

MONDAY PROFILE | DOUG LOCKWOOD

Lawyer Works to Revamp Winter Haven Schools

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WINTER HAVEN | It doesn't matter what school they go to, most good students are going to be top performing students wherever they go, says Winter Haven lawyer Doug Lockwood.

That was Lockwood, a studious kid— raised by his single mother who preached self-reliance. He went to Winter Haven High School and became a successful civil litigation lawyer.

But failing grades for Winter Haven High and a 2010 documentary that profiled students in the public education system hoping to win a lottery into charter schools spurred Lockwood to rethink the high school that got him into Duke University.

Lockwood, 58, along with others at the Greater Winter Haven Chamber of Commerce, created the Winter Haven Public Education Partnership in 2011.

Through a myriad of initiatives and subcommittees, the new non-profit group is trying to revamp Winter Haven-area schools to create better opportunities for the city's students, especially the under-performing students who need the most help, Lockwood said.

"I really think we need to not just focus on the best students, but really, the students



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Doug Lockwood, the chairman of the board for Public Education Partnership of Winter Haven Inc., is also a lawyer with the firm Peterson & Myers, P.A. in Lakeland.

who need the most help ... getting them engaged in school, really trying to work hand-in-hand with those students and their families," Lockwood said.

PERFORMING STUDENT

Douglas Arthur Lockwood III was born to Douglas Arthur Lockwood II and Rosemary Lockwood in Winter Haven in 1953. She was an elementary schoolteacher, he was a fighter pilot in Korea turned gypsum salesman after the war.

They fell in love while Lockwood's father was stationed in Bartow, but divorced when Lockwood was only 5 years old.

"He was an extraordinarily good looking guy, graduated from Harvard ... he played in the Harvard band, and he was just an extraordinary womanizer," Lockwood said. "When you've been through a war or whatever, you know, it's just lots of partying when you get back."

"Those were the days when the husband messed up, the judges said you couldn't even see your kids," Lockwood said with a laugh.

Lockwood was raised by his late mother and grandmother in a large duplex on Lake Martha in Winter Haven. He was always a good student and played tennis for Winter Haven High School.

Rosemary Lockwood always made Lockwood rely on himself first and foremost.

Once, Lockwood complained of being bored on a summer day while she hand-sewed dresses for the next school year. She told him "only boring people get bored," so he went outside and played.

"I was raised in a household where nothing really mattered much but character," Lockwood said. "Nothing really much mattered other than working hard, and self-reliance was just expected."

When Lockwood was a junior at Winter Haven High, he walked into his mother's room and said: "Well, you know Mom, I need to be thinking about going to college."

She turned to him and said, "Well, son, the last time I checked, you were the one

going to college. You need to do something about it."

So Lockwood got on his bike and rode up to the old Winter Haven Mall — where Lowe's is now — and picked up a 6-inch-thick book on colleges in the United States.

"She was big on self-reliance," Lockwood said. "She was like, well this is your life, you need to get it on if you're going to get it on, son.

"It was just very different because now all we do as a parent is just pester our kids and do the right thing and work hard and preach to 'em. My mother just made her point very directly."

Lockwood didn't give her credit for it then, but it created the person who would earn a degree from Duke, a law degree from Stetson and pass the Florida Bar exam on his first try.

"I used to think how you're raised really didn't much matter," Lockwood said. "But I've determined now that I am 58, and seen a lot in my lifetime as a lawyer and otherwise, that it does make a difference."

POOR PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Lockwood was motivated to start doing something about poor grades for Winter Haven-area schools, especially Winter Haven High School, which had received a D in the state grading system, when he saw the documentary "Waiting for Superman" with his wife and a friend who teaches at Winter Haven High.

The documentary follows students through the public schools system while they hope to get into charter schools through a lottery system.

"We were just appalled at all of the problems going on in the school system," said Sharon Lockwood.

"(The teacher) said, 'Doug, you should do something about it.

"So he kind of started talking to people and started doing something about it."

One of those people was Greater Winter Haven Chamber of Commerce President Bob

Gernert, during lunch in December 2010.

"There was concern that the fact that the high school was a D school and we discussed that," Gernert said. "We kind of brainstormed how you might go about helping."

Then they started talking to other community leaders, including Polk State President Dr. Eileen Holden and then-Winter Haven Mayor Jeff Potter.

That spawned The Winter Haven Chamber of Commerce's Educational Outcomes Steering Committee, which spent five months compiling and preparing a 72-page report, released in May, that identified strengths and weaknesses in Winter Haven-area schools.

That transitioned into the Winter Haven Public Education Partnership, which includes examining programs such as coordinating communitywide mentoring programs, implementing pre-academy programs at Denison and Westwood middle schools, expanding after-school and summer programs, increasing reading in elementary schools, rebranding Winter Haven High as a technology-based school, expanding Lake Region High's business programs, and doing more to include students in the community.

"We're really trying to improve the schools using all of the resources in the community," Lockwood said.

The group is in its beginning phases, Lockwood and the organization's other directors are hoping a special chamber education breakfast on March 21 will expand the number of people involved.

"If we, as a community, really want extraordinarily good schools in Winter Haven, we have the tools to make it happen," Lockwood said. "Based on what I've learned, I know we can do it. We have the resources to do it."