

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Students Celebrate \$1 Million Gift from Lenfest Foundation During Summer Bridge Program Capstone Day

*Donation in support of upcoming merger of Philadelphia Futures & Steppingstone Scholars
to better serve Philadelphia students*

August 3, 2022 (Philadelphia) - [Philadelphia Futures](#) (Futures) & [Steppingstone Scholars](#) (Steppingstone) today celebrated the generous \$1 million gift from Lenfest Foundation (Lenfest) with a student ice cream surprise at the Summer Bridge Program's annual Capstone Day. Held throughout the summer at Girard College, the Summer Bridge Program hosted students and their families for Capstone Day where the students showcased their hard work during a "Gallery Walk" of presentations and classroom displays. During the day's culminating barbeque, Futures & Steppingstone brought in an ice cream surprise to announce the \$1 million gift by Lenfest in support of the upcoming merger between Futures & Steppingstone this fall.

"The capstone event of the Summer Bridge program between Philadelphia Futures and Steppingstone Scholars is a perfect example of how the strategic merger of these organizations can be a game changer for Philadelphia," said Dr. Keith Leaphart, Chair, The Lenfest Foundation. "We are deeply proud to support the innovative work of Futures and Steppingstone - coming out of this merger - with a \$1M gift that will support the creation of new, more accessible pathways for Black, Brown and first generation college students as well as those who wish to pursue careers after high school. The commitment of Philadelphia Futures and Steppingstone Scholars to transforming the City of Philadelphia by investing in our youth could not be more wise or more needed at this time."

Steppingstone Scholars and Philadelphia Futures are now in the second year of their joint summer program for rising 9th grade students. This partnership specifically serves 80 students, and a total of 300 students participate in summer programming at Girard College. The organizations' joint Summer Bridge program aims to prepare students for the transition to high school. 2022 Summer programming began June 29 and will be held until August 4 to emphasize time management, study skills, goal setting, and college readiness to prepare students for their high school experience. Students have an opportunity to take math, science, and writing classes as well participate in field trips and capstone projects.

"The Futures & Steppingstone collaboration all began two years ago through this Summer Bridge Program, and today we are celebrating the students - the center of our vision - and this program that gave us a sampling of the bigger and better work we can do together," said Sara L. Woods, Esq. current President of Philadelphia Futures.

“We are so thankful to the Lenfest Foundation that not only believes in our joint vision, but also shares our abiding love for Philadelphia students,” said Sean E. Vereen, Ed.D., current President of Steppingstone Scholars. “It’s with partnership and the support of organizations like Lenfest where our new organization will ensure all Philadelphia students graduate high school with pathways to economic mobility through college and workforce success.”

In May 2022, Futures & Steppingstone announced that their respective educational non-profit organizations plan to merge in the Fall. This decision was made after a comprehensive 18-month period of due diligence and organizational collaboration, which was funded by the William Penn Foundation and The Nonprofit Repositioning Fund, and unanimously approved by the respective Boards of Directors for Futures and Steppingstone on May 24, 2022. Upon the official merger, which is subject to required governmental notices and approvals, the organizations will rebrand as a new entity, which will be unveiled in Fall 2022. Both Vereen and Woods will serve as Co-Presidents of the new organization, and the merging of Futures and Steppingstone will create one of the most dynamic, expansive, and trusted educational nonprofits in the City of Philadelphia. Once merged, the new entity will have a \$10 million operating budget and 71 total staff members – 22 of whom are embedded in the School District of Philadelphia (District) as coordinators and advisors. This enhanced operational budget will allow the new organization to immediately serve 3,000 Philadelphia students as well as significantly scale services, which will create even more sustainable access to academic and workforce opportunities for students, especially Black, Latino, and first-generation students. Furthermore, the new entity will have a combined endowment of \$30 million, which strengthens its long-term financial position.

For more information about Philadelphia Futures & Steppingstone Scholars, as well as the upcoming merger please visit: www.philadelphiafutures.org or www.stepscholars.org.

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About Philadelphia Futures:

Philadelphia Futures is a nonprofit organization that supports Philadelphia’s low-income, first-generation-to-college students with the tools, resources, and opportunities necessary for admission to and success in college. Philadelphia Futures envisions a city where every student has what they need to succeed in college and thrive in life. Through its direct service programs, Sponsor-A-Scholar (SAS) and College Connection, the organization annually serves more than 500 high school and college students offering academic enrichment services, personalized college guidance, placement and retention services and financial resources. Through its other programs and services, including its Step Up to College resources, Outreach Futures, and The Charles E. Ellis Trust for Girls, Philadelphia Futures provides college guidance and financial resources to students throughout the City. Philadelphia Futures can be found online at www.philadelphiafutures.org. Follow Philadelphia Futures on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

About Steppingstone Scholars:

Since 1999, Steppingstone Scholars has used equity as its driving force to provide underserved students in Philadelphia, especially Black and Latino students, with sustainable

access to academic and workforce opportunities. Through consistent engagement, advising and programming, Steppingstone serves students ages 10 - 24 by creating pathways beginning in middle school to college and career. These are the pathways that too many students and families still cannot see or access – and the only pathways through which a stronger, more equitable Philadelphia can be achieved. For more information regarding Steppingstone Scholars, please visit: www.stepsstonescholars.org. Follow Steppingstone Scholars on social media: [SteppingstoneScholarsInc](#) on Facebook, [@stepsstonescholars](#) on Instagram and [Steppingstone Scholars](#) on LinkedIn.

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