

# MOTIVATION HAS A NAME

**Mark Laitflang Stone is an award-winning entrepreneur, trainer and motivational speaker from Shillong in Meghalaya**

**Bhairavi Jani**



with personal transformation and youth development. Headquartered in Shillong, Meghalaya, Avenues is recognised as the leading indigenous force for life skills training and career skills in the Northeast.

If you ask Mark how he thought of starting Avenues, he enthusiastically says, 'In many ways, I shall always believe that Avenues found me. Through all of the meandering in my late teens, I discovered that my greatest personal gift was my ability to connect and inspire people to believe in themselves. I helped a friend get through a nerve wracking interview; within a week of working with him- from advice on the length of his coat sleeves to the ends of his words, this young gentleman took on the world of work with renewed conviction. That's when I knew what I was destined to do. A year after that episode, a stranger who would eventually become my partner and friend reached out through an advertisement to launch a training centre for the call centre industry at Shillong'. And Mark never looked back ever since and Avenues has grown from strength to strength.

## The Venture

Avenues teaches young people to embrace personal transformation, confidence and effective communication as they

prepare to deal with the challenges of life and the world of work. The Avenues training and life skills coaching programmes are accessible across their academies and through partner campuses in the Northeast. They operate four training centres in two states- Meghalaya and Manipur and collaborate with college campuses across the region through their flagship Campus Career Readiness initiative- FastFORWARD. The Skills and Employment vertical at Avenues currently prepares unemployed youths for opportunities in the service sector through intensive grooming programmes that integrate communication skills, front office operations, F&B service procedures, housekeeping practices and conflict resolution. Avenues currently employs 52 people across its verticals, and provides wage based employment for close to 140 F&B service executives, security staff, housekeepers and ushers for events.

In essence, Mark and his venture are a fine example of what is possible with the human resource potential of the people of the Northeast. Ignored for decades and even labelled as backward, the people of the region have shown that when empowered with education, vocational and communication skills and guidance for career

development, they can match the best in class in the country. Mark could have stayed back in Kolkata and continued to work there and succeeded but he chose to come back to his state and set up a venture that can help many more like him. Across the Northeast, there are bright examples of entrepreneurs like him who have returned back to the soil and are helping build a positive local job market.

## The Future

When you ask Mark about his future plans for Avenues his eyes light up, he passionately outlines his vision, 'We intend to build a robust training pedagogy steeped in collaborative learning, led by dynamic trainers trained by Avenues from the region. We have a waiting list of partnerships



**Mark L Stone is the award-winning entrepreneur, trainer, motivational speaker and Founder & Chief Executive of Group Avenues- a brand synonymous with personal transformation and youth development**

