



“When I came to Delray Beach in 2007 I didn’t know one person, but I quickly realized it had a strong and great community with a lot of pieces—on the economic ladder and racial spectrum. Those pieces can and will be connected because of the love affair we all have with our town.”

Mark Sauer

Chairman and Founder, Delray Students First

THEN: A business executive who earned his MBA at Columbia University, Mark Sauer led a successful career in international finance, serving as chief financial officer of 7 Up International. He then became vice president of finance for Anheuser-Busch’s entertainment division, which oversaw operations of the company’s theme parks. Moving up in the organization, Sauer was appointed chief operating officer of the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team in 1988, and in 1991 moved to Pittsburgh, where he served as president and CEO of the

Pirates. In 1996 he began a 10-year run as president and CEO of the St. Louis Blues hockey franchise. “When I write it all down, I still can’t believe it happened to me,” he says.

NOW: In 2012, after spending five years with Delray Beach’s Village Academy, first as a volunteer and later as a certified teacher, Sauer started Delray Students First, a nonprofit that provides rigorous tutoring to prepare at-risk students for the ACT/SAT college entrance exams. Begun with

just eight teenagers, Delray Students First now serves 25 students at Village Academy and 50 at Atlantic High School—along with about 30 Village Academy middle school students. With a success rate of around 90 percent, the program has sent 32 students to either a four-year college or to their high school graduations. “I had worked with underprivileged minority kids all of my career, but I was not prepared for how completely I fell in love with the students, teachers and school leaders within Delray’s minority community,” Sauer, 70, says.

AARON BRISTOL