

## The Man With the Midas Touch for Educating Children

To know Ted Hoskinson is to know that he is steeped in the golden glow of goodness.

His life is a conglomeration of giving and receiving that saints (or philosophers) might think is in perfect sync with God's master plan.

Hoskinson taught 4th grade at the St. Albans School in Washington (where he went to school). He also ran summer programs.

After 17 years at this prestigious private school Hoskinson switched gears and became a successful businessman. Though he sold balloons and gift items he did not inflate like the party items he sold.

Instead this educational servant kept his humble roots exactly where they belong – slightly above ground yet within watering distance of existence.

When his wife Anne passed away suddenly in 2016 Hoskinson went back to their philanthropic master plan – to create an educational foundation to help children and families in need.

They called it Roots and Wings. But after Anne's untimely death Hoskinson had to undertake this task solo from the idea stage to fruition.

He has done just that.

"We started with the Above and Beyond Awards. We gave out awards to exemplary teachers in six Delray Beach public elementary schools. They got a bag with \$100 in cash and gift cards."

That was seven years ago. Today the awards are given out in 15 elementary schools in Delray, Boca Raton and Boynton Beach. The gift bag has also grown to include \$200 in cash and an assortment of coveted gift cards.

Teachers (and now support staff) are nominated by their peers and given the accolades (and cheers) that teachers so rarely get in the public sector.

The second program within the Roots and Wings umbrella is Project UpLift. This afterschool program pays teachers to tutor students in reading. It started at Pine Grove Elementary with 30 third graders.

But, like his previous ventures, Hoskinson's plan took flight with this important educational ideal.

"We are now teaching reading to 765 elementary school students in 10 different schools. We expanded the program to include 1st grade students with a generous grant."

During Covid principals began asking Hoskinson to help 4th and 5th graders in need of literacy proficiency. So that is exactly what he did.

If you want to know why Hoskinson is so bullish on teaching reading to young people, he'll tell you. "If you don't pass the third-grade reading test there's a 74% chance a child won't graduate from high school. If they drop out of school, what does it mean for our children and our society?"

Not being able to read in grade school is akin to a natural disaster says Hoskinson. But, the avid tennis player and international traveller, is not one to blivate, instead he takes action.

He gets grants from foundations and businesses to fund Roots and Wings in elementary schools. Like an expectant father Hoskinson is thrilled when his kids are as enamored with reading as he is.

Leaders in the community, philanthropists and educators are overjoyed with this selfless educational act that has tremendous positive implications for underserved children.

"It's been amazing to see the impact Roots and Wings has on the community. When you walk into the classroom and the kids light up with enthusiasm, and the teachers get overjoyed with gratitude, it's something to see. The recognition given to teachers and generational impact of teaching kids to read is amazing. The Delray, Boynton and Boca Raton communities are stronger from the impact of Roots and Wings," said Daniel Huck of MPR Development.

Huck is in the chorus line of other admirers (and supporters) of these ever burgeoning educational programs.

To undertake this venture Hoskinson is the goodwill ambassador soliciting funds from friends, foundations, and charities. He doesn't bombard people, yet takes every opportunity to let others know about his programs.

When someone asked if \$2,500 was a good enough donation, Hoskinson thought a moment and said, "That's really not as meaningful as it could be. 'Do you think you could sponsor a class - that's \$5000.' He thought about it for a minute and said, 'Sure.' Because of that we were able to sponsor another class."

It's amazing to see how many local businesses and professionals support Hoskinson and his young reading proteges. There may be a lot of charities vying for dollars, but Hoskinson has a gift for the soft



sell. His confidence, passion and ability to inspire others keeps the donations rolling in.

You can see his team on Facebook holding checks from foundations such as the Boca West Children's Foundation, Extraordinary Charities, Children's Services Council, Impact 100 PBC, Impact 100 Men, Men Giving Back, the Boca Rio Foundation, and many others.

A grant from Boca West Children's Foundation made it possible for Roots and Wings to give out new bicycles and helmets to students who excel in the program in less than a year. The awards are called "Stretch Goals."

"Last year we awarded 137 bikes and helmets to children who accomplished the whole years' worth of growth in half a year. This year a third of our children have done the same thing, so we're giving away over 200 bikes and helmets."

They also inspire children with free T-shirts that say "Perfect" (for perfect attendance). And they hand out gold, silver and bronze certificates for literacy gains.

This type of positive reinforcement is what psychologists have touted as the magic bullet for success for years. But not many schools have the initiative or funding to make these educational goals come true for inner city kids.

But now they do.

Hoskinson (and his team) are using a big dose of positive reinforcement and self-esteem building as the glue to foster great minds.

Richard Zenker, Chairman of the Boca West Children's Foundation, has seen this magic come to fruition. "Roots and Wings is one of the Boca West Children's Foundation and Children's Foundation of Palm Beach County's most impactful charity partners. Ted and his team take a no-nonsense approach to getting children to read at or above grade level by the time they leave 3rd grade. The proud smiles on the faces of the children that reach their reading milestones (and receive a new bike and helmet we provide) are priceless."

Hoskinson was first inspired when he saw Chuck Halberg and Stephen Greene giving out awards at Pine Grove Elementary years ago. "I told them I'd like to take that idea and go to other Delray elementary schools."

Hoskinson is a man of his word. He is also humble about his existence and its meaning. "When you seek happiness for yourself it will always elude you. When you seek happiness for others you will find it yourself."

Hoskinson is indeed a happy man on a mission. He knows he is blessed and appreciates his meaningful friendships and charmed life, but little gets in his way of paying it forward.

He was a co-founder of Impact 100 Men and donates to many local charities. When not in town to support children's literacy, Hoskinson can be found traversing the globe (with Aidalyn) and sharing photos of his adventures on Facebook.

Those around him are impressed with the magnitude and magnificence of Hoskinson's mission.

"Roots and Wings plays a valuable role in students' long-term academic success, particularly after the pandemic when many children lost ground in their reading skills. Ted and his team have stayed laser focused on their mission to help children read," said Janet Meeks.

To Danielle Garcia, Principal of Orchard View Elementary School, Hoskinson is nothing short of amazing. "He's definitely helping us reach more than one student at a time EVERY day!!"

Daniel Hartwell of United We Rock thinks he is a one-of-a-kind Angel. Nancy Chanin is impressed with his dedication and passion. And Roots and Wings Board member Joycelyn Patrick said his programs make a big difference in our society. "Literacy is life," she added.

Hoskinson knows that. It is why he doesn't take a salary and carries out this mission from the kindness of his heart to honor his late wife - and to make the world a better place."

We salute you Ted.