

# INDULGE

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## Philippe Houdard

The man who famously brought education to Colombian child soldiers and kids in Brazilian favelas now brings the good fight home—to Miami.



*the movers*

### *Did you know?*

- One in four children in America grow up without learning how to read.
- Nearly 60 percent who cannot read proficiently by the end of fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare.
- The Developing Minds Foundation is most in need of monetary donations and volunteers. Visit [developingmindsfoundation.org](http://developingmindsfoundation.org) to get involved in bringing literacy and education to the Miami children who need it most.

Philippe Houdard has always understood the importance of service. As a child in the northern French country town of Villeselve, he grew up hearing stories of his great grandfather, who'd fought in World War I; of his paternal grandfather, a prisoner of war in World War II; and of his father, who served in the French Algerian War. So it's no surprise that in 2006 Houdard decided to take a step back from his corporate career—he's the co-founder of Pipeline Brickell, Miami's cutting-edge, successful shared workspace concept—to dedicate time to his own brand of service: he created the Developing Minds Foundation to help educate children living in some of the world's most troubled regions.

The Miami-based foundation's first efforts—which included working with 40,000 former Colombian child soldiers in Medellín, and with kids living in the notorious favelas of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil—received international praise not only for improving lives but also for its unique approach. "We apply our for-profit business discipline and experience as venture capitalists to the charitable world," Houdard said. "And we look for organizations already doing good work that's measurable, meaning that we can actually quantify the difference they're making. Then, we plug into them by providing funding as well as our private-sector connections and expertise. The idea is that, through what we bring to the table, we can really have an impact."

Now, Houdard is setting his sight closer to home. This fall his foundation teams up with two Miami children's organizations—Little Havana's Saint John Bosco School and The Advisory Committee of Liberty City Youth—to help each expand the work they're already doing with local kids.

#### **Why Miami now?**

I live in South Beach, and I work on Brickell. If you were to just stay in these neighborhoods, with their opulence and good living, you'd think everything in the world is fine. But all you have to do is drive five minutes

some very significant problems. I wanted to bring the fight here right into my own backyard.

**What exactly will you be doing?**

In Little Havana, our focus will be on literacy, specifically through summer and after-school programs. It's an immigrant community, and the bottom line is it's hard being an immigrant. If you have children, it can be especially difficult. What we do is help provide the children with what they really need, which is a sound and fundamental education. It's the key to bettering their lives. When that happens, the whole community is better off. In Liberty City, we'll be helping kids who've run into problems with the law but who've been given a second chance by a judge. Participating in the project is that second chance. We'll be focusing on their personal development plus there's an

entrepreneurial component. For example, one of the things the kids already have done is start a food truck. Among other things, we'll be mentoring them so they can become more successful and develop their skills.

**How has your business approach to the nonprofit sector helped the foundation?**

Having good intentions is important, but unfortunately it's not enough. When I raise money for the foundation, it comes from corporations but also from personal friends and individuals. When they contribute, they expect to see results and I want to make sure we deliver. Also, just like I do in investment spend time doing research, asking

questions, evaluating an organization from different angles—all to make sure we find the right programs in which we'll have the greatest likelihood of success.

**One reason you were excited about bringing your work to Miami was that it would provide local volunteering opportunities.**

Yes, in the past people would ask me how they could personally get involved with the work we were doing. But I couldn't exactly send them to the jungles of Colombia or to the favelas in Rio. Now, I can absolutely tell them, we need you in Liberty City or Little Havana.

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