

# Author uses skills to help uplift others

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**A MITCHELLS** Plain man with five degrees, including a Master's from Harvard University in the US, quit his job in the corporate world to write a book for the area's children.

Athol Williams was a strategy director for Old Mutual and a partner at US-based firm Bain & Company.

But he gave it all up to give back to the community where he grew up.

Yesterday, Williams read his book, *Oaky the Happy Tree*, to 44 primary schoolchildren during a visit to the Westridge library.

They sat at his feet and listened intently as an animated Williams brought the story to life with sound effects and pictures. In the book, Oaky the tree is happy with life but a bird suggests he will be happier if he could fly. Then a zebra suggests that Oaky would be even happier if he could run.

But Oaky declines the suggestions.

Grade 2 pupil Layla Noordien, 8, said she loves to read and reading was



**GIVING BACK:** Author Athol Williams read sections of his new book to school kids yesterday.

PICTURE: HENK KRUGER

important. She said Oaky reminded her of herself and the character of the sun in the book reminded her of the people who looked after her.

"When you're reading, it helps you to be clever just like me. If you can't read how can you reach high school, how can you reach university and how can you reach those nice jobs like being a doctor or a teacher?"

Williams, 45, said he wanted to inspire children with his story. "I believe that we can awaken greatness in our children to enable them to grow into inspired adults."

He said he left the corporate world in 2010 because he wanted to use his skills and passion to uplift others.

"My wife, Taryn, and I sold our house and the luxury cars that we owned so

that we could invest in our social development programmes and to pay for my studies."

He said they founded a book publishing company called Read to Rise in 2013. "Education has been the key to my freedom, and I know we as a society will only be free when our children can think and learn and fulfil their full potential."