

# the SEED

## Patrice Jones, Class of 2013: Success, Not a Statistic

"I am not going to be a statistic, but a success story," states Patrice Jones, firmly. Patrice dropped out of school in seventh grade because she was pregnant. She was homeschooled until high school, and high school was more about fashion and friends than academics. She dropped out again and by 19, had three children.

"I came to Seeds because I wanted a better life for me and my kids," says Patrice. "I'm setting a strong foundation for all of us through education." Patrice is spot-on. According to an NIH study, a mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing factors like neighborhood and income.

Patrice started with Seeds in 2006, attending on and off over the next six years. "It wasn't easy for me," says Patrice. "I was afraid of not getting it right, of not absorbing the material. I was afraid of failure, and then life would interfere."

Many Seeds students have a similar attendance record because of unreliable transportation, limited childcare, health challenges, or legal issues. Sometimes, it takes several tries for a student to commit to the work that is required.

For Patrice, it took five tries. In January 2012, her grandmother passed away unexpectedly. "I always wanted to show my grandmother that I could be better than what I displayed before. So the month after



she died, I came back to Seeds – and stuck with it."

Strong family role models helped, too. "I have successful women in my family," notes Patrice. "In addition to my grandmother, who had a PhD, I have cousins who are schoolteachers, lawyers, and nurses. It's in my DNA – I just had to dig it out!"

Patrice describes Seeds as phenomenal. "The atmosphere is calm, the tutors are really interested in helping, and even the packets of work aren't too overwhelming. Everyone is eager to help you succeed." After her long road of hard work, Patrice passed her GED in February 2013.

She immediately enrolled at Cuyahoga Community College. She received her Associate of Arts degree in May 2016, graduating magna cum laude and honored as an officer, member, and mentor of Phi Beta Kappa. In August 2016, she entered Cleveland State University to work on her

bachelor's degree in social work, which she will receive next May. And then? Her master's.

"I credit Seeds for my academic success," Patrice states. "It was the foundation to my educational structure, and I couldn't be where I am today without Seeds. You helped me understand what I needed to know. And that's why I came back to tutor."

So in addition to working full-time as a home health aide, attending college, and being a wife and mother to four children, Patrice tutors at Seeds. "I know what it's like to be where the students are. I've sat where they sit and I know what it takes. When I tell them that it took me five times to get it right, they breathe a sigh of relief. And then I remind them that they have to want it for themselves. You've got to go around obstacles. You've got to want more."

Patrice did. And we're so proud to watch where she goes next!

### WHAT'S INSIDE:

Executive Director's Message	2
Volunteer Spotlight	2
News	3
20 Years of Program Change	3
Anniversary Infographic	4



Bonnie Entler, Executive Director

## Executive Director's Message: 20 Years of Turning the Page to a Brighter Tomorrow

Dear Friends:

This year, Seeds of Literacy gratefully celebrates twenty years of empowering lives through adult education. You have helped us thrive and grow, from church basements and 200 students in 1997 to our two dedicated "schools" with nearly 1,000 students today.

When Seeds began, the stock market's high was 8,250 and Harry Potter made his first climb of the best-seller list. Hong Kong was returned to China, *The Lion King* made its Broadway debut, and we all used dial-up to get on the Internet.

How times have changed! But what hasn't changed is the need for our services — and the devotion of friends like you.

With the support of individuals, foundations, corporations, and thousands of volunteer hours, the last twenty years have brought amazing student success: 1,500 tutors have helped nearly 11,000 students transform their lives through education! The hard work of our students — and volunteers and donors — has paid

off, with 7,500 students raising their grade levels and 600 GED® credentials earned.

Hundreds of adults in Northeast Ohio still need literacy services, and it is no longer enough to have just strong reading and math skills. Today's world increasingly functions online, so computer access and digital literacy are crucial for student success. Seeds is a place where personal attention and access to technology are both readily available for all students.

Adult literacy is a human right that is often overlooked and invisible. Our founders, the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph, had the foresight to see this need in Cleveland in 1997. We continue to work hard to meet our students with a spirit of compassion and student-centered instruction.

Please join us in turning the page to the next twenty years of success!

Sincerely,

## Volunteer Spotlight: His Formula for Success? Try.

By Alexandria Marshall

Solve this equation: take 1,584 volunteer hours, add countless students, and multiply by 17 years of undivided commitment. What answer do you get? Tutor Bob Manly.

Bob's tutored with Seeds of Literacy since 2000, making him one of our longest-volunteering tutors. He started at St. Coleman's when Seeds was held in church basements and community rooms. Since then, Seeds has centralized and expanded, but Bob has remained a constant in the classroom.

It's interesting that, when asked what he's learned from the students, a tutor of 17 years would answer, "tenacity." That's what stands out to him in his nearly two decades as a Seeds volunteer: "The ones who stick with it and really don't give up."



"Bob's a great tutor who gets along with everybody," says Site Coordinator Chris Richards. "He's always willing to try new things." Bob's readiness to tackle new challenges is probably helped by the fact that he's a former facilities engineer at NASA Glenn. When I joke that while you don't have to be a rocket scientist to tutor, Seeds does have a few of those, Bob modestly replies, "You don't have to be a rocket scientist. You just have to be willing to give it a try."

There's something about his New York accent that echoes his modest, straightforward character. There aren't any frills or ego in Bob's generosity as a tutor. Asked why he started tutoring, he says, "Basically, I had the skills to do it. I was fortunate enough to go to a very good high school and a free city college. I feel lucky to have been gifted enough to do that and realize the people we work with didn't have that same opportunity."

So what keeps a tutor coming back, week after week, for 17 years? "Feeling that I have helped," says Bob. It's a simple motivation that many tutors can relate to, and that's all it really comes down to for Bob: doing his part to help another person live their best life.

# Through The Grapevine

## ■ X Marks the Spot

Our brain trust of talented volunteers and staff developed a mobile app to increase literacy skills among adult learners in 12 months! The Seeds team is one of 109 international teams competing for the **\$7 million dollar Adult Literacy XPRIZE**, sponsored by the Barbara Bush Foundation and Dollar General Literacy Foundation. Our crew is the only team from Ohio, and one of the few from an adult literacy program. We submitted our app in early March for the first round of judging – stay tuned!

## ■ Unconventional Success

The Unconventional Convention, our 16th Annual Sowing Seeds of Hope benefit brunch last October, was enjoyed by **175 guests and raised \$56,000 for student instruction**. Heartfelt thanks to our event sponsors, who increased their commitment to our students by 26%: Carnegie



Management and Development Corp.; Community West Foundation; Bob & Renita Morris; Jones Day; Bill & Joyce Litzler; RPM International; Voss Industries; Applied Industrial Technologies; Benesch Attorneys at Law; Concord Benefits Planning; Paul Etzler; Robert & Eve Kalayjian; George & Pat Miller; Nordson Corporation; Shur Tech Brands; The City Bank Investment Company/City Bank Antiques; William & Jennifer Rosenberg; Mark Yanochko.

## ■ Warm East-er Welcome

Welcome to **Kara Krawiec**, Seeds East Evening Site Coordinator, and **Tom Moore**, Seeds East Evening Receptionist. They're helping to bring more classroom hours to Cleveland's southeast side!

## ■ With Gratitude

Seeds would not be here without exceptional volunteers and generous donors. In addition to the numerous foundations, businesses, and individuals who donate funds, Seeds is fortunate to receive **thoughtful in-kind donations**. In the past few months, a 9-year-old boy collected 85 books for Seeds, an architect donated a variety of cookbooks from a cookbook swap, and we were featured in the window of Appletree Books! We have an ongoing need for copy paper, pencils, pens, and – as always – books to share with students. If you'd like to make an in-kind donation, please contact Jo Steigerwald, Development Officer, at [jo@seedsofliteracy.org](mailto:jo@seedsofliteracy.org).



# Tools Change with the Times *By Christopher Richards*

## Twenty years is a long time.

A lot of things change in the space of two decades: people, cities, communities.... Having been with Seeds of Literacy since 2007, I'm amazed at how much we've grown. One of the most vital changes has been the materials we use to teach our students. That might not sound exciting to people who don't work with fractions or misplaced modifiers on a daily basis, so allow me to explain.

Without a curriculum, we couldn't help students progress from fractions to polynomials, from sentence structure to critical essays. Curriculums are more than a book or a stack of handouts. The work we provide is toolkit we use to sharpen our students' minds, though even a great curriculum is useless without effective teachers and tutors.

When I first started at Seeds, the way we used these tools was much simpler, even if many of the same packets are still around. Everyone who came to Seeds followed the same set of books. There was only one set of math books; that was it. They were good materials, of course (tutors from those days still speak fondly about "the green books"), but we were limited in how far we could go.

The old curriculum was a single bus route with several stops along the way: everyone was on the same trip.

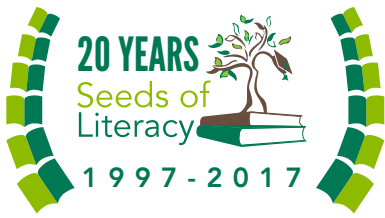
The way we use these materials today is completely different. Our modern curriculum is nuanced and sophisticated; we're able to accurately pinpoint which areas a student's struggling with and which materials will fill those gaps. We utilize dozens of book series and multiple assessments, and we've designed our

own posttests to measure specific groups of skills.

## Instead of a single bus, we've built a mass transit system for student achievement.

That increase in sophistication is vital because the challenges our students face are more complicated than they were a decade ago, whether it's the GED or the job market beyond. And twenty years ago? That was a different world.

Building our curriculum took a lot of hard work, with many people playing a part over the years. I'm glad to have been a part of it. I often talk with folks from other adult ed. programs, and I'm convinced that we offer the most comprehensive curriculum of any program in our field. It makes me wonder just what things will look like twenty years from now...



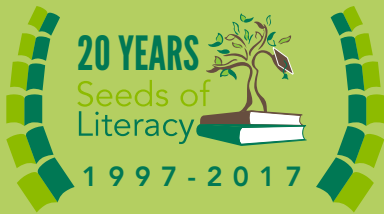
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**Our Mission**

To provide personalized education that empowers adults to succeed in their communities.

**Designer:** Andrea Vagas

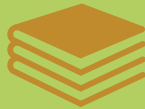


# 20 YEARS OF TURNING THE PAGE TO A BRIGHTER TOMORROW.

NEARLY  
**11,000**  
ADULT STUDENTS SERVED



THAT'S ALMOST  
**400,000**  
CLASSROOM HOURS



**YEARLY ENROLLMENT**  
from **200** in 1997  
to **1,000** NOW



**7,500** adult  
students raised  
their grade levels



About **600**  
graduated  
with a GED®  
credential

This matters because 66% of Cleveland adults are considered functionally illiterate.

WE DID NOT  
DO IT ALONE.



**167,000** hours of  
volunteer service  
valued at over  
**\$3.9 million**



**1,500**  
volunteer  
tutors since  
1997

**FIND MORE AT SEEDSOFLITERACY.ORG/20YEARS.**