HELP LEND A HAND

It takes just one.



ESTD 2026

THE FIRST RUNG

SCHOLARSHIP



The First Rung a scholarship for the deserving student who is easy to overlook.

You're receiving this because a local donor would like to fund a $25,000 scholarship for one of your graduating students, paid toward their post-secondary tuition over four years.

Since 2020, Gia Lucchetta has funded one First Rung Scholarship every year at Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute - $175,000 so far. Now she's helping donors in other communities start their own.

And your school has been chosen.

If a student comes to mind before you finish reading this, they're probably the one.

Who we're looking for

A nominee must:

Be pursuing full-time post-secondary education. College, university, polytechnic, apprenticeship, trades: it makes no difference to us. The only requirement is that it's full-time.

Have kept going through real hardship.

Demonstrate a commitment to learning, but not necessarily be on the honour roll.

Support and encourage the people around them.

Be someone who might not be able to continue their education at all without financial help.

Be able to provide proof of enrolment, and maintain a B average each year to continue receiving the award.

How to recognize them

Character

Integrity, kindness, resilience. Keeps going through hard circumstances instead of giving up.

Community

Lifts other people up. Volunteers, helps at home, leads, contributes where they can.

Circumstance

Real adversity: financial hardship, a difficult home, responsibilities beyond their years. Their grades were held back by their circumstances, not their ability.

How it works

1. A donor approaches your school. You receive this guide and the nomination checklist, and they tell you how your school will be recognized.

2. You name a School Contact.
A principal, teacher, or guidance counsellor who will run nominations.

3. Guidance briefs the staff. Share the checklist with teachers, in print or by email, and set a nomination window. Students don't apply. Staff nominate.

4. Your school chooses the recipient, any time before June, and tells the donor and The First Rung a little about them.

5. The award is a surprise. The student doesn't know until graduation. A First Rung representative sits on stage and presents the award, with the trophy in the room.

6. A private moment.
After the ceremony, your school offers a quiet room where the student and their family meet The First Rung and the donor, and learn what the award really is.

7. The school board pays tuition. The school board collects proof of enrolment and pays the student's tuition directly to the post-secondary institution, each year for four years.

Questions to ask yourself

Who works hard, carries a heavy load, and could use a helping hand they otherwise don't seem to get?

Who would thrive with one real break but is unlikely to come across it out of their own accord?

Who do you worry about because you know both their potential and their obstacles?



How your school joins the First Rung



The trophy and name plate

An engraved name plate is presented at the ceremony and placed on the First Rung trophy, displayed in your school's halls where students and parents will walk past it for years to come.

Named everywhere

Your school is named on our website, on your community's chapter page, and in every announcement about the scholarship.

The School Spotlight

One school per newsletter issue, timed to your own newsletter so you can run it the same week.

The outcome

We tell your School Contact how their student is doing. Schools almost never get to hear that part.

It takes just one.

WHOSE LIFE ARE WE GOING TO CHANGE TOGETHER?

Help us find them.

Gia Lucchetta, Founder

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