



Agnes Stevens

### Founder of School on Wheels

**QUICK BIO:** Agnes Stevens formed School on Wheels in 1993 after 30 years of teaching elementary school. In 3 decades it has grown from a one-woman operation to a nationally recognized program with 1,800 volunteer tutors serving 3,000 unhoused students a year throughout Southern California.

School on Wheels was founded in 1993 by Agnes Stevens, a former nun and retired schoolteacher, who understood the importance of education for students experiencing homelessness — and the unique challenges they face.

One day, Agnes read “Rachel and Her Children”. This book is about homelessness in New York City. The opening pages described the plight of children whose housing instability made regular school attendance difficult. After Stevens finished the book, she vowed that she would find a child to tutor and she did! Agnes started tutoring more students and soon needed help so she founded School on Wheels. Today, thousands of students are supported every year.

In 1999, Catherine Meek became one of Agnes’ first volunteer tutors on Skid Row. They became firm friends and the fearless duo grew the program, expanding it beyond Los Angeles.

The program provides tutoring and basic school necessities including backpacks, bus tokens and classroom supplies. School on Wheels remains the only organization in Southern California dedicated exclusively to the educational needs of students without permanent housing and it all started with one person wanting to help another!

*Keywords to look up: founder, volunteer, tutor, academic, decades*



**QUICK BIO:** Cecilia Helena

Payne-Gaposchkin was a British-American astronomer and astrophysicist. She was the first woman to receive a PhD in Astronomy from Radcliffe College. In her Ph.D. thesis in 1925, she proposed an explanation for what stars are made of – and she was right!

Cecilia Payne (May 10, 1900 – December 7, 1979) was an astronomer who discovered that stars were made of helium and hydrogen, changing the way astronomers understood the universe. It was previously believed that Earth, the sun and stars were elementally very similar. When Cecilia challenged that, her work was initially rejected as it questioned long held beliefs in astronomy.

Payne studied astronomy at a time when there were very few women in the field. She began her journey when she was granted a scholarship to Cambridge University to study physics. After finding her options for the future limited, she moved to Harvard University and became the first woman to receive a PhD in Astronomy from Radcliffe College.

Her analysis of variable stars laid the groundwork for all studies that have been conducted since. She showed a far greater understanding of the universe than most of her male counterparts at the time. Her work was rewarded when she became the first woman to chair the Department of Astronomy at Harvard University.

*Keywords to look up: astronomy, helium, hydrogen, physics, universe*



**QUICK BIO:** Stephen Robert Irwin was an Australian wildlife conservationist and a television personality. He was nicknamed the ‘Crocodile Hunter’ because he was the host of this famous Australian TV show. Irwin was famous for hosting the show with enthusiasm and with deep knowledge of wildlife.

Irwin’s love for nature began at a very young age. He grew up on Ferntree Gully in Australia, loving wildlife, especially reptiles. He caught his first venomous snake when he was six and would arrive late at school because he wanted to stop to rescue a lizard.

At only nine years old, Irwin would help his father catch hold of small problem crocodiles by jumping on them in the water and wrestling them back to the boat. He would help his father relocate problem crocodiles back into their habitat. Irwin was incredible at climbing trees and had an eye for snake and bird tracking. After graduation, Irwin started helping as a crocodile trapper, moving crocodiles from populated areas to his Reptile Park.

Irwin, along with his wife, filmed a documentary about crocodiles which was an immediate success. It was picked by American cable and shown on Animal Planet. Thus the “crocodile hunter” was born. Steve and his wife filmed almost 150 episodes. Steve Irwin was famous for educating young people about nature and wildlife. He and his wife put all the money earned from the show towards the management of wildlife in the family reptile park, later renamed the Australia Zoo!

*Keywords to look up: reptile, wildlife, documentary*



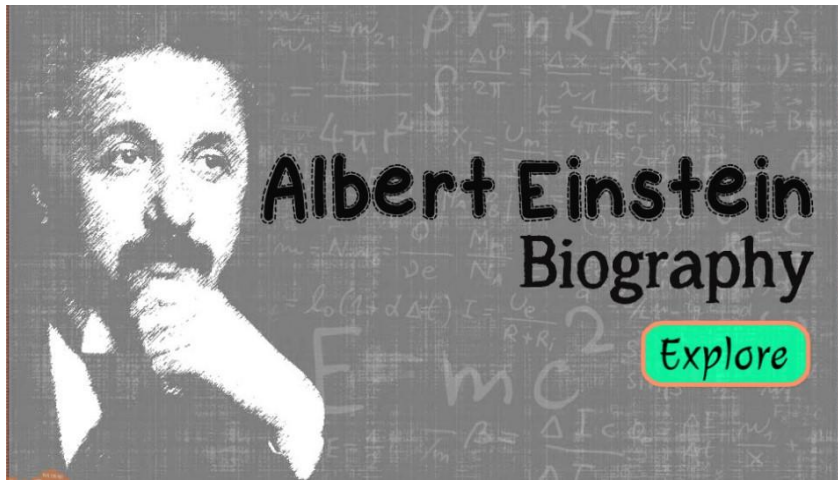
**QUICK BIO:** Photographer Dorothea Lange was born just across the river from New York City in Hoboken, New Jersey. She was an influential photojournalist and even though her work was used primarily for the news, her photographs have an artistic quality that has made her work a collectors item.

Photographer Dorothea Lange (1895 – 1965) was born across the river from New York City in Hoboken, New Jersey. She contracted polio at the age of 7, leaving her with a lifelong weakness in her right leg. However, she grew to appreciate the effect the disease had on her life, believing that it made her stronger and guided her to become the person she was.

Lange trained as a photographer at Columbia University in New York City before moving across the country to live in Berkeley, California, where she lived for the rest of her life. Dorothea Lange opened a portrait studio but as the Great Depression began in 1929, she focused her lens on the unemployed and unhoused people of the Bay Area. Her most famous photograph, titled Migrant Mother, captures the emotion and strife of workers during the Great Depression.

Dorothea Lange was a photographer with a mission and a purpose. Her photographs were windows into the lives of people who had no other means of telling the world about their troubles. Even though the primary purpose of her photographs wasn't art, her work is lyrical and sings the songs of the people she documented.

*Keywords to look up: apprentice, portrait, migrant, lyrical*



**QUICK BIO:** German-born Einstein first became interested in science when his father gave him a compass. As he grew up, he showed he had a great mind for math and science. During his lifetime, Albert Einstein came up with some amazing theories about light, matter, gravity, space and time, and soon enjoyed worldwide fame!

Albert Einstein was born in Germany in 1879 to a Jewish family. His father was an engineer and a salesman. When he was five years old, Einstein saw a magnetic compass and marvelled at the needle that kept moving with an invisible force. At 12, he found a book on geometry which he read over and over again.

Einstein wanted to pursue math and science. The problem was, he wasn't very good at taking tests. Albert Einstein failed his first entrance exam for college. However, he was always analytical and didn't give up.

Albert Einstein was working as a patent clerk in Germany in 1905 when he developed his famous Theory of Relativity ( $E=mc^2$ ). The theory states that the speed of light (constant,  $c$ ) is the fastest speed in the universe and relates energy ( $E$ ) and mass ( $m$ ). It relates to how time and distance can change due to the different speeds of an object and its observer. He also made important contributions to the development of the theory of quantum mechanics, and thus to modern physics.

In 1922, Einstein received the Nobel Prize in physics (an award for major scientific accomplishments). His life work helped completely change our understanding of the universe.

*Keywords to look up: engineer, theory, observer, contributions*