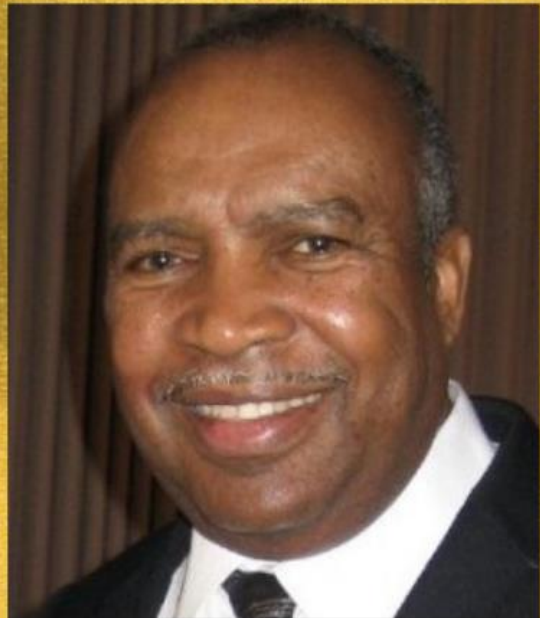
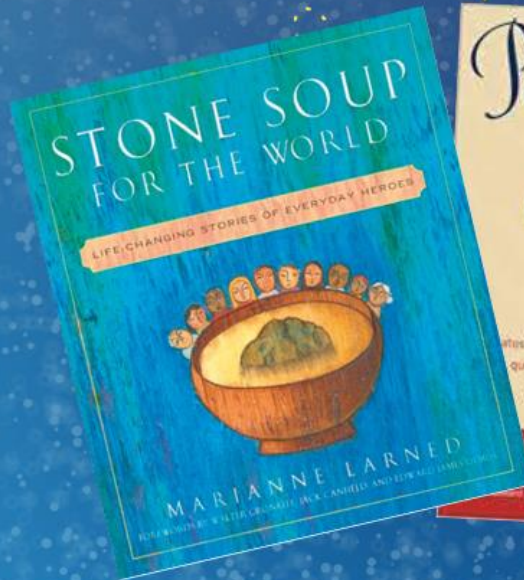


Focus: HOPE

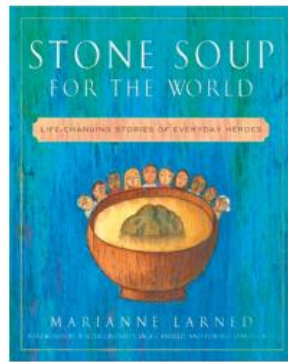


Hulas King
Loaned Executive, Focus:HOPE
SIEMENS (formerly EDS)



Story of the Week!

@StoneSoupLeader



FOCUS: HOPE
Told by Jim Young

Maia Cherry, a twenty-five-year-old African-American student, is a ray of hope in Detroit. But when she first came into this world, there wasn't much hope there. Five years earlier, race riots had nearly torn the city apart.

Born to a single mom, Maia is the youngest of five children. She was a bright student, loved sports, and got good grades in school—most of the time. But when she didn't get the attention she needed from her busy mom, she had lots of problems. "I didn't have any motivation, so I wasn't consistent," she says. "I wasn't happy. Sometimes I was even suicidal." Fortunately, Maia found a way through the darkness. "I knew there had to be more to life," she says. "So I started reading the Bible, going to church, and letting God direct my steps." She's glad her steps led her to Focus: HOPE.

Focus: HOPE was born on the road from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. In 1964, Father Bill Cunningham had traveled south from Detroit in response to Dr. Martin Luther King's call for help and joined him on that historic march. Three years later, in the summer of 1967, Father Cunningham saw his own hometown destroyed by race riots, and drawing on the hope instilled in him by Dr. King, he devoted himself to building racial harmony in Detroit.

Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes

One of his parishioners, Eleanor Josaitis, a housewife raising five children, was so moved by his passionate commitment to overcoming racism, poverty, and injustice that she uprooted herself from her comfortable life in the suburbs and planted her family back down in Detroit's volatile inner city. Father Cunningham quit his teaching job. They started simply, feeding people in a church basement. "We felt we had a moral responsibility to feed the children and the elderly," Father Cunningham said. People have to be properly nourished before they can be productive members of society. Since then they've been training underprivileged young people for good jobs.

Father Cunningham invites everyone he meets to join him in this work, and thousands have. One of them was Hulas King. He came for a visit and stayed for a year. The director of Industrial Partnership programs for EDS Unigraphics Division, Hulas was a "loaned executive" to Focus: HOPE. The loaned-executive program is just one of the ways that EDS helps communities. "One of my dreams for EDS goes way beyond financial success and service excellence," says chairman Dick Brown. "I want us to be the most-admired company—to have a heart and soul and give back something to the communities we work in." A lifelong volunteer, he encourages all 130,000 employees to participate in EDS's Global Volunteer Day—living out the company's philosophy that healthy communities and healthy business go hand-in-hand.

"EDS is known as a systems integrator. We're helping to integrate urban minority youth into mainstream society through technical training," says Hulas. "Our corporate partnership with Focus: HOPE helps us achieve this goal." At Focus: HOPE, students use the most advanced equipment, get real work experience, and learn from the best teachers. Retired engineers from Detroit supervise them, helping them to become well-rounded manufacturing engineers and the best machinists in the world. "Since the technology center's founding in 1981, more than five thousand young people have completed their programs, moving out of poverty and forward in their lives. For kids once on welfare and walking the streets, that's an incredible future," says Hulas.

During Hulas's year at Focus: HOPE, he spent lots of time with the students.

Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes

When Maia first saw him, she was surprised. “We deal with thousands of important people at Focus: HOPE, even presidents of companies. But they are usually white. Hulas is one of the top people—and he’s black. I was impressed!” she says.

Early on, Hulas reached out to Maia, and they developed a special mentor relationship. “He would ask me how was I doing, how my grades were, and give me some advice. He told me, ‘Stay focused and do your job, be on time and be responsible. Be a 110 percent kind of person,’” she says. “He told me that as a young black woman, I might face racism and sexism, but I should hold my head high and never lower my standards.” Hulas also helped Maia gain a realistic perspective about life. “Don’t look for somebody to shake your hand after you do something,” he’d say. “Your rewards will come. Just do your best, keep on moving—and enjoy your life.” What Maia appreciated most was knowing Hulas was there for her. “If you need anything, anything at all, let me know,” he told her.

Hulas certainly knows the importance of helping the next guy—or gal. “I grew up in East St. Louis, one of the most deprived cities in America. We all shared the same poverty, so we stuck together. When a kid got out of line, the whole community stepped in to discipline him,” Hulas says. “To be able to help students and then have the pleasure of watching them assume positions of responsibility is really wonderful,” he adds. “When you nurture them to be on their own, they can then reach back and help someone else.” This continuity is part of what makes the mentoring such rewarding work.

Maia has big plans for how she wants to give back to other young people in Detroit. Having finished her undergraduate studies, she is working on her doctorate. After that, she plans to build her own business and work in the corporate world for a while. Eventually she plans to teach what she calls “The Three A’s”— Academics, Attendance, and Attitude. “I want high-school students to learn that engineering isn’t as hard as people make it seem,” she says.

‘I can’t do it.’ I want them to know they don’t have to be the cream of the crop to learn it.” Maia readily admits that she isn’t a math whiz. It just takes practice, she says. “If you have the desire, you can do it!”

Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes

Carrying on Father Cunningham's tradition, Maia invites others to come to Focus: HOPE. "If we all give back, we can make Detroit really great," she says. From Dr. King to Father Cunningham, from Hulas to Maia: a chain of people strong enough to make their hopes come true.

In thirty years, Focus: HOPE has grown into a charitable empire including a state-of-the-art technology center with an engineering-degree program and a manufacturing company, as well as a food-distribution center and a Montessori-based day-care facility.

Over the years, Father Cunningham and Eleanor Josaitis faced many challenges at Focus: HOPE. When things were difficult, they shared a ritual that gave them the courage to carry on. Quietly, without anyone noticing, they would pass a penny between them. The simple inscription on the penny—"In God We Trust"—and the exchange with each other helped them remember that they were never alone. Continuing her leadership at Focus: HOPE, Eleanor told a special story at Father Cunningham's funeral. She asked the gathered mourners to think of him when they saw a penny—so his spirit would live on forever. The next week, the U.S. Army, a long-time supporter of Focus: HOPE, delivered more than a million pennies to Focus: HOPE, donated by army families, for the millions of lives Father Cunningham had helped.

*Make a career of humanity . . .
and you will make a finer world to live in.
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Reach out and help someone get on the road to success. Companies that want to give young people the gift of technology and bring hope to their communities can visit www.focushope.edu.

Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes