

# The Daily Item

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## Donation gives Operation Bootstrap a lift

By Jill Ricker

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LYNN – Operation Bootstrap will have more money to give the gift of literacy this holiday season due to a major donation from a local entrepreneur.

Nahant resident David Ritchie, CEO of CodeLab Technology Group in Wakefield, donated \$15,000 to help Bootstrap with its English as a second language program.

Don Edwards, director of Operation Bootstrap, said the donation will go a long way.

“It’s basically a blessing,” he said. “We’re really appreciative. It makes us all feel good that someone saw something good in us.”

Edwards said the money will be used in one of two ways.

“We’d like to operate an additional (ESL) class,” he said. “That’s where our biggest need is. Our other option is to use it to fill holes. We need to supplement our classes with supplies and other needs and spread it across the program as a whole.”

After grossing \$4.5 million this year at his 17 employee, self-made computer systems integrating company, Ritchie said he knew he wanted to make a substantial donation.

“We had a terrific year,” the 34-year old said, adding that the company made a 400 percent profit. “It’s incredible for a local firm to experience that kind of growth so we felt compelled to do something.”

So Ritchie decided he wanted to make sure the money went to a worthy cause and he began researching places to give to.

“I’ve never given away money like this before and it’s harder than you think,” he said. “You have to make sure it goes to a worthy cause – one that effects someone’s life in a positive way.”

While reading a Nahant publication, Ritchie said he came across a small plug for Bootstrap and said he was “really impressed” with what the organization does.

“There’s a million places to give money, but out of everything we saw, this made the most sense,” he said. “It expands opportunities not only for (current students,) but for generations to come.”

Ritchie said the group’s mission hit home.

“It may sound dorky, but our family is second generation American,” he said. “When our family arrived here, we spoke the native tongue (of Scotland). By giving them (this donation) we’d be sponsoring a class to help people who immigrated to this country.”

As an entrepreneur, Ritchie said Operation Bootstrap can give people the tools needed to become entrepreneurs themselves.

“From an entrepreneurial standpoint, it levels the playing field,” he said. “There’s something very American about it. I’m an entrepreneurial junkie and I like that aspect of this.”

Ritchie said he hopes other businesses will follow in his footsteps.

“Maybe this will make other business owners say, ‘Hey we should do that – we should give to this organization,’” he said.



CodeLab CEO and Nahant resident David Ritchie, front, standing with Bootstrap executive director Don Edwards, center, and teacher Richard DeShaies Wednesday in Bootstrap’s Lynn office. (Photo: Reba M. Saldanha)