

SOCIETY & CULTURE

philanthropy

# Easy A

Powerhouse executive Brian Conway tops the high honor roll at the Steppingstone Foundation Gala.

By Robert Cocuzzo



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**B**rian Conway remembers the moment he first witnessed the magic of the Steppingstone Foundation (tsf.org).

He was sitting in a stifling hot classroom of sixth graders in Boston. The walls were practically dripping with the kind of humidity that tends to put students to sleep. And yet, Conway marveled as the kids' hands shot up like fireworks to answer question after question. He immediately penned a memo to Steppingstone's executive director with some ideas on how to improve the program and then paper-clipped a check to it. So began a 17-year relationship with one of Boston's most impactful educational nonprofits.

On Nov. 9, Conway will be honored at the Steppingstone Foundation Gala at the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel as he steps down as chair of the board after nearly 15 years. In that time, he has been part of Steppingstone's mission of championing underserved youth in the city through programs designed to help them achieve success in middle school, high school, college and beyond. "You can talk about all these stats and numbers," Conway says, "but it's when you meet the kids and hear their stories, that you really get convinced."

Indeed, Steppingstone has a 26-year track record of turning out remarkable scholars, some of whom have even returned to serve on the board of the foundation. "We have engineers, teachers, lawyers and doctors," Conway says. "We have scholars that have started families and have become great citizens of their respective communities." While he might be the one being honored for his efforts this November, Conway is quick to point out that the real heroes are the members of the Steppingstone team who are dedicated to improving the lives of Boston's youth.

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