

Fisher Island

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Island Spirit



LEXIE POTAMKIN

Making a difference on Fisher Island and beyond.

Author and activist Lexie Potamkin's effervescence is contagious. It's the kind of charisma that helped land the Sandpoint, Idaho, native her title as Miss World USA after college, publish a book of inspirational stories called *What Is Spirit* and—most recently—spearhead the build-out of the Fisher Island Day School, which offers residents' children a top-notch pre-kindergarten-to-5th grade educational program right here on the Island. After she and husband Robert had children—twin daughters Ayla and Alura, now 6, and son Alex, 3—they turned their attention toward schools. "Here on Fisher, we felt we had everything a child would need to have a happy childhood: tennis, golf, a beautiful playground and soccer field, swimming and nature. The only thing missing was a school." By fall of 2004, Lexie and a handful of Fisher Island families had manifested their vision into reality. Today, 10 teachers instruct 42 students in foreign language (including Chinese), music, art, English, computers and more.

Before she and her husband moved to Fisher Island eight years ago, Lexie ran her own Manhattan-based public relations and marketing company, Brockway Associates, which she later sold to global industry giant GolinHarris. Although she stayed on as the company's vice president for two years, she pursued a masters degree in applied psychology and delved deeper

into charitable causes. She ran Resources for Children's Health—a Philadelphia-based organization whose aim is to promote healthy pregnancies of at-risk mothers—and joined the International League of Human Rights, for which she now serves as a vice president. While fundraising for The League, she became intrigued with the notion of "spirit." By 1998 she had begun interviews with extraordinary people she'd met throughout her life—from Bob Hope and Jimmy Carter to Donald Trump and Gloria Steinem—and asked them to describe what the word 'spirit' meant to them. "To answer that, you need to move from your head to your heart," says Lexie, whose book was published by Hay House right before the millennium.

With Fisher Island Day School well into its second year, Lexie has launched her next do-good endeavor: an employee scholarship fund. She hopes to give a limited number of Fisher Islands' nearly 700 employees the chance to send their children to the school, free of charge. "We appreciate the people who work here, and if some of their kids can come to school with them while they work, it's win, win, win—for everybody," she says. "I think we all have that ability to make a positive impact in some way—whether it's through acts of kindness or volunteering—and leave the world in a better state than when we came into it."

By Suzy Buckley