



Photos courtesy Lisa Buksbaum

Lisa Honig Buksbaum

a chance to SOAR

by Lisbeth Wolfe

One of the first things that impress you about Lisa Honig Buksbaum is her tremendous passion and energy. When she starts sharing her vision for Soaringwords, a non-profit using the power of the Internet and human support networks to help millions of sick children and their families heal, you are drawn in because you appreciate that the world really needs what Soaringwords has to offer, especially now.

Founding Soaringwords was motivated by the death of Lisa's only sibling; her father's two heroic battles with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and her son's illness and recovery from rheumatic fever, three tragedies that occurred within a year. One morning during the height of her son's illness, she was walking along the beach, belting out her favorite *niggun* to the seagulls and the waves while watching the sunrise. Suddenly she was inspired by the name Soaringwords. Since she ran a successful marketing company, and was used to inventing names for products and services, she trademarked the name not fully appreciating what Soaringwords was meant to be. Over the course of the next few months, she shaped and articulated the concept into a reality she could only have dreamed about.

For 16 months, she devoted 40-50 hours a week to her passion, during which time she assembled an impressive Soaringwords Advisory Board of Directors filled with acknowledged leaders in medicine, business, religion and philanthropy. She secured strategic alliance partnerships with leading pediatric hospitals and non-profit disease centric organizations. At the same time, she managed the development of over 2,000 pages of original Soaringwords content from website contributors who are the "best of the best" in counseling, healing, mind-body wellness and religion. Many people have donated their time to the cause after meeting with Lisa.

"I have simply taken all of my life's experiences and poured them into Soaringwords. When you love what you do, everyday is an adventure overflowing with new ideas and opportunities."

Many of her personal blessings and experiences have been captured in SoaringStories, an area of the website meant to inspire ill children and their families to never give up. One such story, "The Boy Who Blessed the Rabbi," tells the poignant tale of her son, Jonathan, giving a blessing to a visiting rabbi. It also includes Soaringwords activities for children, parents and teachers of all faiths to discuss what it means to be a blessing, give a blessing, and have hope in the face of trauma and despair.

She credits her tremendous faith and practice of Judaism for her strength. "For me being a Jew in the world is about running to do *mitzvahs* and connecting with others in meaningful ways. In pursuing my dream, synchronicity has brought me together with talented people that have made significant contributions to Soaringwords". A speaking engagement in Boston yielded a \$300,000 in-kind donation towards the website; speaking at her son's nursery school on what to do when your child's classmate gets ill, introduced her to two essential Soaringwords Advisory Board members; she met the expert for SoaringGardens in a jacuzzi while on a family vacation!

The Talmud says, "Words from the heart are felt in the heart." Honig Buksbaum is leveraging her 18 years in marketing to create a powerful and unique Soaringwords brand experience to build awareness and interest in Soaringwords. It will be successful because of its strategic alliances and endorsements from hundreds of pediatric non-profits; strategic alliances with leading pediatric hospitals and social service agencies; word of mouth referrals generated by the national public service advertising campaign, and national press coverage.

When asked what motivates her to do this work Honig Buksbaum says, "At the end of the day, it is the hundreds of e-mails from the sick kids or their siblings and parents that get me every time. The illness may go away, but in any event, the child and family can heal. That's my life's mission, to do this work."

When asked how she has managed to accomplish so much without a staff, she refers to one of her favorite quotations: "What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny matters compared to what lies inside of us." Then she laughs, "If you want something done, give it to a busy woman!"

Each day starts with a brisk early morning walk along Central Park to the gym for a swim. Forty minutes later, she runs home so that she and her husband Jacob can help Jonathan, 11, and Joshua, 5, get ready for school. Her days are crammed



Soaringwords Soaring Hoops Fundraiser, Englewood, NJ.

with meetings with interesting strategic alliance partners, speaking engagements and brainstorming sessions. She thrives on the energy and creativity that transform ideas into a healing, exciting experience for millions of ill children and their families.

When Friday night comes, she escapes into the healing warmth of *Shabbat*, filled with a cozy family dinner, singing at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, lunches with much food, family and guests, and afternoons in Central Park. "It says in the *Amidah*, 'Grant me the privilege of truly tasting the delight of *Shabbat*...May I be undisturbed by sadness, sorrow or sighing during the holy hours of the *Shabbat*...Help me extend the joy of *Shabbat* to the other days of the week until I attain the goal of deep joy always...' Through singing, praying and being grateful, this passage feeds me all week."

Lisa is no stranger to following her passion and creating something from nothing—this is the third successful business she has started. At 15 she started her own greeting card and stationery business targeted to the deaf community. By the time she was 17, her products were being sold across the country.



Lisa Buksbaum surrounded by Carolyn Greif and Eric Moed, teen chairs. Board members (rear: Lr) Susan Greif, Matthew Greif, Jonathan Moed and Debbie Moed.

The same entrepreneurial drive inspired her to launch Boxtree Communications, Inc., a full-service marketing communications company, in October 1991. Over the years, Boxtree [it means Buksbaum in Yiddish] created award-winning advertising, corporate identity and public relations programs for clients as diverse as Colgate-Palmolive, The Chase Manhattan Bank, NTT America, AXA/Equitable, USA Cable Networks, Dannon, Scholastic and Avon, among others.

Lisa is proud of Boxtree's marketing and advertising initiatives to build awareness and revenues for several worthwhile non-profits, including a *pro bono* national advertising and direct mail campaign for Take Our Daughters to Work® Day, resulting in 35 million Americans participating in the event. Lisa secured an endorsement from the Advertising Council that resulted in over \$1 million of public service announcements for the campaign. After Lisa was invited to be a Principal for A Day, Boxtree developed a brand identity and marketing collateral for PENCIL's Principal For A Day, an organization that brings over one thousand CEOs into the New York City public schools to generate meaningful, on-going alliances.

Before Boxtree Communications, Lisa was Manager of New Business Development for Lintas, the eighth largest advertising agency worldwide. She is on The Advisory Board of Columbia University's Graduate School of Business Alumnae and the Advisory Board of The Center for Women's Business Research. She served on the Board of Directors for the New York Chapter of Young Entrepreneurs Organization (YEO) and the Board of Directors of New York Women's Agenda, each for two years. She was on the Board of Advertising Women of New York (AWNY) for five years. In 2000, Lisa was recruited to join the New York Friends of Sheba Medical Center-Tel Hashomer, the largest hospital in Israel.

Lisa is an honors graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and earned an MBA in marketing from Columbia University. lifestyles

Soaringwords: The Power to Heal

What would you do and where would you turn if you were a child in a hospital surrounded by adults and not really understanding what is going on? What would you do if your child was in the hospital receiving excellent medical care but you are having tremendous trouble with your feelings?

Soaringwords is dedicated to responding to these questions.

In 1998, 3.5 million children were hospitalized. Each year it is estimated that 18% of all children in the U.S.—22 million children—suffer from chronic illness. But action is the antidote to despair. Soaringwords is a non-profit organization that uses the power of the Internet and human support networks to help children and their families cope with catastrophic events, as well as chronic or terminal illness. No one else is using the Internet and human support networks to address the fact that when a child is ill, the entire family and extended community are in crisis.

Soaringwords is built with content from many acknowledged leaders, the “best of the best” in counseling, mind/body wellness, religion and healing. It has an impressive Advisory Board comprised of leaders in business, philanthropy, medicine, counseling, religion and education.

Like many worthwhile endeavors, Soaringwords is the vision of its CEO & Founder, Lisa Honig Buksbaum, who is dedicating her life to helping millions of sick children and their families heal after her life was touched by three medical emergencies with her brother, father and oldest son. “When my son Jonathan was suddenly ill, the entire classroom and extended community was in crisis. People wanted to help, but didn’t know what to do. That’s why I created Soaringwords.”

Today, everybody needs soaring words.

Since the World Trade Center tragedy, Soaringwords has been asked by several Boards of Education, synagogues, churches and youth groups to make Soaringwords available immediately. In keeping with its main mission of helping children and their families deal with chronic illness and other family traumas, Soaringwords is also addressing the needs of the millions of children shaken by the tragic events of September 11th. Children can best take refuge in reaching out to others in need. While social services efforts are focused on emergency relief, Soaringwords will help with the emotional and therapeutic needs of children everywhere, long after the relief effort is complete.

Soaringwords.org is the healing place for millions of sick children and their families to reach out to each other through an interactive web-based community that has meaningful content so that children and parents can spend hours in fun, wholesome and healing activities. Soaringwords (www.Soaringwords.org) will have over 10,000 pages of content, making it the leading destination where sick children and families congregate. The most popular features for sick children, siblings, and parents are: SoaringStrength, where leaders in counseling, mind/body wellness, motivation coaches and religion share articles to help people cope; SoaringPlaces, which features hundreds of activi-

ties for aspiring SoaringPhotographers, SoaringPoets, SoaringArtists, SoaringStories, and SoaringCommunity, where kids connect with other kids, and siblings and parents who thereby have their own community to connect with and share. Each article has a sidebar bursting with fun activities—writing, art therapy, discussion guides to engage the child and his family in fun and meaningful activities.

“When I spent time visiting pediatric oncology floors, I used to get so upset to see children glued to Nintendos or watching trash TV that was not appropriate for children and certainly was not going to make them feel healthier,” says Buksbaum. “Today when I go on Soaringwords visits with Chesed clubs and Soaringwords Youth Leadership groups, the sick children are kids excited to connect with each other.”

Today there are over 20,000 medical websites. Soaringwords.org is not medical or clinical in nature, but rather an inspirational online environment to foster caring, empathy, hope and understanding as kids connect with other kids and parents connect with other parents. It combats fear, boredom and negativity through healing words, stories, activities, inspirations from celebrities, live chats and online events, music and photos.

When parents are confronted with a child’s catastrophic illness, their entire world stops. At the same time, because they are the parents, they must be the foundation for the child. This narrow place is harrowing and exhausting. The illness also isolates the child from friends and “normal” routine. Depending on the child’s age, there are numerous issues based on the child’s capacity to understand what is happening physically and emotionally.

Soaringwords creates a sense among children and their families that it is okay to talk about illness and that death is a natural part of life. Soaringwords de-stigmatizes illness for children, enabling them to better understand and deal with issues raised by serious illness.

Soaringwords’ Advisors are the acknowledged leaders in their fields. They include Dr. Ron Taffel, the *Today Show* correspondent for Children and Family Counseling and author of *Parenting by Heart*; Dr. Gerald Epstein, a pioneer in healing visualizations and author of *Healing Into Immortality*; and Cathleen McCue, an expert in helping children cope with loss and grief.

Soaringwords has built strategic alliances with pediatric hospitals to provide quality content through the Soaringwords website for their patients and outpatients. Soaringwords has an entire content area devoted to healers and health care providers giving them lesson plans, activities, and “best practices” to motivate them and their patients. Soaringwords has also secured strategic alliances with hundreds of pediatric disease-centric non-profit organizations who are excited to share Soaringwords content with these relevant communities. Soaringwords also has curriculum units and lesson plans for grades kindergarten to 12 for teachers to introduce lessons on wellness and illness with activities to link a classroom to a sick child.

Soaringwords will host a Healing Concert at Carnegie Hall on Sept. 17, 2002 to raise money for national expansion. Schools, companies and organizations that want to host a Soaringwords community outreach event should visit the website to get more information.