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NEW YORK | JANUARY 17, 2012

## Love of Learning Lives on

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By MELANIE GRAYCE WEST

The focus of the Ruby Peck Foundation for Children's Education is to support learning through creative education. It's also a way for Todd Harrison to perpetuate his grandfather's "good name."

Mr. Harrison, 42 years old, is the founder and chief executive of New York-based Minyanville.com, a financial news and analysis website. He began the Ruby Peck Foundation shortly after his grandfather's death in 2001. "Of all the things I've done ... this is what I'm most proud of," he says of the foundation.



Todd Harrison

"He really was my best friend," says Mr. Harrison of his grandfather. "He was my father-figure growing up."

Mr. Harrison says his grandfather had a seventh-grade education and began working at an early age to support his family. Learning was critical to Mr. Peck and he took great pride in the educational accomplishments of his children and grandchildren, says Mr. Harrison.

Since its inception, the Ruby Peck Foundation has provided some \$1 million to various educational causes. This month, the foundation will make a gift of \$50,000 to Junior Achievement of New York to support an entrepreneurial education program.

Previous grants have gone to support New York's Children's Aid Society and music programs through the organization Little Kids Rock, among other groups. Mr. Harrison says that the foundation adopts a "broad lens" when it comes to making grants and has supported projects that have assisted in rebuilding a library in Missouri that was destroyed by tornadoes and libraries that were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

"We've been pretty good through the years at identifying pertinent and topical causes," he says.

The foundation raises money through individual and corporate donations and through its annual "Festivus" party, held in December. The event is part Wall Street get-together, holiday party and rock concert. This year's event included the auction of a Louis XIII Le Jeroboam crystal decanter of Cognac, which sold for \$23,000.

The party serves "to bring together good people in a room" to benefit charity, says Mr. Harrison. It's something that is important "now more than ever with the lens in which Wall Street is being measured," he says.

But Mr. Harrison also admits that his catalyst to begin the foundation is also, in part, a little selfish. As with most philanthropists, there's a joy that comes with philanthropy and in honoring his grandfather.

"When my grandfather passed away that was, for me, the opportunity to bring it all together and have a consistent channel to do this stuff," says Mr. Harrison. "I miss him. Every time I see the Ruby Peck Foundation in words it reminds me of him. It keeps him close to me. I get a little goose bumps whenever I talk about this."

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