



Stamford Achieves Launches “Beyond Limits Scholars Program”

Pilot Program to Begin August 18 at the UCONN Stamford Campus

For Immediate Release:

Media Contact:

Margaret Hart
(203) 461-9870
margaretahart@gmail.com

STAMFORD, Conn., August 11, 2014—Stamford Achieves, a nonprofit organization that serves as an advocate and catalyst for closing the achievement gap in Stamford Public Schools, today announced that it will launch a pilot summer bridge program designed to support the significant number of students that enter high school unprepared for the academic and social challenges awaiting them. Stamford’s economically disadvantaged population is particularly vulnerable. The new Beyond Limits Scholars Program (BLSP) will focus on basic skills training and exposure to available school and district support resources.

Participation by Stamford Achieves in the High School Call to Action Committee (HSCAC) served as an impetus for this initiative. “We have been closely tracking the eighth to ninth grade transition, and the success of freshmen in the public high schools,” said Andy Sklover, Director of Education and Advocacy for Stamford Achieves. “Given the urgency expressed by the HSCAC, it became abundantly clear that many students need additional assistance.”

The BLSP will begin on August 18 with a dynamic week of programming at the University of Connecticut’s Stamford campus. Approximately 30 students from Stamford’s middle schools are registered to participate in the free pilot program. Scholars were selected by a committee of middle school principals, guidance counselors, and teachers, and were required to complete an application, a program agreement, and an interview at their middle school. Participants who successfully finish the week-long program in August will be provided with additional academic, social and emotional supports throughout their 2014 – 2015 freshman year.

Thomas Pereira, Dean of Students of Westhill High School, along with teachers and guidance counselors hired by Stamford Achieves, will oversee the program. BLSP staff will also be present at the comprehensive high schools to further support its scholars, along with upper classmen who will serve as peer mentors. “As the Dean and a former ninth-grade teacher, I see the transition that our middle school students face as they move from middle school to a larger and less structured environment,” said Pereira. “It is a significant problem when many struggle with the self-direction and autonomy that high school demands. Our goal with this program is to ease the transition by exposing students to a number of different activities geared towards transitions. Hopefully they will build enough of this capacity to help them to become more self-directed learners, and peer leaders,” he said.

The BLSP curriculum will include topics such as: organization and time management; note taking, study and research skills; self-efficacy; career exploration; personal goals and long-range planning; leveraging technology and social media etiquette; as well as overviews of the high school curriculum, grade requirements, guidance departments, schedules, policies and procedures.

“The concept behind the BLSP is personalization,” said Dr. Michael Fernandes, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Schools and Chair of the HSCAC, which comprises more than 50 volunteers focused on redesigning and improving the district’s high schools. “Along with their parents, the BLSP will educate students about their high school experience, and provide them with ‘go to’ resources for academic success, like individual and small group meetings, peer mentoring, and special events, to give meaningful connections and support for their transition to high school,” he said.

“Data, locally and from across the country, highlight the academic and social challenges of transitioning to high school,” said Sklover. “The good news is that the Stamford Public Schools are focusing on this issue and have demonstrated a commitment to identifying and implementing effective solutions. We are pleased to be launching this pilot program in collaboration with the Stamford Public Schools, Stamford YMCA, The Ferguson Library, Stamford Public Education Foundation, The Mayor’s Youth Employment Program, Future 5, and the University of Connecticut – Stamford Campus. In addition to the resources of Stamford Achieves, we gratefully acknowledge the support of Amanda & David Russekoff, the Lone Pine Foundation, The Per and Astrid Heidenreich Family Foundation, and Purdue Pharma.”

For more information about the Beyond Limits Scholars Program, including information for businesses and individuals interested in providing resources or partnering with Stamford Achieves, please contact Andy Sklover, Director of Education and Advocacy at: blsp@stamfordachieves.org, or call (203) 561-5631.

<**image Andy Sklover.jpeg**> Andy Sklover, Director of Education and Advocacy for Stamford Achieves, meets with students and parents at the “Beyond Limits Scholars Program” orientation on June 9, 2014. Photo credit: Jack Rosenfeld.

<**image ThomasPereira.jpeg**> Thomas Pereira, Dean of Students at Stamford’s Westhill High School, and Program Coordinator of the “Beyond Limits Scholars Program,” speaks to students and families at the program orientation in June. Photo credit: Jack Rosenfeld.

<**Image Dr. Michael Fernandes.jpeg**> Dr. Michael S. Fernandes, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Schools, Stamford Public Schools, speaks to middle school students and their families about the transition to high school, at the “Beyond Limits Scholars Program” orientation on June 9, 2014. Photo credit: Jack Rosenfeld.

About Stamford Achieves

To ensure a quality education for all students, Stamford Achieves engages with individuals, families, civic and religious organizations, associations, and corporations to identify, develop, support and promote initiatives that can narrow and ultimately eliminate the persistent achievement gap. For more information, please visit our website: www.stamfordachieves.org, sign-up for our newsletter, visit us on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/stamfordachieves, follow us on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/sachieves> or send us an email at: info@stamfordachieves.org.

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