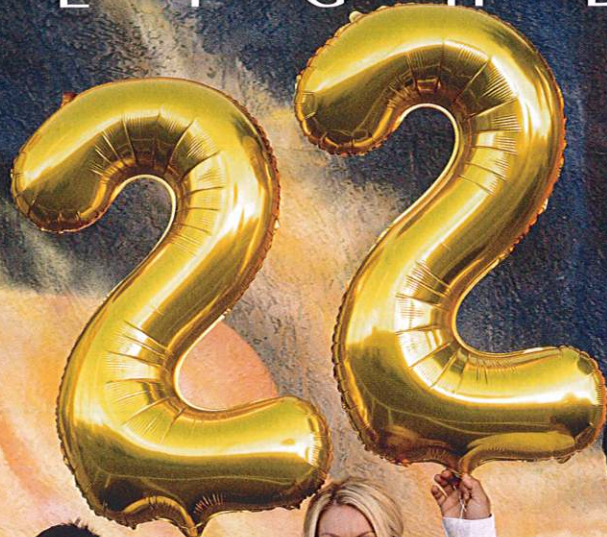


JANUARY 2022

Melbourne Beach

N E I G H B O R S



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A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION YOU'LL WANT TO KEEP



By Keena Bandini Schwinn

IF YOU'RE tired of those dieting and exercise New Year's resolutions, volunteering as a mentor for Take Stock in Children could be the path to a more purposeful you. The college scholarship program helps motivated, low-income middle and high school students with mentorship. As of now, they are in need of more mentor volunteers.

Look no further than Harriet Hankerson and Khalasia Haynes for a little extra motivation. As a former education advocate, Harriet became Khalasia's mentor when she was in middle school, and the relationship has blossomed into a success story. Today, the Rockledge High School junior is on track to become the first person in her family to earn a four-year college degree. After that, she hopes to pursue a Ph.D. It hasn't been an easy road, but Harriet has helped her steer straight. "It's like having a second parent. It's kind of like I'm driving and swerving off the road, and she's like 'get back on the road' and I say okay, I'm back on", says Khalasia of Harriet.

At the beginning of their relationship, the challenges for Khalasia were time management and attitude. "My goal was to get her to stop saying 'I really don't care.' That was the number one thing. If she stopped, I was being successful. She stopped last year", recalls Harriet. Adds Khalasia, "She showed me that everything is a domino effect. The little things you claim you don't care about, they do matter and add up". In the beginning, Harriet would play games with Khalasia to get her to open up, "discussion games, how do you feel about this, this is how I feel, that was very key when I first started. She learned about me, and I learned about her". This mentor/mentee relationship has become full of trust, comfort, and setting goals. Khalasia has all A's in challenging classes like physics, Latin, government, Cambridge AICE English, and one B in Spanish four.

She juggles her studying with working at Walmart and competing on the school wrestling team. Now she has her eye on college. Harriet is helping her identify the colleges that offer programs that interest her, and together they are finding scholarship opportunities. By participating in Take Stock in Children, Khalasia's first two years of college will be paid for by the program. Khalasia believes she would not be on this successful path without Take Stock in Children. "If not for this program, I wouldn't be so confident to go to college. All the resources they provided for me kept me from thinking about dropping out. You can't depend on yourself for everything. It's very comforting for me to have Harriet. It pushes me in the right direction". Harriet offers this advice for anyone wanting to mentor: "It's impactful both ways. I enjoy seeing her blossom, grow and take charge and make changes when necessary. To listen to her talk, sometimes it just blows me away"!

If you are interested in volunteering as a mentor for the Florida nonprofit, you can go to their website www.takestockinchildren.org or call 321-633-1000 ext. 11415



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