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More Than Bootstraps Announces New Plainfield College Student Leaders

These outstanding students will lead the MTB College Access and Success Program in Plainfield

WESTFIELD, PLAINFIELD, and PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY – January 20, 2026.

More Than Bootstraps (MTB), a New Jersey non-profit organization, announces that four college students from Plainfield, New Jersey have been selected as College Student Leaders with MTB. These ambitious and talented first-generation college students will mentor younger peers -- high school students in the Plainfield Public Schools – as they work to achieve their higher education goals.

The new MTB Plainfield College Student Leaders are:



Nikitha Bostwick
New Jersey Institute of Technology



Fernando Caballero May
Kean University



Kalista Daly
Rider University



Jessica Johnson-Ibe
Union College of Union County



Also taking on a new leadership position with MTB is **Ayana Goodwin,** a first-generation college graduate of Kean University who recently completed her MSW at Rutgers University and is completing an MAT at Montclair University. Ayana has served as an outstanding Social Work Intern with MTB for three years. This spring, Ayana will serve as Program Resource Fellow and oversee the onboarding of the new MTB Plainfield College Student Leaders.

Now underway with its sixth year of programming, MTB employs a near-peer mentoring approach. The organization matches high school students with near-peer mentors. To date, MTB has worked with graduates of the Passaic Public Schools currently enrolled in institutions from Princeton to William Paterson University who have led their younger high school peers, following a curriculum that focuses on knowledge about higher education and financial aid,

communication with families, holistic student development, and the promotion of student well-being and agency.

A generous award of $10,495 from the Westfield Foundation will allow MTB to bring its programming to the city of Plainfield. The new Plainfield Leaders, all outstanding college students who have graduated from Plainfield High School, will work with Program Resource Fellow Ayana Goodwin and their Passaic peers to train in the MTB program. Beginning in the spring, these Plainfield College Student Leaders will recruit and select the inaugural class of Plainfield High School Fellows, current sophomores. After additional summer training, the mentoring program in Plainfield will begin in earnest, with Plainfield College Student Leaders mentoring their younger Plainfield High School peers.

Grants and donations to More Than Bootstraps fund the monthly stipends that allow the high school and college students some time and space to come together and create a community of success while still meeting their financial responsibilities.

"We are grateful to the Westfield Foundation for recognizing how difficult it is for first-generation college students to pull themselves up by their bootstraps in getting to and succeeding in the complex American higher educational environment," said **Audrey Fisch**, president of More Than Bootstraps. "We are thrilled that this new support will allow us to bring to Plainfield the MTB model where students empower each other to succeed."

Interested donors are invited to visit the MTB website: www.morethanbootstraps.org/donate.

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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.* For more information, visit www.morethanbootstraps.org or call (908) 397-0893.

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