



college forward

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Non-profit College Forward receives 2007 "Star of Texas" Greater Austin Business Award for Education

AUSTIN, Texas — Spectators scratched their heads on Wednesday, August 29 when Lisa Fielder, executive director of College Forward, didn't grace the stage at the 2007 Greater Austin Business Awards after her non-profit organization was declared a winner. After all, the "Star of Texas" Award for education recognizes the company that "demonstrates contribution and philanthropy within the community to support education," and who better than Fielder, who founded the organization at her kitchen table in 2003, to embody College Forward's contribution?

But at Wednesday's awards ceremony at the Hilton-Austin, Fielder stayed at her table, allowing the four staff and AmeriCorps members accompanying her to accept the award in her place. The gesture reflected Fielder's desire to share the credit for College Forward's amazing successes in the past four years. "This program wasn't built by me," she said. "It was built by more than 50 AmeriCorps members and staff who came to Austin from across the country and poured their hearts and talents into making this program a life-changing experience for the students in this city. They're the ones who should be honored."

The Greater Austin Business Awards, now in its seventh year, are given by the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce to recognize excellence within the community. From an unprecedented 203 nominees, only 21 businesses and organizations were selected. A panel of 14 business leaders thoroughly reviewed College Forward's programs, history and effectiveness in making their selection.

The "Star of Texas" Award recognizes College Forward's outstanding contributions to the education of Austin's youth, including the 100% success rate of its comprehensive college preparatory program. College Forward provides high-quality services free of charge to low-income and rural school districts where few college access programs operate. They were honored in the non-profit category.

"Programs like this are key to providing students the financial assistance they need to get a good education and become productive members of our region's workforce," said Tom Cedel, Chamber board member and president of Concordia University Texas. "I salute College Forward in their efforts to close the achievement gap one student at a time."

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◆ 100% of College Forward's students have been **accepted into colleges nationwide**

◆ College Forward students' **ACT scores increased** by an average of **22%**

◆ College Forward's high school graduates are awarded an average of over **\$16,000 each in scholarships and grants**

The award also acknowledges College Forward's unique commitment to further the educational ambitions of its own employees and its AmeriCorps members, volunteers who devote a year of their lives to national service in exchange for a modest living stipend and an AmeriCorps Education Award. College Forward has been built by these volunteers since the first AmeriCorps*VISTA member joined Fielder at her kitchen table in 2003. By 2008, the program will have provided volunteer opportunities to nearly 115 part- and full-time AmeriCorps members from 14 different states spanning the East and West coasts—and will have awarded over \$305,000 in AmeriCorps Education Awards to the next generation of Austin's leaders.

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