

## Elizabeth 'Liz' Thompson

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As CEO of The Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education Group (The CAFE Group), Liz Thompson is deeply engaged in the social innovation and philanthropic communities. The CAFE Group provides financial and programmatic support to Leaders of Color whose proximity to current and historic challenges in education allows them to influence philanthropic decisions and create meaningful and relevant solutions. By leveraging lived experiences and the genius within our communities, The CAFE Group creates a glidepath from College Intern to Established Leader designed to catalyze lasting systemic change.

Liz began working with nonprofits in 1993 as founding Executive Director of City Year Chicago, a national service organization that was the template for the AmeriCorps Program. Then in 1995, Liz served as Executive Director of Family Star Montessori School in Denver, where she led a multi-million dollar expansion of their Early Head Start program. In 1998, she became active with nonprofit boards in the San Diego area, which further fueled her interest in philanthropy and education. Before following her passion in the nonprofit sector, Liz had a successful ten-year career with Ameritech Corporation after having received an Electrical Engineering degree from Purdue University.

In addition to her commitment to serving students, professionals, and communities, Liz and her husband, Don Thompson, are co-founders of the investment firm Cleveland Avenue, LLC. Cleveland Avenue provides financial resources, expertise, and individual support to entrepreneurs to grow and scale their businesses. Their collective work was highlighted by World Business Chicago through their Corporate Ambassador Award, by Loyola University Chicago's Baumhart Center with their Innovator Award for Social Impact, and most recently by the Chicago History Museum with their Jane Addams Award for Distinction in Social Service.

Liz is currently a Director of the Lamar Advertising Corporation and a Director for Chicago Public Media/WBEZ. She is a National Director for Braven and Chairman of Braven's Chicago Board. She serves on the board of the Partnership for College Completion, and as Special Advisor to OneGoal.

Liz is an alumnus of the Nonprofit Leadership Program of Denver and Leadership Greater Chicago, where she served on the Board for ten years. Liz is a past Trustee of the University of Chicago, the Museum of Science and Industry, and the Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

Liz received an Honorary Doctorate of Engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology where she was the commencement speaker for the graduating class of 2023. She was recognized The Chicago Urban League as the Lester H. McKeever Jr. Individual Service Award Recipient, by Chicago Statue University with the 2023 Cougar Servant Leadership Award in Education Equity, as an IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy 2023 Black Women Give Back Honoree, an inaugural Crain's Chicago Business' Women of Note and is a member of the distinguished Aspen Institute's Pahara Fellowship. She has received the Chicago Public Media's Amplifier Award, YWCA Chicago's Community Leadership Award, the Outstanding Community Leader Award from The Association of Fundraising Professionals, the Dream Builders Award from the Chicago Child Care Society, and the John J. Dugan Award from

OneGoal. She was featured in Make It Better Magazine as one of Chicago's Top Black Women of Impact. She has appeared as a keynote speaker for the Grantmaker's for Education Conference, The Walton Family Foundation, the National Center on Family Philanthropy, the Forefront Annual Luncheon, the Rustandy Center for Social Sector Innovation, and the Chicago Venture Summit.

Liz has been married to Don for 30 years. They have two adult children and live in the southwest area of metropolitan Chicago.