

NEWS RELEASE
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Harlem Educational Activities Fund Celebrates Innovators & Disruptors

Eric Schmidt, Former Executive Chairman & CEO of Google and Co-Founder of Schmidt Futures, and Alexandra Alger, Board Member of HEAF and Alger Funds honored during HEAF Virtual Gala

Thought provoking conversations on racial equity, economic disparity and the role of education to shatter paradigms enthralled online audience of more than 1,000 viewers

New York, NY – October 29, 2020: The Harlem Educational Activities Fund ([HEAF](#)) celebrated its 16th Annual Gala last night, the first as a virtual event. Focused on Innovation and Disruption, honorees Eric Schmidt, Former Executive Chairman & CEO of Google and Co-Founder of [Schmidt Futures](#), and Alexandra Alger, Board Member of HEAF and [Alger Funds](#) were recognized for exceptional advocacy in education and making strides toward disrupting the status quo.

The event marked HEAF's first-ever virtual gala. Online attendees had the opportunity to hear from the honorees and other thought leaders across business and the nonprofit world on critical social justice and education issues, including an honest and in-depth discussion about racial inequity and socio-economic disparities contributing to gaps in education from the earliest grades through to leadership opportunities in business featuring [Roger W. Ferguson, Jr.](#), President & CEO of [TIAA](#), joined by [Ursula Burns](#), former Chairman & CEO of Xerox and VEON, Senior Advisor at [Teneo](#), and [Darren Walker](#), President of the [Ford Foundation](#).

"HEAF's mission is to get some of New York City's most deserving students to and through college," said Ruth Rathblott, HEAF President & CEO. "Our 11-year commitment to students starting in middle school and running through college is critical to helping breakdown barriers, diversify the talent pipeline and support the next generation of leaders. Our program is fully funded for each of the nearly 600 students we serve, and that would not be possible without the support of incredible partners and the leadership of our Board, and we are especially grateful to our two honorees, Eric Schmidt and Alexandra Alger."

"It's an honor to be recognized by HEAF," said Eric Schmidt, Former Executive Chairman & CEO of Google and Co-Founder of Schmidt Futures. "The people who deserve the honor are the men

and women at HEAF and peer organizations who put together the programs to help the next generation be successful.”

Schmidt participated in a discussion with [Fareed Zakaria](#), [CNN](#) host and Washington Post columnist, about innovation and education as catalysts for opportunity, the technological and socio-economic disparities caused by the digital divide, and key learnings about the need to increase access to connectivity that have gleaned from the impact of the pandemic and remote work and school needs.

HEAF gala honoree and board member Alexandra Alger said: “Serving on HEAF’s board, having the chance to see the program in action and interact with the students is an amazing experience. I’m honored to work with HEAF on behalf of its incredible students.”

Alger was joined by Gale Reeves, Retired New York City Department of Education Superintendent, Harlem, for a discussion on the innovative programs at HEAF that help bridge the opportunity gap for underserved students across New York City.

Virtual gala attendees also had the opportunity to hear directly from HEAF students about the impact HEAF has had on their education, personal development and aspirations, and were treated to two incredible performances by Kool & The Gang.

Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson and retired NY Giants running back and Super Bowl MVP Ottis “O.J.” Anderson served as co-emcees of the HEAF Virtual Gala.

HEAF also launched an [online auction](#) to raise funds to further the organization’s mission to provide academic enrichment, personal and social development and college prep support. The auction will be live through Sunday November 1 at 10 PM.

HEAF is a 31-year old education non-profit focused on college access and success for underserved minority youth in New York City. The organization has a superior record: 100% of HEAF’s high school seniors graduate from high school on time and gain admissions to college, more than 80% earn bachelor’s degrees in six years, and 35% continue to earn advanced degrees.

About HEAF

The Harlem Educational Activities Fund (HEAF) is a high-impact supplemental education and youth leadership nonprofit that turns motivated but underserved New York City public school students into high-achieving college graduates. HEAF enrolls eligible students in middle school

and supports them until they are successfully admitted to and graduate from four-year colleges—an 11-year commitment to students. HEAF offers a variety of after-school, Saturday and summer educational and youth development programs that enable students to develop the intellectual curiosity, academic ability, social values and personal resiliency they need to succeed in school, career and life. For more information about HEAF or to get involved, visit <http://www.heaf.org>.

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