

the SEED

Archie James & Ann Miley: A Shared Path

By Alexandria Marshall

Archie James works quietly in Seeds of Literacy's classroom, figuring out pre-algebra. He's focused and muscular; you wouldn't be surprised to learn he's a boxer.

When he opens up, his difficult past takes shape. He grew up in a rough part of Cleveland and joined a gang before leaving school in the 10th grade. He shares that he's been shot and stabbed. Boxing saved his life by giving him a positive alternative: he now had a goal and mentors.

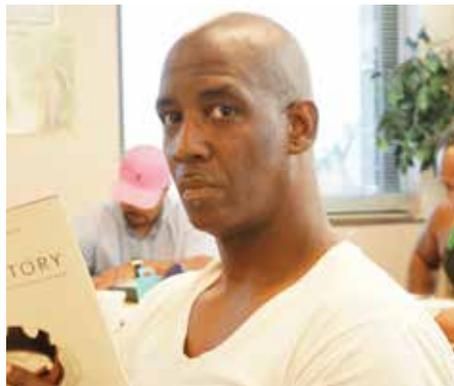
Archie married and became a father, his family now his foremost reason to earn his GED® credential. "The best thing," Archie says, "is that my son didn't take on my personality." It seems an unusual statement from a dad, but shows his self-awareness. "My son dropped out and then got his GED. He's the one who really pushed me.

"Now I'm a grandfather of many, and I want to be a positive influence on them."

Ann Miley has never met Archie, nor most of Seeds' students. They don't know each other's names or stories. But as a donor, Ann has been a part of Archie's journey.

A former teacher, Ann knows how essential education is. "I don't teach anymore, but I think I can help teach by donating to a cause that teaches," she explains.

Ann works through Seeds in that way, and



Archie is a fan of what her support provides for the students. "You've got tutors who build a personal relationship with you. They make you feel like they really want to be here for you.

"My reading skill is getting better," he shares. He can now more easily read his Bible study books, which give him reading practice at home.

Like Archie, Ann doesn't like a lot of frills. She has a genuine, blunt sense of humor ("I'd rather see my money go to charities I know about than have my grandkids blow it"), and doesn't want to be fussed over as a donor.

Ann donates in honor of her late husband. He underperformed in school but, thanks to support from his family, had time to change his attitude and earn a college degree. "Not everybody has that," Ann realized, so she gives to offer her support to adult learners.

"It's so much harder to improve yourself if you have limited resources, limited relationships, limited opportunities. All of those are tied together.

"It's gotta be a tough road. You can't get anywhere today without education."

Archie has walked that tough road. "What I had to learn," he says, "was all the tools were around me. I just didn't ask for them at first."

He hopes others know they can ask, too. "The only thing I can tell a person is, coming from a family of five siblings and none of us graduated, don't ever think that it's too late for you to succeed in life and grow."

That's thing about tough roads: they can still take you where you need to be. And even though you don't know it, there can be someone — like Ann and Archie — walking it right alongside you.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Executive Director's Message	2
Volunteer Spotlight	2
News	3
Problem Solving	3
On the National Stage	4



Bonnie Entler, Executive Director

Executive Director's Message: Literacy Leads the Workforce

Friends, we have our first GED graduate from Seeds East!

Yoko Ferrell passed her last GED section in June, just days before our Graduation and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. We featured Yoko in the Fall 2015 newsletter and are so proud of her work. Yoko is now a student at Tri-C, studying for a job as a dental hygienist.

Yoko's journey underscores the critical importance of adult literacy to economic development. Right now there is a great deal of attention to workforce programs, and the skills gap between jobs and available workers. Nonprofits, community colleges, and higher education institutions offer programs in workforce development and specialized training in fields from nursing to welding, and some training can lead to jobs paying upwards of \$50,000.

But if you have reading and math skills under a 9th grade level, you don't qualify.

At Seeds, 73% of our incoming students read below a 9th grade level. And 91% have math skills under that 9th grade threshold.

Adult literacy is the on-ramp to workforce development. Once a person raises her literacy levels, her job possibilities expand exponentially.

And even more powerfully, improving adult literacy levels directly addresses the skills gap faced by employers. A new study from MIT shows that **higher level math and reading skills were the most-needed skills in the manufacturing sector**, and the best predictors of filling job vacancies.

How can Northeast Ohio become an economic powerhouse? By investing in adult literacy! Seeds' success as an adult literacy and education program is vital to the needs not just of our students and their families, but to the market itself.

Sincerely,

PS: Get ready to celebrate! Seeds turns 20 in 2017.

Volunteer Spotlight: Seeds' Group-On Deal

By Mike Hammer

This year, Seeds of Literacy added working with volunteer groups from area organizations to its volunteer engagement activities. Volunteer Coordinator Alexandria Marshall developed partnerships with organizations large and small, from United Way, Case Western Reserve University, Bank of America, and University Hospitals to several local churches and others.

"More than 50 individuals from these organizations volunteered in groups for Seeds this year," says Alexandria. "Many organizations have initiatives to give back to the community, and Seeds offers a great way to impact the community through literacy."

A group of CWRU students came several times a week to tutor at Seeds, while a group of faculty, students, and staff at

CWRU's Medical School held a book drive. Middleburg Heights United Church of Christ and Barnes & Noble-Eton Collection held holiday books drives focused on collecting children's books, so Seeds students had books to give to the children in their lives. Girl Scout Troop # 70976 from St. Albert the Great also organized children's book drives, and a team from Bank of America went to Seeds' Kinsman Road location and put together book packages for new Seeds students.

However, the majority of the group volunteering projects centered around filling out hand-written encouragement cards for Seeds students. Terry Burns of University Hospitals was drawn to Seeds because it was an opportunity flexible enough for her team, Seeds serves the same people UH serves, and she knew someone who received a

GED as an adult and saw the tremendous difference it made.

"The whole team left the writing session feeling energized and enlightened," says Terry. "We are hopeful that the time we were able to spend will provide the encouragement someone needs to keep them motivated. Not only did we enjoy the opportunity, but we have also begun to share the experience with others."

Adds Alexandria, "Each one-day group volunteering effort builds awareness of Seeds, the need for improved adult literacy in the community and opens the door for further volunteering opportunities."

If you have a group interested in volunteering, contact Alexandria at 216.661.7950 x14 or alexandriamarshall@seedsofliteracy.org.

Through The Grapevine

■ The Unconventional Convention

Caucus for a Cause! Cast your vote for adult literacy and attend the **16th Annual Fall Benefit Brunch & Auction on Sunday, October 23, 2016** from 11 am – 2 pm at Westwood Country Club. Delicious brunch, awesome silent and live auctions, and inspiring student speakers. Tickets start at \$55 and can be purchased online at seedsofliteracy.org/brunch.

■ Tanked

Seeds was a finalist at the **African-American Philanthropy Tank** competition in April, **winning second runner-up in the education category**. Staff members Jo Steigerwald and Chris Richards pitched Seeds to a breakout session of over 100, then engaged in a Q&A with keynote speaker and BET personality Jeff Johnson to over 400 attendees! Thanks to the African-American Philanthropy Committee of The Cleveland Foundation for the opportunity and award.

■ Write On

Essays by **Seeds students Angela Williams and Karen Florence** were published in the literary journal *Beginnings XIX*, an annual publication featuring writing by students of Ohio's Adult Basic Education & Literacy programs. Angela, Karen, and Seeds' staff Sharon Farrer and Chris Richards attended the Ohio Writers' Conference on May 6, 2016, and read their works at the awards luncheon.



■ Pomp & Circumstance

Seeds held its Graduation & Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on June 29, 2016. Tutor Ed Round and graduate Cristaly Martinez gave commencement addresses to an enthusiastic audience of family members, volunteers, staff, and supporters. **The Outstanding Volunteer Award** was given to Gene

and Carol Dodaro for their work as members of Seeds' Program Committee. Dolores Kirn was presented with the **Arthur Zammikiel Award**, honoring an exemplary tutor. This award is newly named after Art, a patient and caring Seeds tutor of 12 years, who passed away in 2014. Special thanks to Bruno's Ristorante, for its delicious catering donation.

■ Bursting with Pride

Congratulations to our GED® graduates from 2014 – 2016: Tiffany Adkins, Tanesha Bagby, Darryl Blackman, Frances Blair, Ryan Carlile, Tanisha Coates, Kasey Davis, Sarah del Rosario, Alysha Fernandez, Yoko Ferrell, De'Shawn Hall, Joel Hughes, Anthony Johnson, Khalia Johnson, Deborah Landis, Ashley Lee, Maria Leon, Ryan Longcoy, Cristaly Martinez, Tierra McCain, Tina Robinson, Pierre Rogers, Jose Rosado, Marcholas Spraggins, Michael Spurgeon, Shauntia Williams, Christina Woodard.

■ Making an Impact

Seeds East was honored with a **Community Impact Award from Dominion East Ohio** in March, 2016. The award acknowledges the important role nonprofits play in improving local communities. Thanks, Dominion!

What's Your Problem? *By Chris Richards*

As an instructor at Seeds, I see people struggle with new problems every day. Sometimes, it's fractions, other times it may be misplaced modifiers. Occasionally, it's the Constitution, which many students tell me is written in something closer to Greek than English.

But what are the hardest things to work on? What are the most challenging topics for students?

If you hate math, understanding abstract concepts like fractions or negative numbers probably seems next-to-impossible. If you struggle with reading, grammar rules like misplaced modifiers and subject/verb agreement are the bane of your existence. For the science-phobic, Chemistry seems universally to

be the most terrifying subject. With students who hate Social Studies, it's learning about history that is the most challenging.

In each case, what frustrates people the most is the information that doesn't relate to their own life. Few people think about negative numbers on a day-to-day basis, or diagram their own sentences before speaking. These skills, while academically useful, often feel like they have no relation to the real world.

And this is the area that separates the best teachers from the rest. Good teachers (and tutors) try to expand on ideas, to help make the information relevant to the students' lives.

When that takes place, a magical thing happens: the barrier between the student and these difficult-to-learn topics just melts away. It's not because the student is suddenly "working hard" on their education; they were already working hard. **What changed is that the student gained a meaningful connection to the information.**

Everyone struggles to learn when what they're learning doesn't line up with knowledge they already have. People, especially adults, learn by building on their past experiences. Each one of us has a different blind spot, a unique set of skills that we struggle with. The power of effective teaching is making the abstract seem real, and that's what we strive to do at Seeds of Literacy every day.



NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 763

Seeds of Literacy
3104 W. 25th Street, 3rd Floor
Cleveland, Ohio 44109

Our Mission

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

Designer: Andrea Vagas

Margo Hudson: Taking Center Stage for Adult Literacy

Seeds students, tutors, and friends alike know Margo Hudson for her warm personality and incredible dedication. She worked diligently at Seeds for 11 years preparing for her GED, which she took six times before passing. Since graduating in 2012, Margo tutors twice a week at Seeds, specializing in fractions and percents.

This year, Margo has blossomed into an active advocate for Seeds and the power of adult literacy. The Commission on Adult Basic Education named her the 2016 Adult Learner of the Year, a national award given to a student who has overcome difficult circumstances to pursue adult learning, supported other adult learners, and demonstrated leadership within learning environments while managing adult responsibilities.

Governor Kasich presented her with the Courage Award, created to recognize extraordinary Ohioans. Margo received formal congratulations from Senators Brown and Portman, Representative Marcia Fudge, State Senator Sandra Williams, and State Representative Nikki Antonio, as well as a commendation from Cleveland City Council.



Finally, Margo was invited to give the Pledge of Allegiance at the Wednesday session of the Republican National Convention.

But Margo doesn't rest on her laurels. This past summer, she began speaking to support groups about how adult literacy changed her life, and will be presenting to more groups this fall. We are so proud of her accomplishments, and honored to be a part of her role as an adult literacy ambassador.

AP PHOTO/J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE