

BOTTOM LINE

Get in. Graduate. Go far.

IN

ALL

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Our presence amplified for first-gen students—with allies side by side.

[BOTTOMLINE.ORG](https://bottomline.org)

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO AND BOARD CHAIR

Get in. Graduate. Go Far.

These words are more than a tagline at Bottom Line—they capture our shared purpose and reflect the foundation of our values as an organization. While college is not the only path to lifelong success, study after study continues to show that earning a bachelor's degree remains the most consistent and reliable pathway to long-term economic and social mobility. And when that degree is paired with manageable debt and strong career readiness support—as it is at Bottom Line—the impact can be transformative for students and their families.

Unfortunately, the rising cost of college and the growing media narrative questioning the value of a degree have dampened many students' aspirations. According to the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Education, between 2002 and 2022, the percentage of first-generation students (those whose parents earned only a high school diploma) who aspired to earn a bachelor's degree fell from 60% to just 33%. Over the past year, the "anti-degree" narrative has only intensified, while many of the federal programs that help our students get into and through college face an uncertain future and significant funding threats.

Yet in the face of turbulence, uncertainty, and discouraging trends, our community went ALL IN, showing that nothing can diminish our students' potential when we stand beside them.

Ask anyone at Bottom Line what we value most, and you'll hear a unified, resounding answer—our relationships and our relentless commitment to students. Each student sits at the heart of our mission, possessing extraordinary power, perseverance, and determination that humble and inspire us daily. A close second is the community we build around them—the mentors, advisors, partners, and supporters who help us

face challenges that can seem insurmountable and walls that appear too high to climb. Together, these relationships give us the courage to keep moving forward, even when the path ahead is uncertain.

The stories in this annual report from our 2024–2025 fiscal year illustrate what happens when brilliant, determined students meet unwavering community support. The data we share offers proof of what's possible. You'll see that each of us can play a role in a first-generation student's journey—and while every role looks different, each one is essential in helping our students go far in life.

During a year that demanded everything from us, we came to better understand the deep meaning of community. Community is more than shared identity—it's a pillar that steadies us when the ground shakes, promise to show up fully, and the confidence that, even in moments of scarcity or uncertainty, we already have everything we need to lift up our students and press forward together – ALL IN.

JOIN US.



Steve Colón
Chief Executive Officer



Auditi Chakravarty
Board Chair

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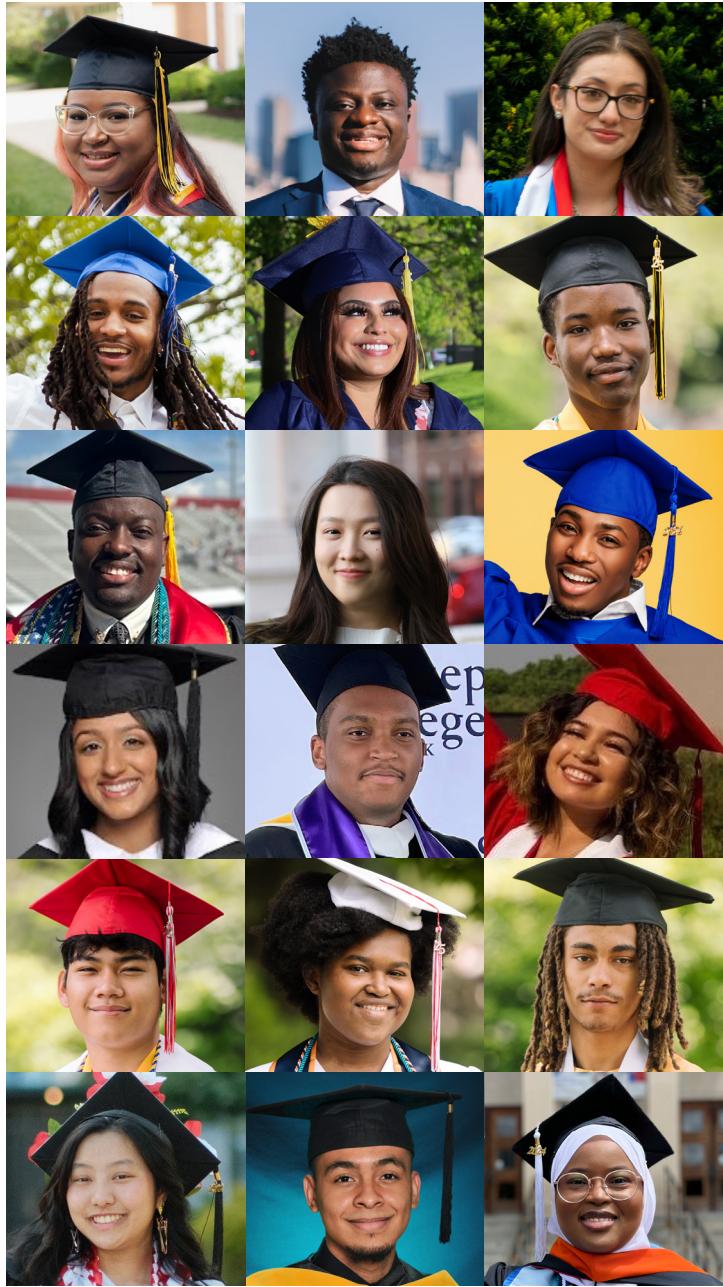
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OUR MISSION

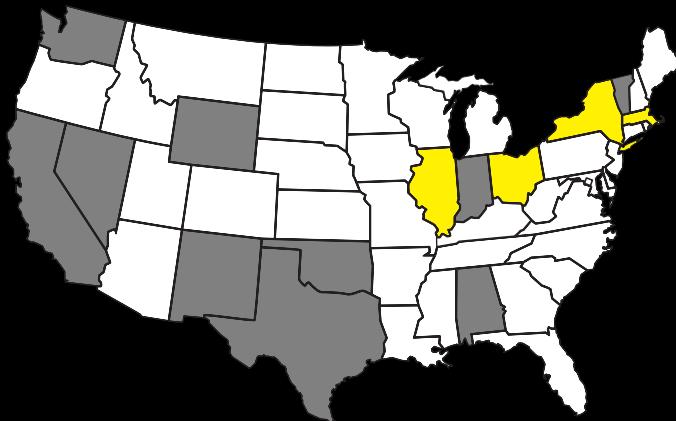
Bottom Line is leaning on the power of community to go **ALL IN** for our students, our mission, and our future.

Founded in 1997 by Dave Borgal, Bottom Line began in Boston serving 25 high school seniors determined to get into college. Nearly 30 years later, that same spirit of relentless support drives us as we partner with thousands of first-generation and low-income students nationwide. Through our Access, Success, and *Blueprint* programs, as well as Learning Labs, we now directly serve 7,000 students annually across regional offices in Massachusetts, New York, Chicago, Ohio, Detroit, and soon, Houston, while reaching tens of thousands more through partnerships and practitioner training.

Our mission is to partner with degree-aspiring students from first-generation and low-income backgrounds as they get into college, graduate, and launch meaningful careers. As the landscape shifts, we remain focused on affordability, economic mobility, and access to long-term security and possibility. Now well into our bold strategic vision to expand to 7–10 regions by 2030 and directly serve 20,000 students annually, Bottom Line is leaning on the power of its community — students, advisors, alumni, donors, and partners — to go ALL IN together.



OUR IMPACT



Students Served

1,512

Massachusetts

5,185

Total Students
Served (Access
and Success)

1,431

Total *Blueprint*
Students Served
(Program only
across all regions)

51K

Students indirectly
reached through *Learning
Labs* across 11 states

1,966

New York

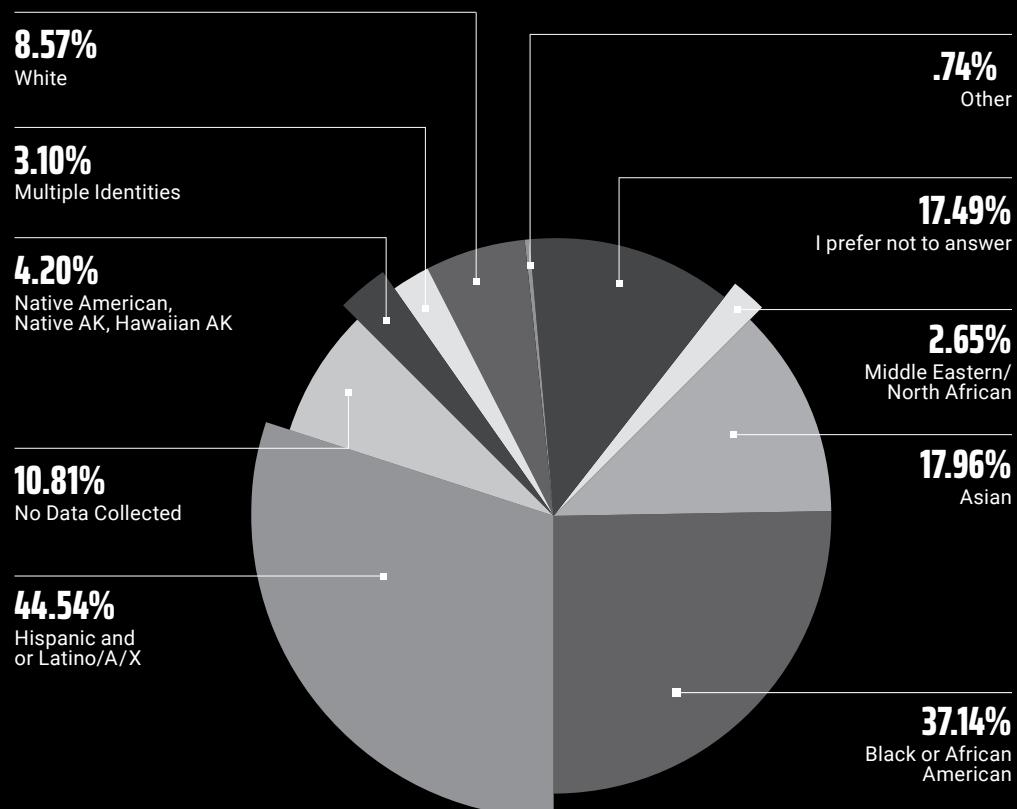
1,534

Chicago

173

Ohio

Race/Ethnicity Demographics of Students



GET IN.



1,089

STUDENTS
SERVED THROUGH
ACCESS PROGRAM



91.7%

STUDENTS WHO
COMMITTED TO
COLLEGE BY JUNE 1

GRADUATE.



4,099

STUDENTS
SERVED THROUGH
SUCCESS PROGRAM



94%

OF STUDENTS PERSISTED TO
THEIR 2ND SEMESTER (A LEADING
INDICATOR FOR GRADUATION)



655

SUCCESS AND BLUEPRINT
PROGRAM GRADUATES

GO FAR.



\$16K

AVERAGE STUDENT DEBT
AT GRADUATION



100%

OF STUDENTS SURVEYED RESPONDED
SAID THEY GAINED SOMETHING VALUABLE
FROM A MEETING WITH A GO FAR
VOLUNTEER.



**GET IN.
GRADUATE.
GO FAR.**

MASSACHUSETTS



Students See Themselves in Success: How Bottom Line Is Inspiring Perseverance

For first-generation college students from families with low income, the path to their dream career can feel impossibly distant given the barriers they must face. But Bottom Line's Career Connections program in Massachusetts is changing that narrative by doing something too underutilized yet powerful: introducing aspiring young professionals to those who have already traveled similar roads and reached the destinations they seek.

Through carefully coordinated Career Insight events, Bottom Line staff create opportunities for students to network, learn, and foster relationships that will crack the doors for future experiences in their field of choice. This past year, the program facilitated a trip to Harvard Medical School for a group of twelve premed students, where they heard from Dr. Jessica Pierre and a panel of others in the medical industry. Dr. Pierre, an alumna of the medical school who received her MPH in Health Policy and Analysis, discussed her life journey that led her to medicine. What the students gained from the exposure that day illustrates exactly why these connections matter so deeply.

"That day was very insightful for me, and just being in the environment helped me envision more for myself and the possibilities of entering the medical field," shared Rebekah. "I can see myself interning or working for Harvard Medical School, especially since they are in the field of what I have been interested in for a long

time." Walking through the halls where doctors trained and hearing from someone who had succeeded in that very space created a shift in perspective for her and many other students.

But inspiration doesn't just come from seeing where someone ended up, students find deeper encouragement when the testimonial comes from a person sharing similarities to who they are. For Derya, who discovered that Dr. Pierre had attended her same high school, the experience impacted her differently because there was an immediate bond that bridged their worlds. "It was very cool to see that we already had that connection. It makes you realize how 'small' the world is," she reflected. "I was also very intrigued by her journey and how it wasn't linear and she took three years before actually attending medical school. The way she was also interested and knew why she wanted to be a doctor was very heartwarming. A lot of inspiration and determination!" Although the students already understood that pathways to success can vary and rarely look the same for everyone, several found deeper solace in hearing from Dr. Pierre that achieving their goals didn't require a perfect, uninterrupted trajectory. At the closing of the event, Derya felt that she received permission to embrace her own winding path, which many first-generation students from low-income communities can end up taking due to the financial realities they face.

Up against the rising cost of degree programs, the thought of debt looms large for most students during the decision-making process and until graduation. This is where honest conversation becomes essential. Another student, Dhoha, found herself particularly moved when the physicians addressed money openly. "From the experience, what stood out most to me was when the doctors both spoke about their financial situations. I feel like feeling stuck financially could prevent you from going forward with your goals. I'm glad to know that the doctors didn't let their finances push them further from their goals of going to medical school."

The engagement also had a practical impact for students. Being able to tour the school allowed some students to consider whether or not they'd want to attend the institution as part of their own route. Some students were even able to glean helpful advice from those who spoke. "The panel was my personal favorite because I was able to get questions answered, and coincidentally, one of the panelists did a program I'm applying for. I was able to ask for insight on my application," explained Grace.

Bottom Line Massachusetts staff and advisors who organized the program loved the variety of positive feedback they heard from students – it made them want to develop more opportunities for students to get out to in-person events, and interact with people in the Bottom Line community willing to volunteer a few hours of their time to lend knowledge to students exploring possibilities for their future. But one of the reflections that stuck out the most was from a student, Lidiya, who was questioning whether she chose the right career path for herself – a doubt that many students face throughout their time pursuing higher education. After the event, Lidiya stated,

"Listening to Jessica Pierre's journey to achieving her medical dreams reignited a spark within me that I thought was nearly extinguished. Her story, along with the insights shared by the panel, left me inspired and motivated to pursue my own aspirations with renewed determination.

Lidiya

Bottom Line Student

Knowing that even one student was motivated to persist, to keep going past every doubt and barrier until they reach the destination that transforms their lives, is what makes our staff place so much thought and effort into experiences like the medical school tour. Bottom Line understands a fundamental truth: when first-generation students are able to come face-to-face with success stories reflecting similar histories, they gain something possibly even more valuable than what classrooms can provide.

They gain conviction in their own capacity to succeed. And that conviction, once kindled, becomes the fuel that propels them through every obstacle that tries to block them from realizing their dreams. **B**

— Bottom Line students visit Harvard Medical School



NEW YORK

A New Food Pantry Stocked to Nourish Student Success

Bottom Line New York Advisors MJ Santiago and Larissa Wormsby had a vision: a food pantry where students could access support with dignity.

"In my personal experience, it's not uncommon for someone from a low-income background to face complicated instructions, lengthy wait times, and stigma when trying to access a critical resource," said MJ, a managing Success Advisor at Bottom Line New York. "It was important to me when designing the pantry that our students feel supported and accepted when they use the pantry, and that the overall experience is both easy and welcoming."

Through direct conversations with students navigating stressors like rising grocery costs, they recognized an opportunity to create something purposeful and grounded in care. The process was collaborative—advisors, managers, and students all explored what a food pantry could offer. The result was the launch of the Bottom Line New York Food & Resource Pantry.

At its heart is a seamless, low-barrier experience. Every Access and Success student can walk into the office and grab what they need without question or bureaucracy. Students fill out a quick form—not for eligibility, but so inventory stays stocked with items they prefer. A dedicated staff group organizes regular shopping trips, adjusting the selection based entirely



on student feedback, and community members can donate through a public Amazon Wishlist. Snacks, groceries, hygiene products—it's all there, ready and waiting whenever students come in.

“

"The pantry has been amazing for me. It hasn't only been about getting groceries, but it's been about going to the office and being with supporters," shared **Liliana**, a long-time Bottom Line student and 2025 graduate from Hunter College. **"They always have a variety of snacks and food, and it's always super easy to go in and out of the office without judgment. I'm so grateful for the pantry and for everyone who has worked hard to keep it going."**

Liliana

Bottom Line Student, 2025 Graduate

With each passing month, as students continue to respond positively, advisors are energized to evolve the pantry beyond non-perishable provisions.

"In addition to stocking the pantry, we launched a 'featured recipe' of Harira Soup and provided all of the ingredients and instructions to make it," explained MJ. "The hope is that the recipes will continue in addition to related events, offering students opportunities to further their life skills and engage with Bottom Line."

The extra touchpoints the pantry creates help advisors strengthen their personal relationships with students. Students can connect one-on-one with their advisor to explore broader campus and community resources for consistent access to nutritious and safe food. To equip staff for these conversations, MJ developed a training on college food insecurity, which will now be offered annually.

Research shows that over 40% of students in higher education nationwide face food insecurity, with first-generation and low-income students experiencing it at higher rates. Our advisors are always listening, refining the Bottom Line approach to ensure no obstacle to bachelor's degree attainment goes unaddressed.

The pantry has become a tangible example of this commitment, showing that when we stock the students' shelves with what nourishes their potential, there's little room left for challenges to stunt their success. **B**



— Liliana, Bottom Line Student, 2025 Graduate.



— Staff stock and ready the Bottom Line New York Food & Resource Pantry.

B

BLUPRINT

More Than a Redesign: How a Unique Student-Mentor Partnership Gave a New Face to *Bluprint*

Bottom Line's most powerful ideas don't just come from within our organization—they come from the students we serve. Their voices shape our programs, their needs guide our strategies, and their potential fuels our commitment to finding new ways to support them. So when we had the chance to put a student at the center of our *Bluprint* program's evolution, the choice was clear.

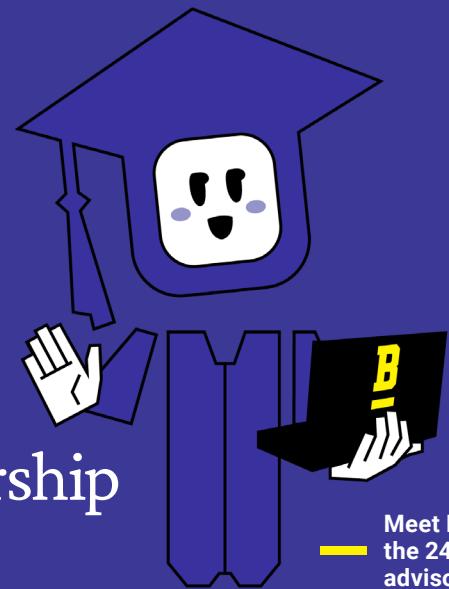
That student was Amani, who submitted the winning design for our AI-powered *Bluprint* program logo contest three years earlier. She never imagined her creative contribution would eventually become the chatbot face of Blu that students came to endear and the foundation for a personalized career mentorship experience.

"I've been wanting to do this for years," Amani said about her opportunity to redesign her original contest-winning logo. "Ever since I designed the first Blu, I knew that once

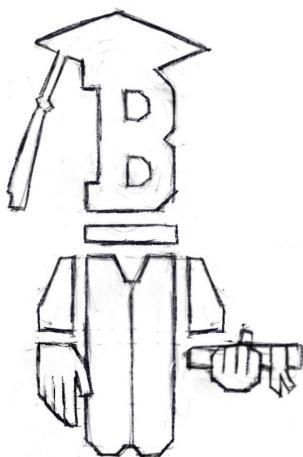
I developed the skills to do digital art, I would love to go back and revamp it." As a first-generation college student in Bottom Line's *Bluprint* program and senior at the Fashion Institute of Technology, Amani was approaching graduation when this unique opportunity arose.

For us, we were at a crossroads: *Bluprint* had just moved out of pilot to become an official offering, and we needed a more polished, scalable version of Amani's original sketch to transition it into its new era. Instead of simply hiring a freelancer or design firm, we proposed something different: What if we could partner Amani with an industry professional who could mentor and guide her through a real-life work experience, while allowing her to maintain creative ownership over Blu?

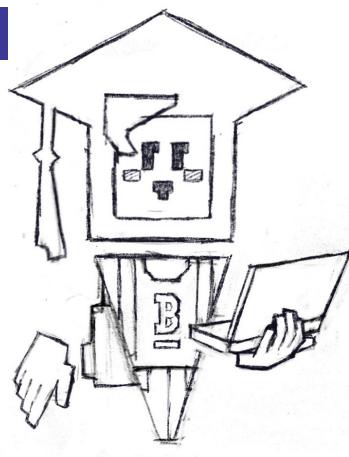
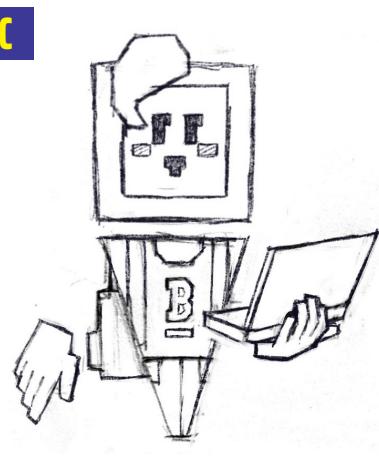
We pitched the idea to a vendor who had done past work with us. Julia, owner of Stone Soup Creative,



Meet Blu,
the 24/7
advisor.

A

Early concept sketches of Blu created by student designer Amani.

B**C**

quickly embraced this unconventional proposal without hesitation. "There's only limited time in class to learn everything about your chosen career path," Julia explained. "What's most often missing is real-world application. When working for clients, it's a different dynamic; it's not about expressing your own creativity—it's about solving their problems and achieving their objectives."

Over six weeks, Julia structured their partnership like a professional design studio contract arrangement, with Amani as lead designer and herself as art director. Together, they navigated creative briefings, developed multiple logo iterations from black-and-white sketches to full color, incorporated client feedback, and delivered a comprehensive suite of digital assets to Bottom Line.

For Amani, the experience was substantive and boundary-breaking. "I found it super fun to draw Blu and think of all the different ways I could spin the design. I tried a lot of variants - maybe I should round the jaw more, maybe I should round the face more, maybe everything should be square. This project made me really test the limits of what I could do with Blu."

But beyond the creative exploration, Amani gained something invaluable: enhanced confidence in her ability to thrive in professional environments. The project resulted in a portfolio piece created under real workplace conditions and opened doors for future opportunities through the relationships she built.

"I found that every time I've built a strong connection with a mentor, I've gotten opportunities that I wouldn't have otherwise found," Amani said, before pointing to a gap she witnessed within some higher ed programs. "Internship programs and mentorships should be pushed more at colleges. There was a lack of support for the art students at my school, unless they were under the umbrella of fashion business management



Julia, owner of Stone Soup Creative, served as design mentor during Blu's creation.

majors. Many people don't know where to look for art mentorships. It's not like something you can easily find on LinkedIn, and if you do, you have to really dig."

Reacting to the same topic of work experience gaps, Julia reflected on the experience and felt that she and others could do more for students through simple acts of professional generosity. "I'm just a regular community member. Maybe I could tell my husband, who teaches art history at a local college, 'You have access to all these students. If they need someone with professional experience, I'm here.' She continued, "What I could also do as a community member is help students see the world more broadly. That's really what makes creative people move beyond—when they can have more experiences and remain open to input and stimulation."

Amani's story demonstrates that meaningful mentorship doesn't require massive institutional programs—sometimes it just takes one community member willing to share their expertise in support of a student's success. In a world where first-generation students must navigate career development without inherited professional networks, community devotion and goodwill are essential to fostering more substantial opportunities for students. Each one of us can offer our time, resources, and knowledge as additions to a student's social capital, which is often the most influential piece to career success. **B**

CHICAGO



Why the Saying *Dress for Success* Means More at Bottom Line

"I found out about Bottom Line's Career Closet, ironically, at a Bottom Line event two years back," recalled Keitah Jones, a junior at Dominican University majoring in Psychology and Black World Studies. "I don't remember how the conversation sparked, but I remember asking what those clothes in the corner were for. I was told it was a donation for students who needed professional-looking clothes, but it wasn't getting used often, which was shocking to me."



Keitah Jones, a junior at Dominican University majoring in Psychology and Black World Studies.

That moment of curiosity would later prove invaluable. When Keitah began preparing for multiple job interviews, she returned to that corner with the racks of clothes—the Chicago Career Closet—and discovered a resource that would change how she approached her vocational journey.

Founded in 2024 by Bottom Line Advisors who recognized a gap in student resources and took action, the closet is now overseen by Chicago's career connections director, Monserrat Gutiérrez, who organizes the collection of community clothing donations, manages the closet's inventory, and actively advertises it as a resource to students. "They had shirts, pants, blouses, pantsuits, bags, shoes, dresses, etc. You name it, they most likely had it," Keitah said. "I was able to gather items to present myself in a manner to be taken seriously, and I didn't have to stress about coming up with funds as a college student to invest in looking professional."

The resource is an extension of Bottom Line's signature DEAL model, which guides the organization's Success program. The "E" in DEAL stands for employability, and the Career Closet embodies this commitment—partnering with students so they have all the knowledge and savvy to set themselves apart and showcase what they bring to the table from day one. "I hate to admit it, but how you dress and how you are perceived is extremely important to employers; it tells them about you and allows them to make a judgment about you before you open your mouth," expressed Keitah, and she is not alone in her outlook.

"I think dressing professionally in an environment where presentability matters makes you feel like you belong," stated Giovanni Escobedo, a junior at Illinois

State University, who landed his first internship with a construction company in Florida. His Bottom Line Advisor, Michael, worked with him to ensure he secured the opportunity, and then when the time came to prepare for the summer experience, he checked in about whether he had adequate attire for the role. Giovanni didn't, but was relieved when Michael connected him to the Career Closet. "Business casual clothing can get pretty expensive, so having access to the variety of clothes that they had made me feel supported."

More than just a resource for business apparel, it serves students as a gateway to learn corporate conduct and gain pointers for making great first impressions.

For Sharon Mendoza, a senior studying Industrial Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the Career Closet answered many of her questions and concerns about how to show up in white-collar spaces. "My parents have always been my biggest source of encouragement and continue to sacrifice for me in every way they can, but they don't work in traditional office jobs. I didn't really have a frame of reference at home for what to wear or who to ask for help." Her advisor was there to ease her mind and didn't just hand her clothes; she taught her which styles were appropriate for different work settings, how to pick out staple pieces, and how to mix items from her own wardrobe to build complete outfits. "It made the whole process feel more approachable and empowering rather than overwhelming."



Sharon Mendoza, a senior studying Industrial Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The right outfit for the right occasion induces confidence that is contagious, and the closet has been spreading that self-assurance to all the students it interacts with. Even though he had never done a professional internship before, Giovanni arrived with purpose and presence. "It kind of made me look like I knew what I was doing, and I was there for a reason," he reflected.

"Having those outfits ready allowed me to focus on building connections and on performing my best rather than worrying about how I looked. It boosted both my outward confidence and my inner sense of readiness," Sharon explained.

No detail is too small when preparing first-generation students for career success, and Bottom Line Advisors know this, which is why they serve students above and beneath the surface. The closet represents just one thread in a larger tapestry of support. "I've gotten emergency funding, emotional and academic support, support with wardrobe, learned skills that will help my professional career, and I've networked through Bottom Line. Things that may have taken people months or years to access, I have gained access to through Bottom Line," said Keitah. And I want to acknowledge the donors who generously give what they have to provide college students trying to find their way with clothes that are not only cute but also professional-looking."

What began with dedicated advisors wanting to champion students, ensuring they were dressed for the aspirations they aimed to achieve, has opened up to be so much more than a clothing resource—it's a testament to what's possible when a community wears the role of ally to first-generation students. "Knowing that I have this kind of support system behind me, from my parents to advisors, keeps me going and pushes me to make the most of opportunities," Giovanni stated with full sincerity. ■

All in

1. **(Phrase):** completely committed to f
2. **(Verb):** to show up fully as a commu
as a Go Far Volunteer, as a Donor, As

Synonyms: to champion, commit, co

first-gen success.

Community, as a Relentless Ally,
as a Partner, as One Bottom Line.

Connect, uplift, empower, believe, build.

OHIO

Mary Got In. Now She's Building Connections and Going Far

Mary Ely-Holden is a freshman in college majoring in communications, but she'll be the first to tell you—she doesn't have it all figured out yet. "I'm not sure entirely what I want to do with it, but what I know is that I love people. I like talking to people, interacting with people, learning about people. I'm the kind of person who will strike up conversations on the street with a stranger." To her relief, she's not navigating this uncertainty alone. "My advisor is helping me figure things out." It's the kind of support she's come to rely on from Bottom Line—guidance that is there for students not just to get into college, but find their path once they're there.

Mary first discovered Bottom Line during spring of her junior year at Trotwood-Madison High School, thanks to a habit that had already paid off. There was a billboard at her school listing opportunities for students where Mary had found a \$2,500 scholarship. Having that reward come from the board kept her coming back periodically, checking to see what new possibilities might appear. Then one day, she spotted information about Bottom Line Ohio recruiting students for its Access program and applied.

"My experience with Bottom Line has been amazing in all honesty," Mary reflected. What started as one more flyer on a bulletin board became a resource and safe haven in the midst of unthinkable challenges. During December of her senior year, Mary became homeless.



Without a residence to provide stability, she turned to Bottom Line.

"Bottom Line became a place to get away from it all, a place to study, a place to just hang out and receive support during a difficult time. They supported me with everything, including connecting me to local food pantries."

Mary Ely-Holden

University of Dayton freshman

Mary even won a laptop through a Bottom Line raffle, which was significant in helping her keep up with her senior year workload.

Through it all, Mary kept pushing forward using her own determination as fuel. She maintained her grades, executed all of the steps of the college exploration process, completed her applications, and refused to let her circumstances define her future. And then she played the waiting game. Despite all of her hard work and resilience, nerves still lurked in her mind. "Even if



19

Mary Ely-Holden is a freshman in college majoring in communications.

you do phenomenally in high school, you still have the fear of what if. So to just see my hard work pay off and have the scholarships and acceptance letters roll in felt amazing. It was one of the best feelings in the world."

Today, Mary lives on the University of Dayton (UD) campus as a student in the UD Sinclair Academy program—a cost-effective pathway that allows her to complete her first two years at Sinclair Community College and seamlessly transfer credits and become a full UD student for the remaining two years of her bachelor's degree. Although she takes her classes at Sinclair, she is able to live in UD's dorms and access all of the private university's resources.

But the transition hasn't been without its growing pains; making friends in her Sinclair community college classes requires extra effort. "There are gaps between myself and the other students because we are coming from various positions in life. Some students are much older and returning for learning experiences, some are parents balancing responsibilities while earning a degree to create a better life for their children, etc, so it can be hard to foster friendships." When your peers are navigating completely different life stages, the traditional experience of bonding with classmates takes on a unique shape.

Yet Mary is finding her people. She works as a cashier at the bookstore, thriving in those checkout line

conversations. She's joined an astronomy club, where she attends events like s'mores under the stars. In her ethics club, discussions test and expand her thinking. Each space offers an avenue for belonging, a chance to network and build the relationships that will carry her through college and beyond.

"I feel like going to college is not only setting me up for a successful future, but transforming me, whether it is just the information I get in class, or growing from meeting new people, I believe the experience is turning me into a better person."

Mary is one of the 90% of Bottom Line Ohio Access students who committed to college this past year. She got in. And now, with support, persistence, and her gift for relating to people, there's no doubt that she will go far.

Bottom Line Ohio will continue to be an active partner by her side. As the organization expands its footprint to more high schools—including Hamilton, West Carrollton, and Springfield—and deepens partnerships with Miami University, Sinclair College, Wright State University, and the University of Dayton through this year's launch of its Success program, the goal is clear: to serve more students so that outcomes like Mary's are the rule, rather than the exception. **B**

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

A Community Committed to Student Well-Being: Words From The JED Foundation

Supporting the mental health of first-generation students is essential to their success, yet many organizations lack the resources and infrastructure to address these critical needs. This year, Bottom Line strengthened its partnership with The Jed Foundation (JED), a leading national nonprofit dedicated to



— Kiana Davis, JED Foundation Director, Community Initiatives

protecting emotional health and preventing suicide among our nation's teens and young adults. Through this collaboration, made possible by a grant from Fidelis Care and the Centene Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Centene Corporation, Bottom Line is increasing its capacity to support student mental health and well-being. We asked JED to reflect on the importance of this partnership and the ripple effect it creates for first-generation students, their families, and their communities:

"First-generation students are incredible trailblazers, often navigating education systems with unique pressures, balancing academic demands with financial responsibilities, family expectations, and the challenges of being the first in their family to pursue a degree. These stressors can significantly impact mental health. Supporting the emotional well-being of first-generation students helps ensure that they persist academically and thrive personally.

Organizations that serve students directly are uniquely positioned to shape the environments where young people learn, grow, and seek support. In our initial work with Bottom Line, we found that advisors are deeply committed to supporting students not only academically and professionally, but also in developing life skills and maintaining their well-being. Through our strategic planning efforts and training that help staff support students holistically, we are building on the strong trust between students and advisors to ensure staff feel confident and equipped to participate in mental health conversations.

By building youth-serving staff capacity to support student mental health, those staff members can feel strengthened and sustained in their daily work. This



Shenita Graham, Bottom Line's Director of Culturally Responsive Programming, seated with fellow panelists at The Jed Foundation's Policy Summit on youth mental health.

support creates a multiplier effect: Students gain tools to manage stress and build resilience, staff feel empowered in their roles, and the broader community benefits from a culture where mental health is openly prioritized.

On a personal note, many of us at JED, including myself, are first-gen and understand the impact of receiving both academic opportunities and mental health support during pivotal times. That dual investment in skills and well-being can change the trajectory of a young person's life, and organizations such as Bottom Line are ideally positioned to provide that life-changing support.

In partnership with Bottom Line, our role is to listen, assess, and collaborate to create a sustainable culture of care that uplifts young people. JED serves as a trusted partner and guide, providing the expertise, evidence-informed recommended practices, and technical assistance needed to strengthen organizational capacity around mental health. We envision a ripple effect that extends far beyond individual students, and we're grateful to Bottom Line for their commitment to student well-being and for welcoming us as a partner in this important work." 

DETROIT

Authenticity in Action



HS students
gather after
Access workshop.

Bottom Line Detroit launched recruitment for its high school Access program with an unforgettable strategy rooted in community and culture. Working with nine school partners across Detroit's diverse neighborhoods, the team created experiences that made higher education feel accessible to students who might have seen college as distant or out of reach.

The key ingredient at recruitment events has been authenticity. Danielle North, Bottom Line Detroit's founding executive director, has had a goal to create connection points that uplift the cultures and rich backgrounds of the first-generation students Bottom Line's program is designed to engage.

With workshops that allow young people to meet Bottom Line through things they love, like music and the arts, the vision for recruitment is manifesting better than the Detroit

team and its local partners had hoped. As they provide information about the free college access programming, DJs filled the room with energy. The Bottom Line team and volunteers orchestrated fun freestyle rap battles that allowed students to turn their college dreams into energetic bars and verses that morphed abstract aspirations into something they could visualize for their futures.

These weren't just one-off events but opportunities to create core memories they could take with them throughout their journeys. The students felt heard, celebrated, and internalized college completion into something they could resonate with. The impact rippled outwards as funders invested in the creative structure, school partners leaned in with enthusiasm, and community leaders rallied around this fresh approach. For Danielle, this groundswell of support laid the foundation needed to recruit through genuine care and relationship-building that will foster a long-lasting presence in Detroit. ■

Detroit Already Has 9 School Partners!

- Northwestern High School
- School at Marygrove
- East English Village Preparatory Academy
- DEPSA
- UPA Schools: UPSM, UPA, UPAD
- Jalen Rose Leadership Academy
- Cody High School

Danielle North, Bottom Line Detroit's Founding Executive Director, sharing dance moves with students during an Access recruitment event.



SENIOR LEADERSHIP

73% of Bottom Line senior leadership are first-generation college graduates.



Steve Colón
Chief Executive Officer



Alissa Silverman
Chief Regional Officer



Brian Alexander
Vice President of Regional Growth



Danielle North
Founding Executive Director, Detroit



Farhad Asghar
Chief Growth Officer



Gabrielle Gilliam
Executive Director, New York



James Crosby
Founding Executive Director, Ohio



Jennifer Reid Davis
Executive Director, Chicago



Shannon Donnelly
Chief Operating and Financial Officer

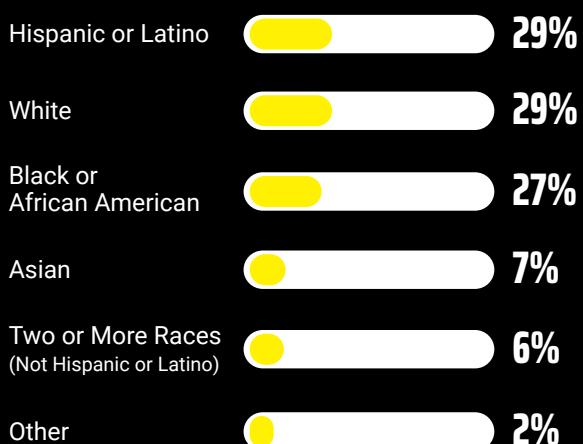


Shauwea Hamilton
Chief Impact Officer



Shaleena Gaskin
Executive Director, Massachusetts

STAFF RACE/ETHNICITY DEMOGRAPHIC DATA



24%

OF BOTTOM LINE STAFF
IDENTIFY AS FIRST-GENERATION
COLLEGE GRADUATES

SENIOR LEADERSHIP RACE/ETHNICITY DEMOGRAPHIC DATA





2025 DONORS AND CHAMPIONS

*Listings are for Bottom Line fiscal year 2025, from July 2024 to June 2025.

Multi-Year Investors

Thank you to our generous champions who are in the midst of a multi-year investment in Bottom Line.

Donor	Donor Range
The Connor Group Kids & Community Partners	\$1M+
Crown Family Philanthropies	\$1M+
Anonymous	\$1M+
Michael & Susan Dell Foundation	\$1M+
ECMC Foundation	\$1M+
Coach Foundation	\$1M+
JPMorgan Chase Foundation	\$1M+
The Richard Li Charitable Fund	\$1M+
Vivo Foundation	\$250K+
The Wilson Sheehan Foundation	\$250K+
FactSet Charitable Foundation	\$250K+
The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	\$250K+
Laura and John Arnold Foundation	\$250K+
Greenlight Fund	\$250K+
The Ballmer Group/Michigan College Access Network	\$250K+
Kresge Foundation	\$250K+
Carol and Gene Ludwig Family Foundation	\$250K+
Carnegie Corporation of New York	\$250K+
Solon E. Summerfield Foundation, Inc.	\$250K+
Altman Foundation	\$250K+
The Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation	\$250K+
Johnson Scholarship Foundation	\$100k-\$249,999
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Lloyd G. Balfour Foundation, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee	\$100k-\$249,999
Ann and Tom Murphy	\$100k-\$249,999
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Liberty Mutual Foundation	\$100K-\$249,999
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Anonymous	\$100K-\$249,999
The Chicago Community Foundation - The SUSA Fund	\$100K-\$249,999
Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust	\$100K-\$249,999
Ichigo Foundation	\$100k-\$249,999
Capital Group	\$100k-\$249,999
Shaw's Supermarkets	\$50K-\$99,999
Shippy Foundation	\$50K-\$99,999

Donor	Donor Range
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Peter and Natasha Bowen	\$50K-\$99,999
Mark and Borbala Cox	\$50K-\$99,999
Tortora Silcox Family Foundation	\$50K-\$99,999
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Ravi Acharya and Simran Sidhu	\$25K-\$49,999
Wendy John	\$10K-\$24,999
Robert C. Ballard	\$10K-\$24,999
Henry E. Niles Foundation	\$10K-\$24,999

Champions

Thank you to our annual supporters for their generous investment in Bottom Line.

PwC Charitable Foundation, Inc.	\$1M+	The Baupost Group, LCC	\$100k-\$249,999	Polk Bros. Foundation	\$50K-\$99,999
A Better Chicago Fund, a Fund of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation	\$250K+	The Chicago Community Trust	\$100k-\$249,999	The Commonwealth of Massachusetts	\$50K-\$99,999
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Charles Hayden Foundation	\$250K+	The TJX Companies	\$100k-\$249,999	The Janey Fund Charitable Trust	\$50K-\$99,999
Hope Chicago	\$250K+	Tiger Foundation	\$100k-\$249,999	The Mifflin Memorial Fund	\$50K-\$99,999
NBA Foundation	\$250K+	Wellington Management Foundation	\$100k-\$249,999	Ada Howe Kent Foundation	\$25K-\$49,999
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Finnegan Family Foundation	\$100k-\$249,999	Fidelity Investments	\$50K-\$99,999	American Tower Corporation	\$25K-\$49,999
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Robert R. McCormick Foundation	\$100k-\$249,999	Jewish Foundation for Education of Women	\$50K-\$99,999	Breckinridge Capital Advisors	\$25K-\$49,999
Robin Hood	\$100k-\$249,999	MFS Investment Management	\$50K-\$99,999	Carl and Pat Greer Donor Advised Fund, a Donor Advised Fund of the U.S. Charitable Gift Trust	\$25K-\$49,999
State Street Foundation	\$100k-\$249,999	National Grid	\$50K-\$99,999	Chicago Public Schools	\$25K-\$49,999
Takeda Pharmaceutical Company	\$100k-\$249,999	New Balance Foundation	\$50K-\$99,999	Chicago White Sox	\$25K-\$49,999
		Omega Community Development Corporation	\$50K-\$99,999	Community Fund, a Fund of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation	\$25K-\$49,999
				Clearwater Analytics	\$25K-\$49,999
				Costco Wholesale	\$25K-\$49,999
				Derek and Marejka Townsend	\$25K-\$49,999

Fordham Street Foundation	\$25K-\$49,999	CFI Partners	\$10K-\$24,999	Origami Works Foundation	\$10K-\$24,999
Franklin Templeton Charitable Foundation	\$25K-\$49,999	College Board	\$10K-\$24,999	P&G Fund	\$10K-\$24,999
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Keld Agnar and Judy Ryerson	\$25K-\$49,999	Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation	\$10K-\$24,999	State Street Corporation	\$10K-\$24,999
Laura Sen and John O'Connor	\$25K-\$49,999	eClinicalWorks	\$10K-\$24,999	Steve and Anne Peacher	\$10K-\$24,999
Loomis, Sayles & Company	\$25K-\$49,999	Eversource Energy	\$10K-\$24,999	Stone Core Shell Construction	\$10K-\$24,999
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Parry VanLandingham	\$1K- \$4,999
Proskauer	\$1K- \$4,999

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Raina Whitfield and Stewart Davis	\$1K- \$4,999
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Sarah Andrekus and Katie McGeough	\$1K- \$4,999
Saranya Fitzgibbon	\$1K- \$4,999
Scott Flynn	\$1K- \$4,999
Scott Grossnickle	\$1K- \$4,999
Sean Barry	\$1K- \$4,999
Sean Kenney	\$1K- \$4,999
Sean Lynch	\$1K- \$4,999
Shayne Evans	\$1K- \$4,999
Sivan and Jeff Hines	\$1K- \$4,999
Stephanie Franklin	\$1K- \$4,999
Steve Dwight	\$1K- \$4,999
Steven M Kornblau	\$1K- \$4,999
Sunwealth	\$1K- \$4,999
Susan and Alan Silberberg	\$1K- \$4,999
Susannah Schmid	\$1K- \$4,999
T. Rowe Price	\$1K- \$4,999
Ted Herrmann-McLeod	\$1K- \$4,999
Terrance Healy	\$1K- \$4,999
Terri and Denio Bolzan	\$1K- \$4,999
The Charles and Margaret Clark Family Charitable Fund	\$1K- \$4,999
The Cooperative Bank	\$1K- \$4,999
The Foodbank, Inc.	\$1K- \$4,999
The Lede Company	\$1K- \$4,999
The Pritzker Traubert Family Foundation	\$1K- \$4,999
Thomas O'Connell	\$1K- \$4,999
Tom and Leslee Kiley	\$1K- \$4,999
Tracy Duffy	\$1K- \$4,999
University of Chicago Crime Lab and Education Lab	\$1K- \$4,999
Uthra Sundaram	\$1K- \$4,999
VML Foundation	\$1K- \$4,999
Walsh Construction	\$1K- \$4,999
Webster Five Foundation	\$1K- \$4,999
Wells Fargo	\$1K- \$4,999
Wentworth Institute of Technology	\$1K- \$4,999
Zachary Fogelson	\$1K- \$4,999

ALL IN FOR LEADERSHIP

Celebrating leadership transitions and the shared commitment that powers Bottom Line's mission.

This year, Bottom Line's Board of Directors transitions reflect the powerful strength of our community and the shared belief in what's possible for first-gen students. We extend our heartfelt thanks to **Mike Refojo, Jim Jesse, and Alejandro Longoria** for their years of service and steadfast dedication to our mission.

We also celebrate and welcome **Erin Cowhig** and **Jabari Porter** to the Board of Directors. Two leaders deeply rooted in our regional networks and relentless in their commitment to equity and opportunity. Their leadership will carry forward the vision that unites us all: partnering with students as they get in, graduate, and go far.

WELCOME



Erin Cowhig
Former Chief People Officer,
Nimbus Therapeutics



Jabari Porter
Head of Investment Grade
Fixed Income, CFI Partners

FAREWELL



Mike Refojo
Senior Vice President,
Institutional Sales,
Fidelity Investments



Jim Jesse
Retired, Strategic Advisor &
Co-Head of Global Distribution,
MFS Investment Management



Alejandro Longoria
President, TWG Global

IN THE NEWS

The policies surrounding higher education profoundly affect our students' ability to get in, graduate, and go far. Throughout the year, Bottom Line showed up in the public sphere to advocate for equitable access and amplify the real experiences of first-generation students. Here are a few moments where our voice helped move the conversation forward.



Politico: Education Department Delays Release of Financial Aid form—Again



University Business: Knocking on Wood for this Year's FAFSA Rollout



Word In Black: Why We Need to Protect Pell Grants for Black Students



Chicago Tribune: Higher education pays off in Illinois, but economic barriers persist, study says



CollegeXpress: Finding Your Best Fit Post—Affirmative Action



WWD: Coach Commits \$20M to Student Scholarships



The Knockturnal: Star Power Meets Purpose: Bottom Line's Spring Benefit Lights Up New York

2025 FINANCIALS

Statement of Financial Position

Statement of Financial Position

Cash and Investments:	\$19,101,882	Total Assets:	\$33,582,184
Contributions Receivable:	\$9,173,152	Current Liabilities:	\$2,253,907
Total Financial Assets:	\$26,602,530	Long-term Lease Obligations: (Operating Lease Obligation, Net of Current Portion)	\$3,490,587
Net Assets with Donor Restrictions:	\$14,100,684	Net Assets:	\$27,832,690
Financial Assets Available to Meet Cash Needs for General Expenditures within One Year:	\$6,002,284	Total Liabilities and Net Assets:	\$33,582,184
Other Financial Assets:	\$4,752,296		

Statement of Activities

Total Revenue and Support:	\$20,484,331	Net Assets, End of Year:	\$27,832,690
Total Expenses:	\$26,312,137	Net Cash Provided by Operating Activities:	\$8,490,135
Change in Net Assets:	\$(5,828,806)	Net Cash Provided (Used) for investing:	\$152,813
Net Assets, Beginning of Year:	\$33,661,496	Contributions Received for Endowment:	\$150,000

Bottom Line's reserves and invested assets are overseen by the Board's Finance & Investment Committee and invested in alignment with Board-approved policies that support the organization's mission, financial stewardship, and long-term sustainability.

B

**THANK YOU,
RELENTLESS
ALLIES**

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