

I am honored to be here this morning, gathered with our community for the 56<sup>th</sup> time to celebrate the life, the work, and the words and actions of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

We lift up his legacy today as his enduring, righteous dream of equality and equity continues to inspire, in his words, "in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment."

With City Council President Marc Laredo and members of the City Council, School Committee Chair Chris Brezski and members of the School Committee, and Superintendent Anna Nolin, I extend my gratitude to Tony Logalbo, Karen Manning and everyone at the Harmony Foundation who put together today's event.

This year's theme – Everybody Can Serve – embodies Dr. King's values, and builds on his profound idea that, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, "What are you doing for others?"

Those words are directly linked to a speech that Barack Obama gave on April 21, 2009, early in his Presidency, when he signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. Named after our esteemed United States Senator, it is still the most sweeping expansion of national service in generations.

Here is what President Obama said:

*"You don't need to be a community organizer, or a Senator, or a Kennedy, or even a President to bring change to people's lives.*

*When Ted Kennedy makes this point, he also tells a story as elegantly simple as it is profound.*

*An old man walking along a beach at dawn saw a young man pick up a starfish and throwing them out to sea.*

*"Why are you doing that?" the old man inquired.*

*The young man explained that the starfish had been stranded on the beach by a receding tide and would soon die in the daytime sun.*

*"But the beach goes on for miles," the old man said. "And there are so many. How can your effort make any difference?"*

*The young man looked at the starfish in his hand, and without hesitating, threw it to safety in the sea. He looked up at the old man, smiled, and said: "It will make a difference to that one."*

*To Ted, that's more than just a story.*

*For even in the midst of his epic fights on the floor of the Senate to enact sweeping change, he's made a quiet trek to a school not far from the Capitol, week after week, year after year, without cameras or fanfare, to sit down and read with one solitary child.*

The President went on:

*We need your service right now, at this moment in history. I'm not going to tell you what your role should be; that's for you to discover.*

*But I'm asking you to stand up and play your part.*

*I'm asking you to help change history's course, put your shoulder up against the wheel.*

*And if you do, I promise you, your life will be richer, our country will be stronger, and someday, years from now, you may remember it as the moment when your own story and the American story converged, when they came together, and we met the challenges of our new century."*

As I look around this auditorium, as I think of the people in our villages across our City, I know so many Newtonians who are putting their shoulders to the wheel ... so many who are meeting the challenges of our times.

Here with us today are **India Arnold and Newton Community Development, Ellie Axe of Story Starters, Kate Carpenter Bernier and the Newton Youth Success Collaborative, Cindy Greene and FORJ,**

the Newton Rotary Club, The Village Bank along with Hospitality Homes, Cradles to Crayons, Welcome Home -- serving all our community every day.

Let me close by sharing one other quote from Dr. King:

"An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."

Thank you to everyone who takes the time to lend a hand, to save a starfish, and to give their time, talent or treasure to **serve** the broader concerns of all humanity.

Thank you.