

Binders join forces on Project New Step

TODD SLISS
Alumni Spotlight

Growing up in Scarsdale, Steven Binder knew two things about sneakers: 1) He relied on them to play basketball at the recreation level, the junior varsity and varsity levels at Scarsdale High School and finally at Division III Curry College; and 2) He never had to worry about where the next pair was coming from.

As a parent of two basketball-loving daughters in Scarsdale, Binder learned two things quickly: 1) Kids go through dozens of pairs of sneakers in their young lives; and 2) Having proper-fitting sneakers is important for healthy bodies.

Then came more revelations as Binder continued his interest and dedication to helping others succeed in the basketball world through showcases, skills training, a recruiting guide, coaching and his more recent charitable work in Florida: 1) Having a proper pair of sneakers also plays into mental well-being and confidence; and 2) Many families can't afford to keep up with proper-fitting sneakers that aren't worn out.

The more time Binder spent putting on clinics at the Boys and Girls Club, the more time he found himself checking out each participant's footwear. And then he realized that some might even be staying away since they knew they weren't properly equipped.

While he has many ongoing projects, including coaching girls' high school and all-star basketball at the elite level in Florida, in 2025, Binder founded Project New Step Foundation Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization committed to providing proper athletic footwear to children in Martin County, Florida, where he and his wife and behind-the-scenes partner in all of his endeavors, Stacey, now spend most of their time, and Metro New York City—they also spend time locally visiting their daughters, Stephanie and Carolyn—through corporate partnerships and acceptance of monetary donations of any amount.

Binder, a 1980 Scarsdale grad



Photo by Todd Sliss



and former longtime Scarsdale resident, who played alongside Butch Graves and John Revelli during the greatest era of Scarsdale basketball under coach Jack Kaminer— Binder always joked that he was “the third best player on a two-man team”—before becoming an Academic All-American nominee at Curry College, started the Hudson Valley Top 100 Basketball Showcase in 1988 (now Binderhoops Premier Basketball Showcase) to give prospective Division II and III recruits more exposure with the hopes of getting recruited. That showcase

continues this month, though it has evolved over the years and is now invite-only and limited to 60 players. That was one of the first ways Binder, who had a successful publishing and sales career with Conde Nast and ESPN—he also opened a sporting goods store in Scarsdale from 2004-2007—has been giving back for nearly four decades.

In 2013, Binder wrote “Your Recruiting Playbook: Maximize Your Opportunities to Play College Sports!” Between the showcase and the book, these were things he wishes he'd had when he was going through the college process.

Now he is all-in on Project New Step, which is not a basketball-specific organization. A \$600 donation equates to 10 pairs of sneakers.

“That's not insignificant,” Binder said. “You can see the value. I'm not saying \$600 is not a lot of money to donate, but that's where the money goes, to 10 kids at the Boys and Girls Club or another community center. That's direct impact.”

Just like a showcase can be life-changing to a teen, the right pair of sneakers can have a whole

slew of impacts on a child. Some of the kids Binder encountered in Florida were running around in flip-flops or Crocs. For him it was eye-opening as a volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club, and he appreciates the organizations openness to him offering his expertise and connections to flip the script not just athletically, but in the every-day lives of the kids.

“Sneakers, for kids, is such an important part of their lives,” Binder said. “When you're in K-12 it's about self-esteem. There's the health benefit of having proper footwear to take care of their feet. That's the stuff we take for granted that we can provide to our families pretty easily. By the time your child is 18 they've gone through 35 pairs of sneakers, even if they don't play a sport every day. Some wear out, some don't fit after a while because they're growing.”

Binder noted, “The magnitude of money, even if it's not the most expensive pair in the store, is mammoth, bigger today than it's ever been, especially for someone who has to stretch the dollar or may be on some sort of assistance. 90% of the families I'm going to

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Photo by Todd Sliss

Former Scarsdale students and residents Stephen Binder, Stephanie Binder, Carolyn Binder and Butch Graves have teamed up for Project New Step.

Foundation aims to address footwear issue

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help have some sort of federal, state or local assistance for their housing and food.”

Binder would love to see donations from the place he grew up and raised his children. That would mean the world to him. He wants kids to have proper footwear every year for the first day of school, for recess, for sports, for every-day use to boost their health, both mental and physical, self-esteem and confidence.

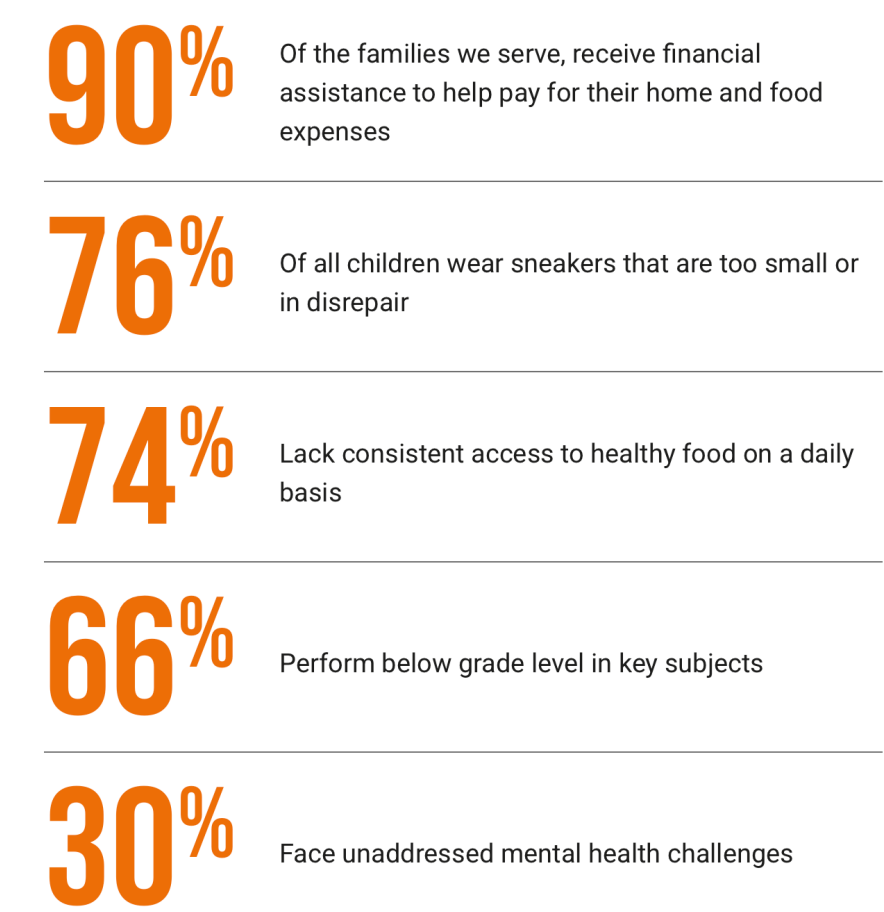
“I thank people for donating to whatever charities they donate to, and it would be great to also donate to this because it’s something that no child should go without,” Binder said. “This is not a basketball initiative—this is about getting everyday sneakers so somebody can walk out the door and have sneakers that fit and last them for the next several months until they outgrow them or they get worn out. It’s a basic necessity just as much as a shirt on their back or a meal on their table.”

Binder is leveraging his basketball, sports, business and personal contacts to make a difference when he’s not teaching basketball skills and improving his golf game as a quasi-retiree.

“It’s more full-time than I thought it would be,” Binder joked. “I’m not in the corporate setting anymore, not putting on my suit anymore, and I can still do a few hours and then go play golf or do some other interests. We’re so close with our girls, so we’re back and forth to New York quite a bit. I think it’s important to stay sharp and do lots of things. I’ll turn 64 in October and time’s going a little bit too fast for me. Either I’ll fill it up or slow it down a little bit.”

Former Raiders teammate Graves is also on the board of Project New Step. After helping lead Scarsdale to the New York State finals, Graves went on to star at Yale, graduating as the school’s all-time scorer and second in Ivy League history, before being drafted in the third round by the Philadelphia 76ers in 1984 and played with the Milwaukee Bucks and the Cleveland Cavaliers, is now the CEO of Black Enterprise, which was founded by his father, Earl Graves, Sr., and is on the board of Project New Step Foundation.

Graves was inducted into the American Advertising Federation Hall of Achievement in 2002, won the Jack Avrett Volunteer Spirit Award from the Boy Scouts of America in 2006 and was given the NCAA Silver Anniversary Award in 2009. He also serves on the board of directors of AutoZone, Bermuda Tourism Authority, and is a Trustee for The Committee



HOW MANY SNEAKERS DO KIDS REALLY NEED?

Children’s feet grow fast and coupled with active play, regular sneaker replacement is essential for comfort, safety, and good health. According to RunRepeat’s footwear research:

Ages 4–6: Replace shoes every 4 months

Ages 7–10: Replace shoes every 5 months

Ages 11–14: Replace shoes every 6 months

Over 11 years (ages 5–16), a child might realistically need 20–25 pairs of sneakers. That’s why our mission to provide children in need with proper fitting sneakers is so vital.

“Having a good pair of sneakers is more than just footwear—it’s a source of confidence, opportunity, and dignity for kids in need. Through Project New Step Foundation, we’re not just giving shoes; we’re giving the children of Martin County, Florida, South Florida and Metro New York City the ability to walk into school with pride, participate in sports, and chase their dreams without limitations. Every pair donated is a step toward a brighter future, proving that small acts of kindness can make a lasting impact. Helping kids get the sneakers they need isn’t just about comfort—it’s about empowerment, self-esteem, and opening doors to new possibilities.”

— Steven Binder

Project New Step Foundation
<https://projectnewstep.org>

For Economic Development. He continues to stay involved in basketball as an AAU coach.

Also active on the board are Binder’s daughters.

Binder knows that when he approached his daughters about Project New Step there were some eye-rolls in the spirit of, “There goes Dad again!” but they knew it was coming from a heartfelt place of seeing a need and doing whatever he could to help kids in the community. With them both working and having had many life experiences of their own between college, professionally and personally, he knew the time was right to get Stephanie and Carolyn involved from the get-go. They each bring different skills and perspectives, but they share a common background so they knew right

away that Dad was serious and 100% all-in. He wanted them to have “a meaningful role.”

“They rolled up their sleeves and they’re doing it,” Binder said. “It’s their time to see that the need is out there and they can help. That’s what they’re doing. They have full-time jobs and they’re living their lives, but as board members they are contributing and helping fundraise. We raise money to buy the sneakers so we can distribute them, so they can see the significance of the impact that happens when you really decide to get involved when a community needs your help.”

Stephanie transferred from Scarsdale High School to Rye Country Day School for her junior year, where she was two-time All-Conference and led the team’s

three-point attack, graduating in 2011. She played 41 games over her four years at Division III Johns Hopkins, graduating in 2015.

Stephanie went to work on Wall Street and for the last decade has been a Managing Director of Equity Sales at Needham & Company, a boutique broker dealer specializing in technology & healthcare sectors.

Carolyn transferred from Scarsdale Middle School to Rye Country Day School as an eighth-grader and was a star player on the girls’ basketball team there from day 1. She was a three-year captain and won a pair of state titles. Carolyn graduated in 2013 as the school’s points and assists school record-holder. She then played Division I at Columbia University and professionally in Ireland, winning a national title, and earning her master’s degree from Trinity College Dublin Business School.

Carolyn worked at BuzzFeed and Google before moving to Amazon, where she is a Senior Business Development Manager. She is also a volunteer coach for the Dalton High School girls’ basketball team.

Stephanie and Carolyn also grew up in Scarsdale never wanting for anything their parents couldn’t provide. But they also grew up seeing Mom and Dad giving back at every turn. They particularly remember spending the day at the annual basketball showcase.

“I don’t think I understood the magnitude of what he’s been doing until I was older,” Stephanie said. “I always saw him as a gracious, kind, loving parent, husband, friend, child to my grandparents, but I didn’t understand the magnitude of what he did. Honestly, what was a really huge turning point for me is when I started working on his showcase with him, like really working on it, not just being cute running around or handing out jerseys when I was little. I started watching him and all the planning that goes into it, all the coaches and everything he has to do. When we took everyone online a number of years ago he and I worked on it a lot together. He’s always been very clear that if you are in a lucky position to be able to help somebody, you owe that to the world to give back.”

About a decade ago, Stephanie realized that it took parts of every day from the end of one showcase to the next to make sure it’s the best event possible for both the recruits and the college coaches. Stephanie saw one parent go up to her dad and praise the ratio of players to courts to coaches as so many players can get lost in the shuffle of AAU recruiting and other showcases. It’s especially helpful

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Binders work together to help kids in need

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for players and families who don't have as many resources and/or will be relying heavily on financial aid and the right place to play at the next level.

"Just the transformative nature of what he does, and how much time and energy goes into it, I didn't understand until I really was watching," Stephanie said. "We've always been around the camp, so we know what it looks like, but God bless him for doing it all those years when he was working a full-time real job. And before they were using computers my mom hand-wrote the rosters and got them copied. I don't think they had time to go to bed the week of the event. I remember that vividly."

Stephanie also remembers going to Champs as a youngster and getting any sneakers she picked out. "You realize as an adult that's not the norm, so for him to be able to change these people's lives in such a big way, it's something that seems so small, but is magical," she said.

Stephanie, who lives in Rye, helps out more on the tech end between helping with the website and its visual appeal and being 24-7, 365-day tech support for Dad. "There's no better value on the street than my market rates for him," she joked.

"It's great to be able to work on something with him as an adult," Stephanie said. "My parents are unbelievable people. Caroyln and I are so blessed to our core that we've had great parents. As we've become adults, that relationship has changed and evolved more into that natural next step of a friendship. He'll ask me a question or want my input and there's this part of me that's excited he

wants to hear what I have to say as an adult and as a professional, but I'm still looking at him and I remember all those years ago the interview and photo shoot for the 'Mr. Basketball' piece you wrote in the Scarsdale Inquirer. It's really amazing to think back and know that even now my dad's one of those all-in people—if he's committed, he's committed 100%."

Carolyn, who lives in the city, is more on the editorial side with copy writing and editing with Project New Step.

"Seeing the reaction from the kids and the community, even from afar, is the reward and there's always that hope that when you work hard for something you see a big success," Carolyn said. "Hopefully, as we continue to expand, we'll continue to see the impact on kids. I hope to get down there to experience one of the gifting sessions one day because all of the photos and videos are amazing. We've been involved in many things and we're rooting for them from up north."

Growing up in a sports-centric household, sneakers and any other sports equipment was always readily available to Carolyn and Stephanie. They never had to worry about where their next pair was coming from—or having to run them into the ground before getting a new pair—nor did they realize that other kids weren't in the same boat. "That was never a consideration we had, which we're beyond grateful for," Carolyn said. "As my dad started volunteering in Florida as an after-school basketball coach with the Boys and Girls Club he was like, 'Hey, where are your sneakers?' And they didn't have any."

That set off the light bulb—Binder wanted to the kids to have the

proper equipment to match the excitement they had for being involved in sports and other offerings from the Boys and Girls Club, whether they are potentially going to pursue a sport like basketball or they have the need in their everyday lives.

"Some of them have the talent, but not having the basic gear—or what we consider the basic gear—to even participate on a recreational level was definitely really eye-opening and kind of the whole impetus for the foundation coming about," Carolyn said.

As Stephanie and Carolyn shared their father's passion for basketball for as long as they can remember, this was an easy wagon to hop on. "It's very much the fabric of our household," Carolyn said. "It taught me so many amazing values and how I approach life, friendships, work, etc. When he brought the idea to my sister and I, we were really excited that we would be able to participate, too. We love this board and we wanted to be involved and to give back."

Having been involved in the corporate world, having been a small business owner and having work in non-profits, Binder knew exactly what would be involved in a new venture, but that didn't make it easy.

"I had to put the framework in place because I know how to create a foundation between the legalese and the accounting part of it with the IRS, the long process, but I have a really good lawyer and accountant who helped set all that up, so then I got to start fundraising and talking with the sneaker companies," Binder said. "You show how legitimate and credible you are and then you can really go after it. Even though I've never done this before, it's just building

a business-like framework as a non-profit."

After the initial planning and behind-the-scenes phase, it was time for Project New Step to spread awareness to build the first round of footwear to be donated to the children at the Boys and Girls Club in Florida. "It's just been amazing how it's been received across the community," Carolyn said. "It's so meaningful for them and for us to share this experience and mission together has been wonderful."

Project New Step is expanding to other areas, but that will require the support of corporations and private donors and volunteers in order to be as wide-spread and successful as possible. "My parents take on as much as they can and it's still such a small operation, but my dad handles most of it," Stephanie said. "Hopefully it can continue to grow and my sister and I can help with that over time."

This is only the beginning for Project New Step.

"It's going to make a difference on a pretty large scale—thousands and thousands of pairs," Binder said. "And we can do in New York City what we're doing in South Florida. People need it. Unfortunately, there's always been disadvantaged kids and our world is more socioeconomically divided than even, so I'm concerned about that."

Working closely with friends and especially family, makes Project New Step even more special for the Binders.

"They're what every parent wants, kids with confidence who are successful and society-conscious people that you're proud of," Binder said. "It's understanding where you came from and how you can help others."

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