

**NYU Reynolds Program in Social Entrepreneurship
2006-2007 Speaker Series**

**John Wood, October 30, 2006
Founder and CEO, Room to Read**



At age 35, John Wood left his job as Director of Business Development for Microsoft's Greater China region to form Room to Read, a nonprofit organization that promotes literacy in impoverished parts of the world.

John founded Room to Read because he was concerned that nearly 1 billion people lack basic literacy. "I was blessed with a solid education. As a result I had a great career and made some money. I started Room to Read as a way to give that same opportunity to children in some of the world's poorest villages".

Room to Read, founded in 2000, has sponsored the opening of a network of over 2,500 libraries and 210 schools across Asia. Over 1.2 million books have been put into the hands of children. John describes the results-to-date as being "total tip of the iceberg", as Room to Read plans to increase the network to 20,000 libraries and schools serving at least 10 million children. In 2006, the organization will expand into Africa and will launch three countries (Ethiopia, South Africa and Zambia) during the years 2006-8.

John, a native of Connecticut, holds a B.S. from the University of Colorado, awarded *magna cum laude*, and a Masters in Business Administration from the Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University.

He spent most of his career running significant parts of Microsoft's international business, including:

- The worldwide launch of the >\$1 billion Office 95 campaign
- Director of Marketing for the Asia-Pacific Division
- Director of Marketing for Microsoft Australia
- Director of Microsoft Australia's Internet Customer Unit
- Director of Business Development for the Greater China region.

John has raised over \$15 million from a "standing start" to fund education projects in nine countries around the world. He is the author of "*Leaving Microsoft to Change the World*", a book described by Publishers' Weekly as "an infectiously inspiring read". It will be published by Harper Collins in August, 2006.

John also serves on the Board of Directors of the Lynn Foundation and Net Impact.

Honors:

- Time Magazine's "Asian Heroes" Award, recognizing "20 People under 40 who have done something brave, bold or remarkable." (he is the only non-Asian ever chosen for this honor!)
- Selected as a "Young Global Leader" by the World Economic Forum
- Three-time winner of the *Fast Company Magazine* and Monitor Group Social Capitalist Award.
- Two-time winner of the Skoll Foundation Award for Social Innovation (\$200,000 and \$1.2 million grants)
- Second recipient of the Draper Richards Fellowship -- America's largest fellowship for social entrepreneurs
- Social Service award from Himsikhar Foundation, Nepal, for "contributing significantly in the social and national interests of the country"
- Profiled by the Public Broadcasting Corporation (PBS) as one of "America's Great Leaders"

To learn more about Room to Read, please visit <http://roomtoread.org>.