

“It’s not what you get, it’s what you do with it that counts.”

That’s what Kristine Heitner tells her son, 11-year-old Ethan.

At first glance, Ethan Heitner is a typical sixth grader at The Pine School in Stuart. He plays soccer, wants to be an NFL kicker (with a backup plan of anesthesiologist), has a dog named Chuck, and is a trumpeter in the school’s band. It’s during that second glance that you notice Ethan was born with only his right arm, and three fingers.

After Ethan initially tried to play the trumpet by holding it between his knees, John Barnes, the school’s band instructor, knew there had to be a better way. That’s when Barnes contacted David Allen, head of maintenance for the school’s Stuart campus. As a master carpenter with more than 30 years of construction experience -- and a fellow musician (he plays the drums) -- Allen is no stranger to improvisation.

The initial fitting was plastic, and didn’t withstand the stress. Allen’s next idea was to use a plumbing T. The brass device allows Ethan’s trumpet to be securely screwed onto the top of the stand, positioning the instrument exactly as it should be. (photos available)

We’ve all heard the saying, “It takes a village to raise a child”; however, this story clearly demonstrates how a robust sense of community, commitment, and ingenuity can make anything possible.

I hope you’ll consider sharing this inspirational story with your readers/viewers this month. To arrange an interview, or for additional information, please contact me at any time.

Sincerely,
Carla