

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Group helps low-income students access college, careers



Meredith Moss

For many area students, going to college can seem unattainable. From navigating financial aid to

making decisions about a future career path, the postsecondary process can be overwhelming.

That's where the organization known as Bottom Line comes in. This nonprofit helps first-generation students from low-income households get into college, graduate, and become a vital part of the future workforce. Through free, personalized advising, the organization supports students during some of the most critical transition points in their academic and professional lives. Bottom Line serves students in Dayton, West Carrollton, Northmont, Mad River, Springfield, Winton Woods and Hamilton City Schools.

"College success isn't just about grades," said Bottom Line Executive Director James Cosby. "If a student is worried about whether they'll eat tonight or have access to toilets, it's incredibly hard to

focus on long-term goals."

Bottom Line works closely with high school students as they explore college options, apply to schools, find scholarships and complete financial aid applications. Advisors help students compare affordability, avoid excessive student debt, and select institutions where they are most likely to thrive. Once students enroll, that support continues through graduation, addressing both academic and personal challenges that can otherwise derail progress.

Bottom Line's impact extends beyond college graduation. Students receive guidance on career readiness, professional networking, and navigating life after college, helping them move into meaningful employment and long-term financial stability. The organization's outcomes consistently show higher graduation rates for students participating in its programs than the national average for low-income college students.

Mary, a graduate of Bottom Line's Access program, is a current participant in the College Success program and spoke at the organization's recent



Mary is one of Bottom Line's success stories. Bottom Line works closely with high school students as they explore college options, apply to schools, find scholarships and complete financial aid applications. CONTRIBUTED KNACK VIDEO + PHOTO

Breakfast of Champions held in April which celebrated local students and Bottom Line partners of the year, Omega Community Development Corporation and the Wilson Sheehan Foundation.

"My Bottom Line advisor helped me get into college, and their food pantry helped me and my brothers get by when I was living in my car in high school," said Mary, a Trotwood-Madison High School

graduate who is now a communications major at the University of Dayton.

How to help

Many of the students Bottom Line serves face significant socioeconomic barriers, including food insecurity and lack of access to basic necessities. That's where our Make a Difference readers can help.

To address immediate needs, Bottom Line oper-

ates a food and hygiene pantry at its downtown Dayton office. The pantry provides students with groceries, personal care items, and household essentials – resources that can make the difference between staying focused on coursework or missing class to meet basic needs.

Here's what they need:

- Dry cereal
- Beef jerky
- Fruit snacks
- Gas gift cards

- Walmart gift cards
- Wireless headphones
- Roller bag luggage
- Battery power banks
- Backpacks
- Ramen
- Easy mac

Donations can be dropped off from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 118 W. First St., Suite 850 Dayton on Monday, Wednesday or Friday and can also be mailed to the same address.

Other needs

Volunteers are needed to mentor students, help set up events and serve on the board and committees. If you're interested, reach out to bottomlineohio@gmail.com.

Community members can mail checks, ship items, or set up a meeting to learn more by emailing bottomlineohio@gmail.com.

If you know of a student who could benefit from the organization's programs, visit bottomline.org to learn how to apply.

Meredith Moss writes about nonprofit organizations and their wish lists. If you know of an organization that would like to be included, contact Meredith: Meredith.Moss@coxinc.com. Please include a phone number.