First Niagara Foundation Donates $1.0 Million to Support Youth Mentoring

-- Regional bank's 2013 Mentoring Matters program will provide mentoring services to more than 45,000 young people across New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Massachusetts --

BUFFALO, N.Y., October 28, 2013 – The First Niagara Foundation is donating $1.0 million to fund youth mentoring programs designed to help close the achievement gap, help children improve school attendance and performance, prevent substance abuse and behavioral problems, and give at risk youth a chance to reach their full potential.

The regional banking and financial services company today announced the 33 nonprofit organizations across its regional footprint that will share the $1.0 million award through First Niagara's Mentoring Matters signature grant program.

"Mentoring matters because it can change a young person's life for the better. Proven results include better grades and behavior - and improved school attendance, all of which lead to a brighter future," said Gary Crosby, Interim President and CEO of First Niagara. "Our Mentoring Matters signature grant program enables us to collaborate with proven, results-oriented mentoring organizations across our footprint that do great things each and every day."

Including today's awards, First Niagara has provided more than $5.25 million in financial support for mentoring programs since the program's inception in 2007. Additionally, First Niagara team members are encouraged to volunteer with mentoring initiatives in their communities across New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Massachusetts.

"First Niagara is committed to supporting organizations that enrich our communities, specifically in the areas of mentoring, youth and education, community development and neighborhood revitalization," said Elizabeth Gurney, Executive Director of the First Niagara Foundation. "We are proud to collaborate with outstanding community partners with a mutual goal of improving lives and empowering our communities to thrive."

"First Niagara's support and advocacy through Mentoring Matters has helped mentoring providers reach thousands of young people," said Thomas Guagliardo , CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie County, which was one of today's grant recipients. "Serving as a mentor involves sharing one's time, expertise and life experiences, and is an incredibly rewarding and powerful way to volunteer."

In making grant decisions, First Niagara evaluates specific community needs along with program metrics and outcomes. The $1.0 million investment in this year's 33 community-based recipient organizations will directly support more than 45,000 youth participants in proven mentoring programs.

Recipients of First Niagara's 2013 Mentoring Matters grants are:

- Boys & Girls Clubs of the Northtowns of WNY, Buffalo, N.Y.
- Compeer of Greater Buffalo Inc., Buffalo, N.Y.
- Buffalo Prep Inc., Buffalo, N.Y.
- Junior Achievement of Western New York, Buffalo, N.Y.
- Seneca Street Community Development Corp., Buffalo, N.Y.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Niagara County, Inc., Lockport, N.Y.
- Hillside Work – Scholarship Connection Inc., Buffalo, N.Y.
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Buffalo Inc., Buffalo, N.Y.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie County, Buffalo, N.Y.
- Monroe Community College: *World of Inquiry School #58 Partnership*, Rochester, N.Y.
- Junior Achievement: *World of Inquiry School #58 Partnership*, Rochester, N.Y.
- St. John Fisher College: *World of Inquiry School #58 Partnership*, Rochester, N.Y.
- Booker T. Washington Community Center Of Auburn, N.Y.
- YWCA of Cortland, Cortland, N.Y.
- On Point for College, Utica, N.Y.
- Samaritan Counseling Center of the Southern Tier Inc., Endicott, N.Y.
- CNY Community Foundation Inc. (Say Yes Syracuse), Syracuse, N.Y.
- Junior Achievement of Northeastern New York, Latham, N.Y.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Capital Region, Albany, N.Y.
- Northeast Parent & Child Society, Schenectady, N.Y.
- Clearview Center/Equinox Inc., Albany, N.Y.
- Girls Incorporated of the Greater Capital Region, Schenectady, N.Y.
- YMCA of the Capital District (Black & Latinos Achievers), Albany, N.Y.
- WMHT Educational Telecommunications Inc., Schenectady, N.Y.
- YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester Inc., White Plains, N.Y.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rockland County, New City, N.Y.
- Nyack Center, Nyack, N.Y.
- United Way of Allegheny County: *Be a Middle-School Mentor*, Pittsburgh, P.A.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters Southeastern Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, P.A.
- Junior Achievement of Southwest New England, Norwalk, CT
- Junior Achievement of Southwest Connecticut, Hartford, CT
- The Governor's Prevention Partnership, Wethersfield, CT
- Mass Mentoring Partnership Inc., Boston, MA

Why Mentoring Matters

Mentoring Matters is First Niagara's charitable giving program that provides monetary and employee volunteer support to organized mentoring initiatives. Established by the company in 2007, Mentoring Matters reinforces the importance of mentoring and the positive impact that it has on today's young adults. In 2009, First Niagara expanded the reach and impact of Mentoring Matters by launching its annual Day of Mentoring, offering young people the opportunity to spend a day with First Niagara volunteers to learn about financial literacy, work place awareness and enhanced life skills.

About The First Niagara Foundation
First Niagara Foundation is a not for profit corporation founded in 1998. The Foundation is committed to supporting organizations in the communities in which we live and work with specific focus on youth and education, community development and neighborhood revitalization. In 2012 the Foundation contributed more than $10 million in charitable grants to community partners. For more information, visit www.firstniagara.com/community.

About First Niagara
First Niagara, through its wholly owned subsidiary, First Niagara Bank, N.A., is a multi-state community-oriented bank with approximately 420 branches, $37 billion in assets, $27 billion in deposits, and approximately 5,800 employees providing financial services to individuals, families and businesses across New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Massachusetts. For more information, visit www.firstniagara.com.

-- 30 --

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