

Thomas M. Cornish

Business

Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Alumni Hall of Fame 2018

It took wise words from a teacher for Tom Cornish to turn his life around in a powerful way.

Abandoned as a boy, Tom grew up in foster care until he was adopted by a single woman who cleaned hotel rooms to support him.

Though bright, he struggled through his school years at Morningside Elementary, Edison Junior High, Miami Central Senior High and Edison Senior High. But his English Teacher at Edison Senior asked a question that changed his life.



“Why are you so determined to waste your life and your talents?” she had asked. Tom didn’t think about it until two years later, as a high school dropout, sitting under a bridge.

“That sentence came back to me,” he said. “It hit me like a ton of bricks, like a lightning bolt out of the sky. And I realized she was right. I was determined to waste my life. At that moment I decided I was not going to do that anymore.”

Tom earned his GED from Lindsey Hopkins Adult Education, worked his way through college, and began his career as a bank clerk with SunTrust. 21 years later he worked his way to the top – becoming bank president.



Tom later joined BankUnited as Florida president, earning promotion to his current post as chief-operating-officer. He has also served as Beacon Council board chair and devotes his time to City Year Miami and other worthy organizations and causes.

For his inspiring determination to overcome hardship—leading to his success—we are proud to welcome Thomas M. Cornish to the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Alumni Hall of Fame.

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