

2025 Community Impact Report



The Power of an Internship

Higher Up, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was established in October 2023 to create career and education pathways for students and graduates of East Windsor Regional School District's Hightstown High School. By coordinating meaningful paid summer jobs and internships, we ensure that all students, regardless of background, have access to strong opportunities in their fields of greatest interest.

In 2025, our second year, Higher Up continued to grow the number of students served, partner businesses participating, and volunteers engaging. We also refined our back-office systems and enhanced our support programs while continuing to partner with Mercer County to bring \$181,000 to date in salaries-available to the students of our community.

In these uncertain times, the power of an internship to positively impact students is clearer than ever. Internships build self-confidence and character, enhance personal and professional skills, and create competitive advantages –especially valuable for under-resourced students – in a job market flooded for entry-level positions.

If you have experienced the power of an internship, either as a host or as a participant, then you know how transformative these early opportunities can be.

Let's work together in 2026 to impassion the next generation of workforce and springboard our local students along their career and life paths – we'll all fly just a little bit higher.

Wendy McDade,
Co-Founder, Executive Director

Rosa Prada-Rodriguez,
Co-Founder, Director of Program Development

125 South Street, Hightstown, NJ 08520
609.469.4942 | info@higherupnj.org | higherupnj.org

@higherupnj in f Higher Up

2025 Higher Up Partner Businesses

Affiliated Foot and Ankle Center

Better Beginnings

Central Jersey Legal Services

Dennigan Cahill Smith

DFG Financial Group

East Windsor Regional
School District

GreenHouse Graphics

Hamilton Building Supply

hearts+homes

Higher Up

Hights Motors

Jersey Dugout

Kuehne + Nagel

LSC Mechanical

Meadow Lakes

Mercer County Family
Support Organization

Monroe Foot & Ankle

The New School for Music Study

Office of Asw. Tennille McCoy

Pinot's Palette

Plainsboro Preserve

Princeton Federal Credit Union

Princeton Symphony Orchestra

Princeton University,
Venue Services

School Business Office

TAPinto East Windsor/Hightstown

Trenton Area Soup Kitchen

Turp, Coates, Driggers & White

Type Marketing

Wildflowers of Princeton Junction

2025 Highlights

- **35 Students Served:** 18 Hightstown High School; 5 Mercer County Technical School/HHS; 11 College; 1 Post-College
- **48.6% of Students** qualify as under-resourced
- **9 Students** continued in the Higher Up program for a second year
- **7 Students** were invited by their Partner Businesses to extend their grant-funded internships through October
- **7 additional "Alumni" Students** were hired directly by their Partner Businesses
- **4 Readiness Sessions** held prior to the start of internships
- **More than 30 Presenters and Volunteers** made the Readiness Program possible
- **100% of Students** rated the Readiness Program as Good or Very Good
- **10 Student-Partner Coordinators** administered the Higher Up Support Program
- **30 Partner Business Worksites** spanned Mercer, Monmouth and Middlesex Counties
- **95% of Partner Businesses** rated their student's conduct and attitude on the job as Excellent or Very Good
- **100% of Partner Businesses** rated their student's quality of work as Excellent or Very Good

The Higher Up Readiness & Support Programs

Our **Readiness Program** consists of interactive workshops designed to develop essential professional and personal skills for students while preparing them for their individualized job placements. 2025 Session Topics:

- **Your Professional Foundation:** Participants gained essential insights into business etiquette and workplace expectations to set themselves up for success.
- **Your Professional Brand:** Participants uncovered their unique professional style, explored techniques for maintaining self-wellness and community connections, and shaped their personal definition of success.
- **Your Professional Toolbox:** Participants learned how to navigate the job search with confidence and establish their financial priorities.
- **Your Professional Network:** Participants engaged with business professionals while honing their communication skills and practicing refined dining and networking etiquette.

Our **Support Program** assigns each placement a Student-Partner Coordinator who provides directed guidance through stages of applied professional development and conducts regular check-ins to assess fit, address needs, note progress, and facilitate evaluations.

let's go! LET'S GO! STUDENT TRANSPORTATION FUND

The "Let's Go!" Student Transportation Fund literally – and crucially – gets Higher Up students to work. Students who experience transportation challenges to and from their summer placements receive vouchers for taxi services or stipends for gas.

- 9 students benefitted from the fund in 2025
- Round-trip voucher costs between \$12 and \$80 for each day, with locations ranging from Ewing to Howell
- 2025 Student Transportation Program totaled \$9,482.84 over 12 weeks

shine bright! SHINE BRIGHT! STUDENT SUCCESS FUND

The "Shine Bright!" Student Success Fund boosts readiness for Higher Up students on an individual basis by providing access to technology, stipends for professional attire, and scholarships for transformative classes, training, and materials.

- 4 students benefitted from the fund in 2025
- Fund covered capital purchase of a laptop, audio equipment, and stipends for professional and skilled trade attire
- 2025 Student Success Program totaled \$876.70

Student Career Interest Areas

Art Education	Graphic Design	Marketing
Auto Repair	Health Sciences	Mental Health Services
Carpentry	Information Technology	Music Education
Childhood Development	Interior Design	Music Technology
Environmental Science	Journalism	Sports Management
Finance	Land Stewardship	Supply Chain
Floral Design	Law	

make change! MAKE CHANGE! GENERAL GIVING FUND

The "Make Change!" Student Impact Fund allows Higher Up to support all students for the entirety of their Higher Up experience, from initial assessments through the full course of their placements to the ending celebration of all they achieved and learned. While Higher Up sets students up for independence in the workforce, they know we have their backs every step of the way!

Are you ready to make an impact?

Learn how you can engage with Higher Up by visiting higherupnj.org or emailing info@higherupnj.org. Scan now to make change in your local community!

