



FIRST GENERATION
COLLEGE BOUND



Celebrating the Power of Firsts

Summer

2026

Newsletter

THE FGCB COMMUNITY

The Power of Firsts

Every student we serve is a first. The first in a family to fill out a college application. The first to sit through a financial aid appointment and understand what the numbers actually mean. The first to walk across a commencement stage while relatives watch from the audience, holding a moment that no one in the family has held before.

But a first is never accomplished alone. Behind every one of those milestones is a parent working a second job, a college coach who made one more phone call, a volunteer who reviewed one more essay, a donor who closed a gap no one else could close, and an alumnus who came back to say it can be done **and to pay it forward**.

The stories in this issue: a graduating class honored at the University of Maryland, a documentary carrying our work to new audiences, a national professional community choosing to invest in our students, an employer, who decided a part-time job should come with a path to a degree, and practical guidance for the families we serve, all point to the same truth: **students succeed because an entire community believes in them!**

Thank you for being part of that community!

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36TH ANNUAL CELEBRATION

*Celebrating the Class of 2026 and
the Power of a Community That Believes*

The University of Maryland, College Park once again served as the backdrop for one of First Generation College Bound's most inspiring traditions — our 36th Annual Graduation Celebration, honoring the Class of 2026 and celebrating the achievements of students, college graduates, alumni, families, volunteers, partners, and supporters who make the FGCB mission possible.

Throughout the evening, one message rang loud and clear: when opportunity meets determination and a caring community, lives are transformed.



Members of the FGCB Class of 2026 are recognized at the 36th Annual Celebration at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Guests heard from students and alumni whose stories illustrated the impact of mentorship, perseverance, and believing in yourself.



Laurel High school graduate Heather Boston-Griffiths, who will attend the University of Maryland this fall to study Computer Science, reflected on her family's journey to the United States and the support she found through FGCB.

"Do something today that your future self will thank you for."

— HEATHER BOSTON-GRIFFITHS



Recent Towson University graduate and newly registered nurse Migranje Tchapwa reminded the audience that success is rarely achieved alone.

"My story is proof that when a community believes in you, one conversation, one opportunity, and one act of support can truly change the course of a life."

— MIGRANJE TCHAPWA



University of Maryland master's graduate Demetrius Arnett inspired the Class of 2026 with his

powerful message about resilience and embracing what makes each person unique.

"Your starting point does not determine your destination."

He also challenged graduates to have the courage to stand apart:

"Be the black sheep. Stand out. Be different. Don't be afraid to chase your dreams simply because they look different from everyone else's."

— DEMETRIUS ARNETT



The evening's keynote speaker, FGCB alumna Yolanda Wheelington, shared the remarkable

story of her own first-generation college journey and reminded students that education is about much more than earning a degree.

"Academia can help us reach our full mental potential, but character and values are what have the greatest impact."

"She concluded with a challenge that captured the spirit of the evening:

"We can choose to be a blessing because we are the blessing."

— YOLANDA WHEELINGTON

One of the evening's most memorable moments came as a complete surprise. **Founder and CEO Joe Fisher and his wife, Pat Fisher**, were honored on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary. **Maryland State Senator Alonzo Washington**, an FGCB alum, presented proclamations on behalf of both himself and **Governor Wes Moore**, recognizing not only this personal milestone but also the Fishers' decades-long partnership in expanding educational opportunity for low-income and first-generation students. The standing ovation that followed reflected the gratitude of generations of students, families, and supporters whose lives have been touched by their shared vision and commitment.



Joe and Pat Fisher receiving proclamations from MD State Senator Alonzo Washington (left) with event MC, Reggie Black

The celebration concluded with the recognition of the FGCB Class of 2026, followed by the acknowledgment of alumni who earned associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees during the past year.

The accomplishments are a testament to the dedication of our students, and the unwavering support of families, coaches, volunteers, sponsors and community partners who make educational opportunities possible.



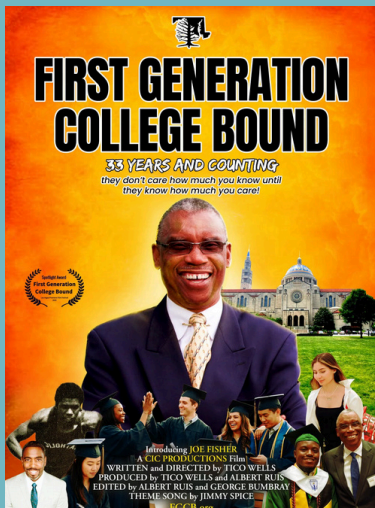
Award-Winning ★ Documentary

Brings the FGCB Story to the Big Screen



For more than three decades, First Generation College Bound has quietly transformed the lives of thousands of students and families across Prince George's County. Now, that story is reaching an even broader audience.

"First Generation College Bound: 33 Years and Counting," directed and produced by acclaimed actor, director, and filmmaker **Tico Wells**, recently received a **2025 Spotlight Award** at the Las Vegas Premiere Film Festival and was celebrated during community screenings at the Greenbelt Cinema and Laurel High School Performing Arts Center.



*First Generation College Bound: 33 Years and Counting
Movie Poster*

The documentary chronicles the vision of **FGCB Founder and CEO Joe Fisher**, whose commitment to expanding college access has helped generations of first-generation and low-income students pursue higher education with little to no student debt.



Joe Fisher and Tico Wells outside the Greenbelt Theater preparing to welcome guests for the documentary screening.

More importantly, it tells the stories of the students, families, educators, and community partners who have made that vision a reality.

The screening brought together alumni, supporters, board members, community leaders, and friends of FGCB for an evening of reflection and celebration. Audience members described the film as inspiring, uplifting, and a powerful reminder that one person's vision — supported by an entire community — can create opportunities that change lives for generations.

Joe Fisher and Tico Wells were also featured on **FOX 5 DC**, where they discussed the documentary and the importance of ensuring that talented students have access to higher education regardless of their financial circumstances.

The documentary is another milestone in FGCB's ongoing effort to share the stories behind the organization's impact and inspire others to invest in the next generation of college graduates.



National Financial Aid Community

Selects **FGCB** as Charity Partner



First Generation College Bound was honored to be selected as the charity partner for the **National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) 2026 National Conference**.



Joe Fisher accepts the NASFAA 2026 charity partner contribution of \$12,818.80 during the association's 60th anniversary conference at National Harbor, Maryland.

Conference attendees from across the country generously contributed **nearly \$13,000** to support FGCB's mission of helping first-generation and low-income students access, afford, and complete college.

The partnership represents more than a financial contribution — it reflects national recognition of FGCB's longstanding commitment to college affordability and student success. Every dollar raised will help expand opportunities for students as they navigate the path to and through college.

We are deeply grateful to NASFAA and the hundreds of financial aid professionals who chose to invest in the future of FGCB students. Their generosity demonstrates the powerful impact that can be achieved when organizations committed to educational access work together to achieve tremendous results.



The NASFAA national conference is the premier event serving the student financial aid community. Thousands of student aid professionals from across the nation attend the NASFAA national conference each year to teach, learn, network, and share best practices.

The conference provides valuable, up-to-date information on student aid programs from financial aid veterans. It is a unique training and professional development opportunity that will equip student aid professionals with the tools they need to better serve students and families.

A Different Kind of First

Abraham Raymond's ➤ College Journey ➤



FIRST
GENERATION
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BOUND



A unique partnership.
Real support.
Brighter futures.



Some firsts begin in a classroom. This one began behind a counter.

First Generation College Bound has partnered with **Jersey Mike's** to offer **college access and affordability services as a benefit to student employees** at select locations. The idea is simple and, as far as we know, unique: a part-time job that comes with more than a paycheck. It comes with personalized guidance through the college application process, financial aid, and choosing a college that is both the right fit and financially affordable.

For Abraham Raymond, the partnership is helping him achieve a first that will last a lifetime. A first-generation college student and a member of the Class of 2026 at Springbrook High School in Silver Spring, Abraham worked at the White Oak Jersey Mike's while completing high school. This fall, he will begin his college journey at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Abraham's story is **an important milestone**, not only for him, but also for FGCB and Jersey Mike's. Together, we have transformed an employer into a college access partner, demonstrating how businesses can play a meaningful role in expanding educational opportunity.

We congratulate Abraham on this exciting next chapter and thank Jersey Mike's for recognizing that **investing in a young employee** is also an investment in that student's future and in the future of the families and communities they will help strengthen.

Every first-generation college student represents a family milestone. Abraham's journey is one more reminder that when employers invest in education, they help create firsts that can change lives for generations.



Abraham Raymond with Joe Fisher at the Jersey Mike's White Oak Store in Silver Spring.



Talking with Young Adults About Gambling

As sports betting, fantasy sports, online gaming, and mobile gambling become increasingly visible, many young adults are encountering gambling enticements for the first time. Like conversations about credit cards, budgeting, or responsible social media use, talking openly about gambling can help young people make informed decisions.

The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling encourages families to discuss gambling as a form of entertainment, not as a way to make money, and to help young adults recognize the importance of setting limits and making healthy financial choices. Research also

shows that people ages **18–24** are **at higher risk** of developing gambling-related problems **because decision-making skills are still developing**.

If gambling begins to interfere with school, work, finances, or relationships, free and confidential help is available for Maryland residents. Warning signs may include gambling more than intended, borrowing money to gamble, hiding gambling activity, or frequently thinking about gambling.

Treatment, counseling, peer support, and family resources are available **at no cost** through the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling.



Need more information or support?

For free, confidential assistance available to Maryland residents, visit the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling <https://www.mdproblemgambling.com>

Call or text

1-800-GAMBLER
(1-800-426-2537)



Read together, these stories describe a single pattern. A graduate steps forward. A film about first-gen students reaches a new audience. A national association passes the hat to benefit students. An employer looks at a teenager behind the counter and sees a college student. A family has a hard conversation at the kitchen table. None of it happens in isolation, and none of it happens by accident.

First Generation College Bound has never been in the business of handing students an opportunity and wishing them well. We build support systems around them—coaching, need-based aid assistance, mentoring, advocacy for college affordability, and a community that stays in touch long after the acceptance letter arrives.

The students in this issue are proof of what that support makes possible.

THREE WAYS TO KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING

Give. Your gift provides needed services to students to support their dreams of going to college and earning a college degree. <https://fgcb.org/donate/>

Volunteer. Assemble care packages for college students, support community events, assist at the FGCB Annual Celebration, or help with behind-the-scenes administrative projects. <https://fgcb.org/volunteer/>

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