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More Than Bootstraps' Founder and President Audrey Fisch and More Than Bootstraps Nominated for Russ Berrie Making a Difference Award

PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY – May 10, 2021. [More Than Bootstraps](#) (MTB), a New Jersey non-profit, and Audrey Fisch, the Founder and President, were nominated for a [Russ Berrie Making a Difference Award](#).

The Russell Berrie Foundation recognizes unsung heroes from across the Garden State for their compassion and selfless dedication to others. For 25 years, the Russ Berrie Making a Difference Award has honored New Jersey residents whose outstanding service to others and heroic acts make a substantial impact on the lives of others. Over the years, the Foundation has given \$3.75 million to 380 honorees, each of whom has an inspiring story to tell about how they made a difference in the lives of others.

“As challenging as 2020 was for so many of us, these selfless individuals answered their communities’ call for help,” said Angelica Berrie, President, Russell Berrie Foundation. “From activists fighting injustice and systemic inequities to neighbors helping neighbors struggling during the pandemic, it’s an honor to celebrate this remarkable group of individuals as part of our 25th anniversary celebration of the awards and Russ’ legacy.”

Audrey Fisch, a Professor of English at New Jersey City University, together with a board of educators, founded More Than Bootstraps to address the challenges faced by first-generation students, the majority of whom are students of color from low-income communities. The organization obtained its 501(c)(3) in 2019 and selected the Passaic Public Schools, the seventh-lowest income district in New Jersey (median household income \$36,226), as its initial partner.

More Than Bootstraps employs a stipend-supported, near-peer mentoring model that empowers first-generation students to help each other form and sustain a network of resiliency. Over the 2020-2021 year, our inaugural cohort of 5 college student Leaders have mentored 6 high school Fellows in the Passaic community. In 2021, our program will grow to support 16 high school Fellows and 8 college student Leaders.

Volunteer EMS Services

Claire Fabilo

Bernadette Falcon-Lopez

Christine Ferdinand

Illiana & Michael Figueroa

Audrey Fisch

FLOW Forward

Louis Franco

Despite the obstacles of the pandemic, economic disruption, and remote learning, More Than Bootstraps celebrates the groundbreaking members of our community of success and their dedication to helping each other access and succeed in higher education.

“We are grateful to have been nominated for this prestigious award. The unsung heroes within More Than Bootstraps are the students themselves, who are continue to strive for success and to lift each other as they rise.” said Audrey Fisch, president of More Than Bootstraps.

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More Than Bootstraps is a 501(c)3 organization, Tax ID 83-2245008



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