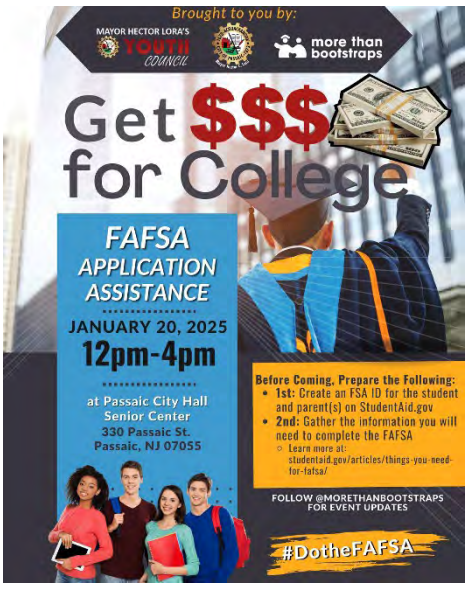
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Media Contact: Audrey Fisch, Ph.D.
President, More Than Bootstraps
908-397-0893
audrey@morethanbootstraps.org

More Than Bootstraps Celebrates Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with a Day of Service
Collaboration with Passaic Mayor Hector Lora's Youth Council to Support FAFSA Completion

WESTFIELD and PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY – February 4, 2025.

More Than Bootstraps (MTB), the New Jersey non-profit organization, celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day this year with a day of service devoted to helping students and families in Passaic complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

In collaboration with students from Passaic Mayor Hector Lora's Youth Council, MTB high school and college students gathered at the Passaic City Hall Senior Center to offer FAFSA assistance. Students completed training in advance and brought their financial aid knowledge as well as their cultural competency and language skills to the work. Students and families were able to get support with creating student aid accounts (FSA IDs), understanding which parent(s) would be required to complete the FAFSA, completing the FAFSA applications, understanding their student aid index number (the financial aid award estimate), and setting up their account for New Jersey state aid (TAG) through HESAA.





One MTB student noted: "Helping others fill out the FAFSA was easier than I imagined and gave me the confidence to use my skills to help others close to me, and myself."

MTB students have also worked with students and families on-site at Passaic Academy for Science and Engineering (PASE). This year, the FAFSA is a state graduation requirement.

Many of MTB's students developed their FAFSA completion skills and training this past summer as a result of an award from **Educational Credit Management Corporation** as part of the nationwide FAFSA Student Support Strategy project.

T-shirts for the MLK Day event were supported by a grant from One by One, the charitable arm of 4imprint. The Mayor's office generously supplied lunch for all the student volunteers.



"There is nothing quite like the relief on a family's face when one of our students is able to solve the FAFSA problem," said **Audrey Fisch**, president of More Than Bootstraps. "One mother was unable to see the `invite' to complete her daughter's FAFSA. This is a common issue and the non-intuitive solution is for the daughter to delete her FAFSA and have the parent start the form and invite the student. Solving this problem means reducing stress and ultimately enabling students to get the aid they need to be successful in higher education."

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About the Passaic Youth Council

The Youth Council consists of students in 8th through 12th grade who reside in the city of Passaic or attend Passaic City Schools. Mayor Lora helped establish the Youth Council to empower and encourage youth participation in community service projects, help them with personal growth, and support their understanding of key issues affecting their community and the world.

About MORE THAN BOOTSTRAPS

More Than Bootstraps builds a community of first-generation, underrepresented students who empower each other to access and succeed in higher education. *More Than Bootstraps* is a 501(c)3 organization, Tax ID 83-2245008.

Now beginning its fifth year of programming, MTB employs a near-peer mentoring approach to address the challenges first-generation, low-income students face in accessing and succeeding in higher education. Working with underrepresented students in and from Passaic, New Jersey, the organization matches high school students with college students from the community who serve as mentors. Interested donors are invited to visit the MTB website: www.morethanbootstraps.org/donate.

MTB DIGITAL PRESS KIT: www.morethanbootstraps.org/mtb-digital-press-kit