

Millburn-Short Hills Scholastic Boosters Launches Annual Campaign

By Henry M. Holden

Since 1947, the Millburn-Short Hills Scholastic Boosters, has been raising money for educational grants to support local college students trying to close the shortfall in their financial needs.

It all started with a group of fathers of Millburn High School football players that gathered to organize a dinner to celebrate a successful football season. While planning the event, the fathers became aware that Edward Miller, one of the seniors on the team, was not only a standout athlete, but also an excellent student and all-around student leader but he was lacking the money to attend college.

Robert Hart, who would

become the Boosters' founding member, would later write, "To the men who organized that dinner, this was an unacceptable prospect for a young man whose potential was fully equal to any of their own sons."

The organizers decided that the proceeds of their dinner would go toward helping this senior with college expenses. They further decided to create an organization to address similar needs of worthy township students moving forward. And so, The Millburn-Short Hills Scholastic Boosters was born.

Over the past 70 years, more than 1,000 students have received awards totaling more than one million dollars.

With the costs of college tuition rising, and wages often remaining stagnant, Jennifer Baer, president of the Millburn-Short Hills Scholastic Boosters, said that while applications have increased in recent years, donations to the group have declined just as students' loan debt is on the rise.

"The loan debt among college kids is astronomical now," she said, citing a "Wall Street Journal" story which said just more than 20 years ago, the average graduate with student-loan debt was faced with paying back slightly more than \$10,000. For 2016 graduates, that number has more than tripled to \$37,000, up six percent over the earlier year's graduates. She said

that "The Congress has compounded debt not legislating to lower student loan interest rates."

Parents taking out loans for their children are also affected. According to US News & World Report, Parents Plus loans will have a 6.31 percent interest rate for the 2016-17 school year.

"For many deserving local students, the challenge of assembling a financial package to attend college becomes more difficult each year," said Baer. "With the ever-increasing costs of tuition, room and board, and even textbooks, which alone can reach upwards of \$700 a semester, more students face the prospect of substantial debt

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Millburn Short Hills Scholastic Boosters President Jennifer Baer, from left, and Vice President Rick Sacks met with Kim Kaminski, Investors Bank branch manager and assistant vice president, to announce the bank's becoming presenter of the annual "Give A Boost" award

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when they graduate."

In recent years, individual Boosters grants, which are based on proven financial need, have ranged from \$500 to \$1,500 for the school year.

"We look at several criteria to determine a student's eligibility," said Rick Sacks, vice president of Millburn-Short Hills Scholastic Boosters. "We check the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA will give us the big picture of the financial situation of the parents. We will also see if the student will be receiving any aid from the college. We check for Pell Grants and Stafford loans, also."

Baer made the point that

unlike government and private loans, support from the Boosters is a gift, and need not be repaid. "Every student, and the family, who receives a Boosters Grant has already been willing to put himself or herself under considerable financial commitments that will follow them well past their college years," Baer said. "But, they still face a shortfall in their funding package."

In June 2009, The Boosters introduced a new award the "Give-a-Boost Award" to recognize a Millburn High School senior who has achieved an excellent academic record, and who has shown diverse academic, community and personal interests, and accomplish-

ments during his or her high school career. Provided by Investors Bank, this is not a need-based award. The selection of the winner of the \$1,000 award is made by The Boosters' Board with the assistance of the Millburn High School Guidance Department.

A typical example of the award's high standards is Jake Gerrard who received the award in 2016.

Gerrard was a member of the Millburn and Congressional Debate teams, progressing to the final round in the State Championship for Congressional Debate. He also was a member of the Track and Cross-Country teams, and a certified EMT with the Millburn-Short Hills Vol-

unteer First Aid Squad. A National Merit Scholar, Gerard was a Presidential Scholar Nominee, and a recipient of the National Forensics League Degree of Distinction.

"Right now, our only fund raising source is an annual mailing to our community," said Sacks. "The Boosters work with the

students in the Millburn High School Career/Work Exploration Program who assemble the Boosters campaign mailing. The program is dedicated to the development of partnerships with local businesses for providing students with an opportunity to experience the world of work."

To make a tax-de-

ductible donation to the boosters or to obtain a grant application, visit msh-scholasticboosters.org or write to Millburn-Short Hills Scholastic Boosters, P.O. Box 42, Millburn, N.J. 07041.

Donations of any size and employer matches are encouraged and very much appreciated.

Did You Know?

If you think that the only way to exercise and burn calories involves gym equipment, think again. Yard work can be just as challenging as a thorough aerobics workout at a nearby fitness club. To reap the greatest benefits, gardeners should use as little motor-

ized machinery as possible. Manual tools will get you moving and can burn a substantial amount of calories. Try to vary positions and alternate which hands you use to reduce strain and get an even workout. Fitness experts say that gardening can improve strength, in-

crease endurance and assist with flexibility. According to a report in the UK publication The Telegraph, clearing a pond or weeding can burn some 300 calories in an hour. Forty-five minutes worth of gardening can burn as many calories as 30 minutes of aerobics.