



Westfield Rotary Club Fdn. Aids Low-Income Students

WESTFIELD — More Than Bootstraps (MTB), a New Jersey non-profit organization dedicated to helping low-income, first-generation students access and succeed in higher education, recently received a \$1,000 community service grant award from the Westfield Rotary Club Foundation, an organization of business and professional men and women in Westfield who value service above self in Westfield and throughout the world. This is the third award MTB has received from the Rotary Club.

Founded by Audrey Fisch, a longtime Westfield resident and college professor, More Than Bootstraps addresses the challenges that first-generation, low-income students face in getting to and succeeding in higher education. MTB builds on these students' strengths to create a sustainable pathway to and through college. The organization provides first-generation high-school stu-

dents with near-peer mentors — current college students from their community. Mentors meet weekly with their high-school mentees and follow a curriculum of activities focused on personal and professional development, college and financial-aid awareness, and communication with families.

MTB launched in Westfield on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, 2020. Donations from Westfield residents and local organizations, such as Temple Emanu-El of Westfield, the Westfield Rotary Club Foundation, the Westfield-based Union Innovation NJ Alliance and the Westfield Foundation, provided resources to support the initial five College Student Leaders and six High School Fellows. All of the initial cohort of MTB College Student Leaders graduated from college in four years, vastly outpacing the 9 percent of first-generation, low-income students who earn a Bachelor of Arts

degree by age 24. In 2023-2024, the organization will serve 28 High School Fellows and 14 College Student Leaders.

“The Rotary Foundation’s continued support of MTB is fundamental to our work increasing access to and success in higher education for first-generation college students,” said Audrey Fisch, president of More Than Bootstraps. “Word of the success of our program has spread among students and families in Passaic and demand currently outstrips our resources. This grant from the Rotary Club enables us to continue to grow the number of students we serve.”

In May 2023, MTB celebrated College Signing Day for its second cohort of High School Fellows.

Grants and donations to More Than Bootstraps fund the monthly stipends that allow the high-school and college students in the program some time and space to devote to their professional development and college-going activities while still meeting their financial responsibilities. Interested donors are invited to visit the MTB website: www.morethanbootstraps.org/donate.