

The Education Savior

If the old adage is true that to understand someone you have to walk a mile in their shoes, then Ted Hoskinson must have blisters on his feet.

The Washington, DC native came to South Florida 23 years ago with a mission. Part of that mission was to enjoy the Florida lifestyle, the other was to someday make a difference in the lives of underprivileged children and families.

Hoskinson knows a lot about the plight of teachers – and students. He taught 4th grade at the St. Albans School in Washington (where he went to school). Not only did he teach at one of the most prestigious prep schools in the country – but he also ran summer programs for them that exceeded everyone’s expectations.

To put it succinctly, Hoskinson is a winner. He knows how to start and promote a business and rarely passes by an opportunity to conquer a new challenge. As a matter of fact, it is challenges that make this platform tennis champ exhilarated.

So, it is with much fanfare and dedication that Hoskinson added to – and elaborated on – the Snickers Program started by Chuck Halberg and Joe Peccia (principal of Pine Grove Elementary School).

Though Hoskinson had a long-term plan to invest in the future of our children, it got accelerated by misfortune.

“When my wife Anne passed away, I wanted to honor her by helping students and teachers with a program we talked about called Roots and Wings. It honors teachers who go above and beyond the norm in the classroom. Three teachers were picked at each school (seven were picked in Delray when we started in 2016),” said Hoskinson, who owned a successful balloon business and a chain of gift shops in the Washington area.

Roots and Wings, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, took the Snickers Program and magnified its scope. You could say it was elevated by the wings of its founders.

The first year they gave out a gift bag (to 189 teachers) with two \$50 bills, one to pay for a celebratory meal and the other to purchase school supplies. The second and third year they added gift cards and presents from area merchants.

The teachers – who receive this honor and fanfare – are picked by the principal and their peers. “We go into the classroom and say we are here to honor the teacher because of their dedication to students. We also tell them why they are getting the “Above and Beyond” Award (under the Roots and Wings umbrella).”

The Above and Beyond Awards have been a win-win for everyone. “Ted has worked tirelessly to expand the Above and Beyond Awards. They have such a positive effect on the teachers – it reinforces support from the community. Teachers need love and support, they work hard and it’s a tough industry,” said Peccia, who is now Principal of Eagles Landing Middle School.

You bet they do.

“There are no words to describe and express my appreciation to Roots and Wings. It is a privilege for me to be honored by you. This recognition challenges and motivates me to continue serving my

school and my students with unconditional positive regard each day,” said Edner Pierrevil of Pine Grove Elementary School.

The Above and Beyond program has expanded to include six Boynton Beach schools and three Boca Raton Title 1 schools. This year’s awards will be given out twice to 18 schools.

Hoskinson is not only adamant that teachers need support and recognition from the community, but he is positive that many 3rd graders (especially in Title 1 schools) need help learning to read. To ensure this lofty goal Hoskinson created “Project UpLift” under the saintly Roots and Wings umbrella.

“It is critical that a child be able to read by the end of the third grade. If not, they will progress to each grade level, but they won’t know how to read. That is a recipe for disaster with some students dropping out of school.”

Project UpLift is an afterschool program that pays teachers to tutor 2nd and 3rd grade students in reading. The program started at Pine Grove Elementary and was added to Orchard View Elementary. “It’s important that third graders pass the state mandated FSA reading test so they can enter the fourth grade.”

It seems Hoskinson’s tremendous belief in the importance of this program has motivated others. They received a \$10,000 grant challenge from the Virginia and Harvey Kimmel Family Fund, as well as donations from foundations and individuals. The program will be added at Banyan Creek and Plumosa this year.

Hoskinson gets intrinsic joy from motivating these children. “I tell them if they show up the first six weeks, they will get a free T-shirt that says ‘Perfect.’ We also roll out the red carpet and present them with gold, silver and bronze achievement awards. It astounded me how many children had never seen the ocean when we took them on a Gumbo Limbo outing.”

Hoskinson also transforms himself into Mr. Candy Man and Mr. Pizza Man to reward the kids for participating in the program. He refers to it as sweet and subtle bribery (of great educational benefit).

Hoskinson also supports the Arts Garage, is co-founder of Impact 100 Men, a member of the Delray Beach Initiative and the Elks Club.

But it is his work with children and teachers that has garnered him a special place in everyone’s heart. “Ted is a special gem of a human being to the teachers and children in our schools. His passion for awarding teachers, and providing resources for students who need assistance, has been a huge benefit for all these teachers and students. His Roots and Wings program should be duplicated around the country – it’s that important,” said Chuck Halberg, President of Stuart & Shelby.

Hoskinson relentlessly preaches that to succeed one has to show up.

This self-made giant does just that!

ROOTS AND WINGS - 561-265-1381 www.rootsandwingsinc.org