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**Fitzgerald HS students/ECU support 18-month-old with rare illnesses through
\$1,000 donation
Related book drive promotes early literacy with nearly 5,400 books**

The Fitzgerald High School leadership class had the drive, spirit and brilliance. Extra Credit Union had the monetary support they needed. Together, they made a difference for 18-month-old Elliot Carter—who faces two rare diseases that cause his body to reject food—by presenting his family with a \$1,000 check to help cover some medical expenses.

However, their semester project was two-fold, and in turn, resulted in a collection of nearly 5,400 new and gently used they donated to two local elementary schools.

Elliot's mother, Leah, is a Fitzgerald High School alum. Her son's only sustenance is breastmilk. The diseases—Mass Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS) and Food Protein Induced Enterocolitis Syndrome (FPIES)—cause the family to spend much of their time in and out of hospitals, racking up medical bills on top of daily living expenses. And despite all the tests and trials, sweet Elliot keeps a smile.

“Our community projects cover a broad spectrum of efforts that allow and encourage our staff and members to give back to the community around us,” said Deidra Williams, President and CEO of Extra Credit Union. “This one hit home for us for a number of reasons, but ultimately it allows us to keep the legacy of supporting education alive. We were able to do that by supporting these future leaders in their compassionate effort to help a young boy who will continue to need medical treatments for the foreseeable future, but also to support one of their own, a Fitzgerald alum. These kids have big hearts.”

In December, students in Sara Sonnenfeld's leadership class at Fitzgerald High School decided that helping the Carter family with their medical costs was the project they wanted to take on for the semester's end. They asked Extra Credit Union for help. The credit union challenged them to host a book drive, through which, they could also promote literacy at Mound Park and Westview elementary schools. Extra Credit Union staff said they'd give them \$1 per gently used/new book they brought in, up to \$1,000.

They greatly surpassed that number, bringing in 5,379 books, nearly 1,600 of which were donated by Extra Credit Union staff members. The books were sorted and taken to the elementary schools. Every student at each school received 4-5 new books.

And recently, the leadership students made a special presentation to Leah Carter and her family in their classroom, presenting them with the \$1,000 check they earned for the family from Extra Credit Union.

“We are proud of these students and we can only imagine the life-changing work these future leaders will do throughout their lifetime,” Williams said. “This is only the beginning for them, and it’s wonderful to see that they are learning to care and give back early in their lives. Literacy is very important to us at Extra Credit Union in many ways, and we are also proud of our staff in supporting literacy in the community.”

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Extra Credit Union (www.extracreditunion.org) was founded in 1954 by a group of educators with \$856 in assets. Today, with two full-service offices in Warren and Sterling Heights, Mich., Extra Credit Union (ECU) has about 19,000 members with \$214 million in assets. Extra Credit Union works with the local community and educators to provide hands-on learning, financial fundamentals, and customized services to help students and educators make good financial decisions. In addition, ECU provides solution-based lending and credit education programs to open lending possibilities to people of all credit backgrounds in Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair and Wayne counties. Deidra M. Williams serves as President/CEO, leading the credit union in its mission.