

# CRAIN'S

## CHICAGO BUSINESS®

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### SOCIETY

## Griffin, Zell, Mason give kids a hand up

*Founded by a Bronx schoolteacher in 1987, the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship teaches schoolkids how to run a business. Since its launch eight years ago, the Chicago branch has brought the message of entrepreneurship to more than 12,000 Chicago Public Schools students. Elevating Entrepreneurs, its first formal fundraiser, is expected to gross \$400,000 to expand NFTE's reach to 35 schools and 2,000 students in Chicago next year. Co-chairs of the cocktail-party benefit are Stephen Quazzo, CEO of Transwestern Investment Co.; Deborah Quazzo, co-founder, NeXtAdvisors; **Kenneth Griffin**, founder, president and CEO of Citadel Investment Group, and Anne Dias-Griffin, founder of Aragon Global Management LLC. Crain's spoke to Mr. Griffin, 42:*



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Kenneth Griffin co-chairs the NFTE benefit party, where Mellody Hobson will interview Sam Zell and Andrew Mason. The group teaches entrepreneurship through Chicago Public Schools.

### **Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship Elevating Entrepreneurs Benefit**

**When:** 5 p.m. Wednesday

**Where:** Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave.

**How much:** \$500 and up

**Who'll be there:** 300 entrepreneurs and executives

**For more info:** (773) 938-8701

**CRAIN'S: How did you become involved in NFTE?**

**MR. GRIFFIN:** Clint Coghill (president and CEO of Coghill Capital Management LLC) brought this organization to my and my wife's attention. Our involvement is a tribute to what NFTE has done in Chicago and to Andrew Mason (founder and CEO of Groupon Inc.) and Sam Zell (chairman of Equity Group Investments LLC), both leaders in Chicago and the dynamic and successful business community we have in Chicago.

**Why is NFTE a worthwhile organization?**

The future of America will be built on the successes of young men and women still in their early years, and their willingness to start businesses. Job growth is driven by small and mid-sized businesses. NFTE teaches inner-city kids the tools they need to be successful entrepreneurs and provides the encouragement they need to complete the education, high school and college, required to be successful in today's day and age.

**How well does Chicago nurture entrepreneurs?**

When I came to Chicago, in 1989, it was just a few years later that *BusinessWeek* had as its cover story an article about the demise of Chicago ("Chicago Blues," Oct. 16, 2000). Looking back now, we live in a magnificent city that has had a number of dramatic success stories. Look at Groupon, one of the fastest-growing companies in the world. It's a Chicago success story. Citadel, a market maker—it's a Chicago success story. Chicago is an attractive place to do business. There's an incredible workforce, and the Midwestern values of hard work and commitment to family.

**Why is it important that the city take care of entrepreneurs?**

The idea that a state or city government will pick winners and losers in business is a flawed idea. We want our government to ensure that we have for all our citizens the greatest possible education opportunity. That's why NFTE is so important to me. It's about creating an environment where we as a community are investing in our children.

**Is Jean-Claude Brizard, new CEO of Chicago Public Schools, the right person to help accomplish this mission?**

Absolutely. JC's track record in New York is extraordinarily strong. So far, (incoming Mayor) Rahm Emanuel has knocked the ball out of the park in terms of leadership decisions for Chicago Public Schools. He has put together a great board and brought in an executive with a deep background in education and a demonstrated history of making decisions needed to help our kids succeed.

**Tell us about the party.**

I think the guests at this event will be excited to spend time with each other and talk about the issues at hand in Chicago today. Melody Hobson (president of Ariel Investments LLC) will be interviewing Sam and Andrew at the event. I know both these people. Attendees will find their words inspiring.

**Contact:** [society@crain.com](mailto:society@crain.com)