

## UNLEASHING HUMAN POTENTIAL

MIAMI BEACH-BASED DEVELOPING MINDS FOUNDATION JOINS THE GROWING TREND OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURING VENTURES

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When Philippe Houdard set out to help educate the poor of a Brazilian urban slum, he came face to face with children who carry Uzi submachine guns and work for drug dealers. They also tackle him with hugs.

The 37-year-old Miami Beach resident started the nonprofit Developing Minds Foundation seven months ago to start a school with computers for these children. He took a break from his career as a technology company executive and traveled to Brazil to focus on the project.

After living in the area for a month, Houdard was inspired to do more. As president of the foundation, he is launching other projects in Brazil and Colombia, which include another technology-focused school, literacy programs and sports schools.

He works with other humanitarian and philanthropic organizations based in Brazil and Colombia to run the programs while he is in South Florida raising money. After tapping into his contacts from his business networks, he has raised more than \$50,000 to date.

### RISKY BUSINESS

"I have never really been able to fully articulate exactly what it is that inspired me," Houdard said. The people who help him set up these programs are "amazing" to him, because of the risk they take working in dangerous areas to help make a positive difference, he said.

That, combined with the opportunities he had in his education, compelled him to "try to make this thing a little broader, give it a little more depth."

His foundation opened its first school on Feb. 19 in Rio de Janeiro's urban slum, the Rocinha favela. It's set up to teach 100 impoverished children how to use computers and technology. The cost of construction, teachers' salaries, computers and classroom equipment came to \$15,000.

Companies and executives

in the technology industry, such as Aspect Software and Alex Tellez, a former chief executive of Cell-IT Technologies, were quick to donate to the computer education programs, he said, and South Florida is "a natural fit for helping out Latin America."

But donations come from all over, including the South Florida construction firm Amicon Development Group.

"People here have this real deep and profound desire to help out these people," he said.

### CORPORATE WORK

The executive-turned-social entrepreneur spent 10 years working in executive marketing positions for several technology companies in Miami, including Lucent Technologies and Concerto Software. He had enough money saved up to quit in 2006 and start the foundation. He said he chooses not to take a salary and doesn't plan to anytime soon.

"Even if I took a modest salary, one of these projects wouldn't get funded," Houdard said.

A social entrepreneur by definition doesn't have to be wealthy enough to give up a salary, but they do "sacrifice financial benefits," said Sandy Herz, vice president of marketing and communications for The Skoll Foundation, a nonprofit organization that supports social ventures.

### NEW TREND

The number of social entrepre-neuring ventures are increasing rapidly, Herz said, and part of that is due to an increased awareness of global issues.

"There are certain hot spots for it in the world, and Brazil is one of them," she said.

According to the University



CARL JUSTE/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

**COMPASSIONATE CAPITALIST:** Philippe Houdard is the president of the Miami Beach-based Developing Minds Foundation, which has opened a school in a Rio de Janeiro slum to teach children how to use computers.



COURTESY OF PHILIPPE HOUDARD

**A NEW CHAPTER:** A Colombian family spends time together reading books provided by the nonprofit social foundation Developing Minds.

Network for Social Entrepreneurship, more than 80 major schools are teaching social entrepreneurship around the world to meet the growing demand from students.

The University of Florida began a social entrepreneurship program about three years ago, but the popularity of the subject grew in higher education in 2006 when major business schools such as Harvard University and NYU received grants for social entrepreneurship programs.

"It was like the field of social entrepreneurship was on fire, growing exponentially,

courses sprouting up all over," said Kristin E. Joos, coordinator of UF's Innovative Social Impact Initiative at the Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation.

### FOCUSING ON RESULTS

Houdard is part of the growing trend. His business model reflects the best practices of a private venture capital firm. But instead of trying to make the most money, he puts his money in projects that get the best return on unleashing human potential.

One of those projects includes a judo and jujitsu



COURTESY OF PHILIPPE HOUDARD

**SAFE HAVEN:** A child works on a PC at a school funded by the Developing Minds in Rio de Janeiro.

### FIND OUT MORE

To learn more about the Developing Minds Foundation, visit [developingmindsfoundation.org](http://developingmindsfoundation.org).

school in the Rio de Janeiro slum Dona Marta. The project is almost complete and has 230 students and a number of instructors, including Federico Flexa who represented Brazil in the Olympics in 1984, 1988 and 1996.

The children "are learning for the first time that they can actually control their own destiny," Houdard said.

He plans to eventually start another company, and Developing Minds will be its charitable arm.

"I'm in this for the long haul," he said.