

More than Bootstraps helping Passaic students to the next level – and beyond

By Bryan Perez, News Editor

An organization created by educators, for students, is helping Passaic students in their journey through high school and beyond.

More than Bootstraps is a non-profit organization helping Passaic's first-generation, low-income students during their voyage through school and after high school.

The program was founded by educators, both at the secondary and higher education levels, "who have grown frustrated seeing excellent and capable students fail because of things that are out of their control!" said Ms. Severino, who formerly taught English at Passaic Preparatory Academy.

The "near-peer" mentoring program, in which college students closely mentor high school students on their journey through the world of higher education, is the cornerstone of the non-profit organization, said Ms. Severino.

Prep junior Marisol Coliente is a member of More than Bootstraps, which has raised more than \$81,000 to support Passaic students to date. The non-profit also works with the Passaic Optimist Foundation.

"Having a program like More than Bootstraps in our city is a privilege to me," she said. "Having a program like this in our city also can help ignite an aspiration and desire for other students to take on learning about the college process throughout their junior year."

Students can also get money and laptops to help them through the college experience. More than Bootstraps guarantees a steady stipend for years and a strong support system that wants to see all students succeed, according to the organization's website.

The organization helps students with "two of the greatest challenges that first-generation students face: financial hardship and technological inequity," Ms. Severino told The Boulevard Online. She serves as the Secretary for the organization's Board of Directors and works closely with other board members to make sure the program runs smoothly. She participated in the designing of curriculums, fundraising, and recruiting volunteers.

The program is unique because it gives students the opportunity to share and build on their own experiences while mentoring others. Those mentored will be given an opportunity to mentor students in the future.

For more information on More than Bootstraps, visit www.morethanbootstraps.org.



Morethanbootstraps.com