

He Teaches Kids the Right Moves

Orrin Hudson, 44

Lithonia, Ga.

A TOUGH START: Raised in a housing project with 12 brothers and sisters, Hudson was struggling in school and stealing tires—until an English teacher, James Edge, took the 14-year-old aside and started teaching him chess to give him focus. Soon Hudson was playing college kids. “Chess changed my life,” recalls the father of five. “I learned every move you make has consequences.”

PAYING IT FORWARD: In 2000 Hudson closed his used-car business, emptied his bank account and launched Be Someone, Inc. (www.besomeone.org). Through his one-man nonprofit—funded by schools, churches and other groups—Hudson gives free, 16-week chess workshops to disadvantaged kids ages 6 to 19. So far, he’s tutored some 10,000 youngsters at schools and community centers in Alabama, Nevada, California and Georgia. His best players go to state tournaments, but Hudson—who carries a roll-up rubber chess mat—cares most about teaching kids to apply chess strategies, such as recognizing patterns and thinking several moves ahead, to life. “He’s got a way with kids that’s miraculous,” says Jane Fonda, who had Hudson give lessons to kids who were in her teen pregnancy-prevention campaign.

A BETTER GAME PLAN: In 2004 Robert Curry of Lithonia was skipping school and going nowhere. Chess lessons with Hudson grew into a mentoring relationship, and today Curry, 19, has a GED and a year of technical college under his belt; nursing school is next. “I am where I am today,” he says, “because Mr. Hudson believed in me.”

By Chandra R. Thomas

Photograph by ERIC McNATT

“There’s nothing like changing the future of young people,” Hudson says. “I was born to do this.”



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