director. "Walter Cronkite made people feel that they were part of something. He was part of a generation of journalists who strived for the truth. He believed in being part of a team. He believed in building a better world. Young people want to be someone and do something. We just need a little help. Being a member of the Martha's Vineyard Youth Leadership Initiative gave me an opportunity to capture young people's dreams and to have adults listen."

Cronkite read the citation received from Senator Kerry to both award winners. "I am proud to congratulate Meagan McDonough for her outstanding and unwavering dedication to the young people of her community. Through her selfless efforts with the Martha's Vineyard Youth Leadership Initiative, she is able to encourage other young people in her community to raise their voices for what they believe," the citation said.

Josue Cruz shared how winning the 2010 Award helped this 23 year old realize his goals of being accepted to the most prestigious law school in Puerto Rico and create the first green initiative with school gardens for more than 100 Puerto Rico public schools. This year Josue also served as MVYLI's 2011 Youth Summit Director.

Emma HallBilsback presented MVYLI's Sustainable Vineyard Map. "The map shows how the Vineyard can be a showcase for island living and the future of the world." In September, MVYLI will present the map to the Town of Tisbury, recently voted to be the first green community on Martha's Vineyard. Then in November MVYLI will present the map at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Conference in Hawaii.

Trip Barnes closed by encouraging the young people to be the best they can be— be it a truck driver, a plumber, a carpenter or a doctor, lawyer or engineer. He then invited them all on stage to take a bow to a standing ovation.

"The Award winners and MVYLI speakers were phenomenal," said Marsha Reeves-Jews on behalf of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute. "Their poise, courage, commitment to a better world and bettering themselves was truly evident. Having personally witnessed their growth and development over the years underscores the power of the Institute's educational curriculum as truly transformational and with their eyes on the future, we will all be in a better place."