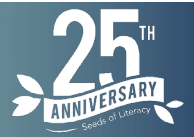




ANNUAL REPORT



BONNIE ENTLER, President & CEO • December 1, 2023

THE YEAR WAS 1997...

Titanic hit theaters. A sheep was genetically cloned. Jennifer Aniston's hair was becoming iconic. Princess Diana died in a tragic accident. Bill Clinton was president. A large chunk of my staff was in high school or college (a few weren't born yet), and more importantly, The Sisters of St. Joseph started a grassroots, education program.

Fast forward to June 2023, and that grassroots effort had evolved into Seeds of Literacy, a program that has been serving adults in Cleveland for a whopping twenty-five years!

A QUARTER OF A CENTURY

As we look ahead, aiming for growth and sustainability, it's important to pause and reflect on our journey so far.

The Sisters initially ran the program as part of their ministry, setting up educational services in church basements across Cleveland. When founder Sister Kathleen Kilbane retired five years later, I stepped up to continue her legacy.

AN EVOLUTION

Since those early days, Seeds has undergone significant changes. We've transitioned into an independent nonprofit with two main locations and a strong online presence. Our logo and branding

got a facelift, staff have come and gone, curriculum has evolved (thanks to changes in the GED), and of course, COVID reshaped the world. But through it all, our mission has remained unchanged: **To provide free, personalized education to empower adults to thrive in our community.**

At the heart of Seeds is our one-to-one instruction model, which sets us apart from other programs.

RECORD NUMBERS

This milestone year saw our highest enrollment and a record number of graduates. Just hours before the ceremony, one more student passed their final exam, bringing our total graduates to 150, with over 40 attending the graduation event. But it's not just about growth by number: we also expanded *our reach*, serving students across almost every state and in six countries.

(Since then, we've had to require Ohio residency -- but in our 25th year, we were still open to all.)

I invite you to read more about the milestone year that you made possible. With your continued support, the next 25 years are looking pretty bright!

Bonnie



2023 State of Ohio Northeast Region
Outstanding Adult Educator of the Year:
BECCA HUNTINGTON

2023 State of Ohio Northeast Region
Outstanding Adult Students of the Year:
SADIE ANDERSON & SHAKEIYA EDWARDS

2023 Crain's Notables
in Education Leadership
BONNIE ENTLER

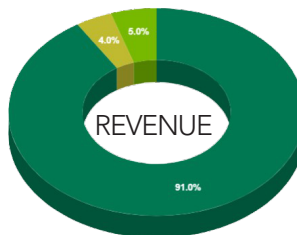
2023 Social Impact Woman
to Watch by Nonprofit HR -
BONNIE ENTLER

2022 OACE Support Staff of the Year -
SUZANNE MCWHORTER

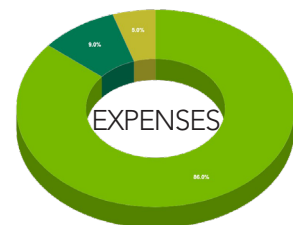
PICTURED FAR RIGHT: GRADUATE DESIRE BARB, WINNER OF THE 2021 PROLITERACY ADULT LEARNER OF EXCELLENCE AWARD. THE CEREMONY WAS DELAYED UNTIL 2022.



We have no guaranteed stream of income. We have to raise our entire budget every year.



- Special Events
- Donated Services
- Grants, Gifts, Contributions



- Educational Program
- Management
- Fundraising

NOVEMBER 2022

THRIVE!



Watch Clips seedsofliteracy.org/thrive2022



Cultivator Impact Award
MARGO HUDSON,
grad, tutor, advocate, friend



Speakers
Student DELILAH BROWN
DR. JOSEPH DAPRANO



In Part By
Carnegie Management
Development Corporation
George & Pat Miller
DataRedi Technology



Funds for Adult Literacy
\$90,000+



150 Graduates
A record-breaking number!



GED Sections Passed
697



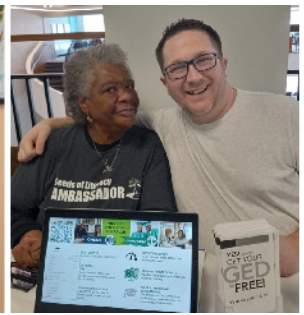
Graduate Speakers
Ralph Hernandez
Santina Lauter
Antoinette Jones

Keynote by
Dustin Passalacqua
Seeds Class of 2013



Arthur Zammikiel Outstanding Tutor Award
Deborah Nadzam Melnyk & Kathy Patton





ACTIVE IN THE COMMUNITY: STUDENT AMBASSADORS SHOWCASE SEEDS

The Seeds Student Ambassador Program launched with Ambassador training workshops focused on a variety of topics such as effective communication in public, understanding motivation, self-care, mental health, and leadership – all aimed at growing soft skills.

The Ambassadors were then sent into the community to represent Seeds at resource fairs. They shared their personal stories with hundreds of people in an effort to encourage other adults to sign up as students or tutors. After more than 70 events, they can see the results of their efforts as people they met during events come through the doors of Seeds for orientation. The Ambassadors are always there to help with first-day jitters.

“Being part of the Ambassador team is an honor,” one said. “I feel grateful that I’m needed and acknowledged, and trusted.”

Content Marketing World

Seeds of Literacy is so excited to be selected for CMW's charity! We'll be at the conference, so please stop by our booth and say hello!

ABOUT SEEDS AND OUR STUDENTS

An unbelievable 80% of adults in Cleveland are functionally illiterate. This means they may struggle with navigating public transportation, running a household, banking (checkbooks), or following prescription instructions. They may struggle to advance at work, and may not even qualify for general employment. This affects multiple generations, as they are also unable to help children with schoolwork.

THE REALITY OF OUR STUDENTS AT THE TIME THEY JOIN US

- 88% are at or below the Federal Poverty Level
- 88% lack even the most basic computer and technology skills
- 54% read below a 5th grade level, 94.7% have math skills below a 5th grade level

HEY! CMW ATTENDEE

66% of CLEVELAND ADULTS are functionally illiterate

All of that content you work hard to create? They'd struggle to understand.

BOOTH #733 TO LEARN MORE.

HEY! Yeah, you. The one at **CM**

YOU ARE LUCKY. You can read this. Many people can't.

43 MILLION ADULT AMERICANS ARE **FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE** = UNABLE TO READ, WRITE, or do BASIC MATH above a 3RD-GRADE LEVEL

BOOTH #733

PARTNER FUNDRAISERS

Content Marketing World selected Seeds as the conference charity partner. All attendees had the opportunity to donate through the 3-day event and CMW matched funds raised.

In-kind donor **Appletree Books** dedicated the retail window space to Seeds for an entire month, allowing us to recruit tutors and raise funds. Appletree is the primary supplier of our Free Library.



Seeds is also grateful to **Ahola**, the payroll partner, who featured our anniversary year on their social media pages.



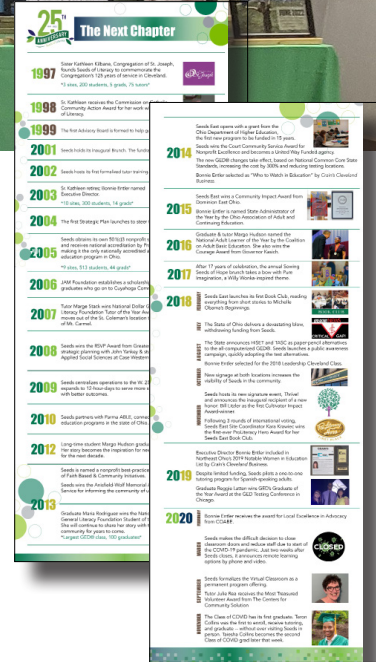
A quarter of a century of fighting illiteracy is cause for celebration, and Seeds of Literacy made sure that the achievement was highly promoted throughout the year. It also records for enrollment and graduation in a single year. The season culminated with the Silver Jubilee Event in May.



A LOOK BACK: Pivotal moments in Seeds of Literacy's history were compiled into a timeline. The timeline was then used to adorn the walls of both classrooms, segments were posted on social media, and it was displayed at the Silver Jubilee.

DEDICATED WEBPAGES AND SOCIAL MEDIA SERIES

1. 1997 Pop Culture
2. Staff: Where Were They That Year?
3. Milestones in Seeds History



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:

Students were included with classroom celebrations on the 25th of each month, as well as with incentives for class attendance and for recruiting other students. Any student who attended 25 hours of class or more each month was entered into a drawing for 25th anniversary merchandise, with a winner from each classroom each month for a total of 36 winners.



VIDEO SHORTS

1. \$25k Challenge
2. Evolution a logo

LONG IN-HOUSE VIDEOS

1. 1997 Pop Culture
2. Mission Driven
3. Tutors Speak
4. Student Voices

+ BRAND VIDEO by Classic Teleproductions



AN ANNIVERSARY WITHIN AN ANNIVERSARY
 As Seeds was celebrating 25 years of service to the community, West Site Coordinator Chris Richards was recognized for his 15 YEARS at Seeds. He started right out of college. Other than President Bonnie Entler, he has the longest continuous tenure.

Silver Jubilee

25 YEARS of Adult Literacy
MAY 19, 2023



Funds for Adult Literacy
\$86,000+
Call to Action
\$13,000+ In just 20 minutes!



In Part By
Carnegie Management
Development Corporation
The Davide & Inez Myers Foundation



Venue
Cleveland Metroparks Zoo & Carousel



Special Guest: Founder Sister Kathleen Kilbane



Photo -Recap
seedsofliteracy.org/25yearsjubilee



Speakers
Student **SHAKEIYA EDWARDS**
Tutor **ROY HULME**





MAKING THEIR **DREAMS** COME TRUE

With donor support, Seeds, along with our students, accomplished many goals last year. We educated **1,065 students**, a record-setting **150 students earned their GED**, and **696 official sections were passed**. For most students, a GED is the ultimate goal, but every step towards that goal is a celebrated accomplishment.

The biggest impact of our program can be seen in the individual stories of our students:

- a grandparent who reads to their grandchild for the very first time;
- a man moved to tears after gaining the ability to read his bible independently;
- and a mom accessing resources for her children, as she now effectively communicates with their teachers.

For these students, Seeds of Literacy is the **only** path forward. Seeds welcomes everyone into our program and provides tailored, one-to-one support that lets students define success on their own terms and their own timeline.

YOU HELP AN OFTEN UNDER-SERVED POPULATION.

Seeds' flexible, individualized structure is critical for student success, as:



34.9% (317) enter the program at or below a 5th grade reading level



75.1% (800) reside in "extremely low income households" (based on HUD guidelines)



36% (390) do not have a driver's license



17% (219) do not have reliable transportation (access to a vehicle or bus route)



48.6% (518) are parenting at least one dependent child; **63%** (370) of parents are head of household; and **20%** (121) do not have access to reliable childcare



Only **36.5%** (389) are employed; **60%** (234) of those employed work full-time



PROGRAM REACH

Seeds served students from all over the world.

918 Ohio



636 Cleveland

147 Outside of Ohio



10 International



SEEDS IN THE NEWS

08/22 Channel 5: How Adults Sharpen Skills Later in Life

10/22 Speak with Presence pod: GED Captain Courtney Schoch talks about her latest adventure: Running for (Seeds of) Literacy

10/22 Book Banter pod: Dr. Stewart Talks to Appletree Books

11/22 Freshwater Cleveland mentions Seeds

12/22 The Land: Cost of public transit burdens job-seekers, GED students

12/22 WKYC: Cleveland Reads Kickoff

1/23 WKYC We the People: Bonnie Entler and Margo Hudson speak about Cleveland Reads

1/23 Fox 8 Cleveland: Cavs and Caesar's Sportsbook present Seeds a check

1/23 Euclid Observer: Profile of Margo Hudson

1/23: Library of Congress Center for the Book: Margo Hudson interviewed as part of a podcast about literacy rates in Cleveland

1/23: Ideastream Public Media: "Can you read a million books in 2023?"

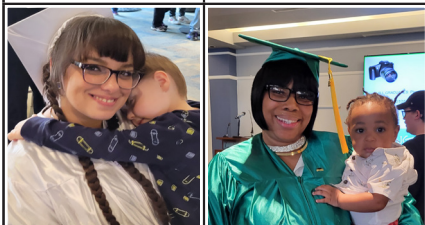
1/23 WEWS: Bonnie interviewed about the impact of the end of Amazon Smiles

2/23 Ideastream Public Media: Site Coordinator Kara Krawiec and her student interviewed about impact of low literacy on healthcare

3/23 Spectrum News: Mother and son get GED together as Seeds celebrates 25th year



25,667 instructional hours were provided by tutors for a total value of **\$768,727** in donated time.



"SEEDS NEVER SHOOK THEIR HEAD OR GAVE UP ON ME so I didn't either.

I was in another program and there were three week when I couldn't come to class. When I tried to return, I had already been removed from the system. Then I joined Seeds, which was a good fresh start for me with more flexible schedules and more personal choice of tutors and subject material. One of the coordinators never stopped emailing me until I finished."

~ ALETHIA GANNOE CLASS OF 2023

"I went to the teacher in the fifth grade and I asked her for help and I'll never forget her words she said "I HAVE 32 STUDENTS AND I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR JUST ONE."It's completely different at Seeds. ...Sure, I had my days when it was hard emotionally, and I didn't know if I could get through it. But the staff and tutors tell me 'SANTINA, YOU'RE SMART, YOU CAN DO THIS.' and guess what? I did it."

~SANTINA LAUTER CLASS OF 2023



MAYORAL VISIT

Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb surprised students with an impromptu visit and pep talk. He shared why literacy is important to him, listened to several student stories, and took photos with the class. It was a visit they won't soon forget.



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