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**More Than Bootstraps Awarded Grant from Westfield Area Y Men's Club**

**The $500 grant will support stipends for students in the MTB College Access and Success Program**

WESTFIELD, PLAINFIELD, and PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY – March 24, 2026

More Than Bootstraps (MTB), a New Jersey non-profit dedicated to helping low-income, first-generation students access and succeed in higher education has received a $500 grant from the Westfield Area Y Men's Club to support the MTB College Access and Success Program.

Founded by Audrey Fisch, a long-time Westfield resident and college professor, More Than Bootstraps addresses the challenges first-generation, low-income students face in getting to and succeeding in higher education.

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.

In January, MTB initiated programming to the city of Plainfield. Five college students, all graduates of Plainfield High School and enrolled in colleges from Kean to New Jersey Institute of Technology, are shadowing their Passaic peers and training in the MTB program. The Plainfield College Student Leaders will recruit 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.

MTB launched in Westfield on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, 2020. Donations from Westfield residents and local organizations, including Temple Emanu-El of Westfield, the Westfield Rotary Club Foundation, the Westfield-based Union Innovation NJ Alliance, and the Westfield Foundation, provided initial and ongoing resources to the organization.




*MTB Founder and President Audrey Fisch and Scott Gleason, Member of the Westfield Area Y Men's Club*

The Westfield Area Y Men's Club raises money for local charitable organizations through its annual Christmas Tree Sale. Community members come out for their Christmas trees, wreaths, garlands, and grave blankets and leave knowing they have "ornamented their lives through charity."

As **Scott Gleason**, a member of the Westfield Area Y Men's Club and a longtime supporter of More Than Bootstraps remarked, "The club is proud and pleased to support MTB and its valuable contribution to youth development."

"We are grateful to the Westfield Area Y Men's Club 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 honored to be among the esteemed local organizations supported by the Westfield Area Y Men's Club's amazing hard work and holiday tradition."

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

## About the WESTFIELD Y MEN'S CLUB

The mission of the Westfield Area Y Men's Club is to function as a service organization and raise money for charitable causes. We strive to give back to the local community and support organizations, groups and individuals that share our values of respect, responsibility, volunteerism and youth development.