

## Working for Success

**“**I left school when I was 18, almost ten years ago,” recalls Seeds of Literacy student Kasey Davis. “I’ve been working the whole time – roofing, taking apart factories, hanging flyers – I’ve always been the kind of person who makes money. But I wasn’t going anywhere.”

The oldest of a large family, Kasey dropped out of school in 11th grade after finding out that he needed an additional two to three years to have enough credits to graduate. “I didn’t take school seriously,” he says. “I was there to have fun, and I daydreamed a lot. I was always the Teacher’s Pet, but I didn’t pay attention unless something interested me.”



Kasey Davis

“

**I don’t want just a job.  
I want to make it as  
big I can. . .**

”

A decade of dead-end jobs followed. The turning point came when Kasey was working as a manager of a fast-food chain restaurant. It was then that he realized that his boss, who had worked there for 35 years, only made 75 cents an hour more.

“I wanted more out of life. I want to be an inspiration to the children I want to have, and to my family. Education can get me more. I don’t want just a job. I want to make it as big I can, and say I did it when it’s all said and done!”

Kasey heard about Seeds of Literacy from his cousin, who is a Seeds graduate. “I enjoy the atmosphere. People here want to learn, and you can get the help you need. It’s the people who make the difference.” Seeds is fortunate to have over 200 active tutors who work with students at morning, afternoon, and evening sessions. Seeds staff matches a student’s need with a tutor’s ability, and great learning relationships are formed.

With the help that he received from Seeds, Kasey has already passed two

sections of the new GED test, Social Studies and Language Arts. He attends classes four nights a week, after putting in an 8-hour day at his job as a warehouse worker. “I didn’t have the easiest life, but I’m using that as my motivation,” states Kasey. “Education is undervalued. I know there is more to life than scraping by with your teeth.”

Besides, he has a promise to keep. “When my younger brother graduated from high school, I promised him that we would both go to college,” Kasey grins. “And I’m a man of my word.”

*To learn more about Seeds of Literacy, contact Jo Steigerwald, Development Officer, at 216.661.7950 or [jo@seedsofliteracy.org](mailto:jo@seedsofliteracy.org).*

### WHAT’S INSIDE:

Executive Director’s Message	2
Volunteer Spotlight	2
What’s New at Seeds of Literacy?	3
Health Literacy	3
Alumni News	4



Bonnie Entler, Executive Director

## Executive Director's Message: Seeds Far & Wide

Friends, it's been an exciting almost-three-years of near-nonstop activity at Seeds of Literacy. You've been wonderful supporters and cheerleaders as we prepared for and rolled-out the 2014 GED® test, as well as when we opened our new eastside location this past fall.

All this activity has brought regional and national attention to Seeds and our students. I was deeply honored to be featured in the November 3, 2014 issue of *Crain's Cleveland Business* highlighting "Who to Watch in Education." We were thrilled to be included, and to bring news of our program to the business community.

In December, I was invited to attend a national conference hosted by the American Institutes of Research and the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies held in Washington, DC. The conference was a chance for Seeds to meet with members of the Departments of Labor and Education, as well as to hear international research scholars in the field of adult education.

But perhaps the most exciting news is that Seeds will be working with two new research partners. We were asked to join a study of the adult education landscape with the Joyce Foundation and Education Associates, which will begin this winter. And finally, Seeds will work with the University of Akron's Center for Organizational Research on methods of measuring student self-efficacy, self-esteem and workplace readiness. Members of our Program Committee sought out and pitched this opportunity to the University, whose students and professor will be donating their time and services to Seeds.

Recognition is wonderful, as it brings the story of our students to more people from different walks of life. We hope that our research partnerships will help us better serve our students – some of the most dedicated and potential-filled people we know.

Sincerely,

*Bonnie Entler*



Christine Wright

## Volunteer Spotlight: Christine Wright

Christine Wright has volunteered at Seeds of Literacy since May 2010. A full-time employee at Fox Sports Ohio where she is the Finance Manager, Christine enjoys coming to the west side Seeds location but has transitioned to working mostly from home. Doing so gives her more flexibility – especially lately, as she's expecting her first child very soon.

Christine works in data entry, keeping records for all student achievements by entering them in the LACES database. She chose to donate her time to Seeds because of the importance she places on her own education, adding "I truly value the role my education has played in my life and in my career. Providing support that benefits others who are attaining their educational goals seemed like a great fit. Knowing that I'm making a small difference makes it worth it."

Christine is humble about the role she plays at Seeds. "I've been blessed with a good support system.

Spending a few hours each week volunteering honors the support I've received," she says. Sounds like both Seeds and Christine are lucky!

Seeds is proud of its volunteers and of their selfless giving. And Christine is "proud to be part of this organization. I enjoy seeing the same names each week and how many achievements they've accomplished. I feel like a cheerleader rooting on each person as they try to reach their goals." We thank Christine, and all of our tremendous volunteers.

*If you are interested in learning about volunteer opportunities at Seeds of Literacy, contact Alexandria Marshall, Volunteer Coordinator, at 216.661.7950 or alexandriamarshall@seedsofliteracy.org.*

“

I feel like a cheerleader rooting on each person as they try to reach their goals.

# What's New at Seeds of Literacy?

## ■ Brunching for Seeds

225 enthusiastic guests joined us on October 19, 2014, for our 14th annual fall fundraiser, Sowing Seeds of Hope, raising \$56,000 for student instruction. Special thanks to event sponsors Nordson Corporation; KeyBank Foundation; George & Pat Miller; Bob & Renita Morris; Ms. Barbara Arison; Benesch Attorneys at Law; Community West Foundation; Ms. Lindy Grasser; Bill & Joyce Litzler; Mr. Dustin B. Rawlin of Tucker Ellis LLP; Shur Tech Brands; The City Bank Investment Company/City Bank Antiques; Waldheger-Coyne; Climate-Tech, Inc.; Mr. Paul Etzler;

Hyland Software; The Sherwin-Williams Company; Mr. Mark Yanocho; Mrs. Carol Hughes; Voss Industries; Cheryl & Richard Carlisle; Kadish, Hinkel and Weibel; Mr. Bob McFeeley; Tim & Regina Smith; Mr. Tyler Spey; and Ms. K. J. Van Linge.

## ■ Reading in the East

In celebration of their 95th anniversary, the Business/Professional Women of Ohio donated a complete Townsend Library to Seeds for our east side location. This collection is written for adults and coded by Lexile Level, a score that reflects a student's reading level. Happy anniversary, B/PW of Ohio, and thanks for celebrating with Seeds.

## ■ Speaking with Conviction

Fatima Zahra, a 2011 Seeds graduate, was a keynote speaker at the Foundation Center's *Rising Tide: Empowering Low*

*Income Women* event held in October 2014. Fatima gave a heartfelt address that inspired a standing ovation. She completed her Associate's Degree at Tri-C, is currently enrolled at Cleveland State, and will be attending Kent State this fall as part of the Kent Scholars program. We are so proud of Fatima, her work, and her message.



Fatima Zahra

## ■ Bursting with Pride

We're proud of the students who have passed at least one section of the 2014 GED. The new test is highly complex and designed to be taken in sections, rather than all at once. Please congratulate:

Correll Coffie  
Kasey Davis  
Damonte Grays  
Sean Harvey  
Khalia Johnson  
Deborah Landis  
Ryan Longcoy  
Cristaly Martinez  
Tierra McCain  
Derek Mills  
Jamall Morphis  
Michael Spurgeon  
Ashley Weslowski  
Shauntia Williams  
Christina Woodard

And hats off to Darryl Blackman, Will Gayton, and Crystal Smith, Seeds students who passed all four sections of the test!

## ■ Visiting from Columbus

Seeds hosted a visit with Bryan Conrad, Outreach Coordinator from Governor Kasich's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. He learned more about Seeds, our students, and volunteers to share with other community organizations across Ohio.

## ■ Connecting with Us

Increase our social media presence by liking us on Facebook, following Seeds on LinkedIn, and connecting with individual staff members through LinkedIn. It's a simple way to help spread the Seeds news.

## To Your Health

Seeds of Literacy will be adding health literacy to its mix of offerings this year, thanks to the help of some health-savvy volunteer talent. Several members of our Program Committee have professional backgrounds in health, from Cleveland Clinic and University Hospital doctors to an Ohio State Extension Nutritionist, and Seeds was fortunate to work with Mary Ann Nicolay, an intern from Cleveland State University's Adult Learning and Development program. Ms. Nicolay has worked as a health educator, and designed a project to gauge student interest in health literacy.



Health literacy includes making informed decisions about one's health, understanding doctors' advice and prescription instructions, and choosing appropriate healthcare insurance. It's an important example of how literacy skills impact the everyday lives of our students. There is more awareness within the medical community of the need for health literacy, and the gap between medical instructions and patient understanding.

Based on student surveys and focus groups, Ms. Nicolay found that Seeds students wanted to improve their health knowledge; showed interest in learning about a wide range of health issues; and trusted information given by Seeds volunteers and staff.

Seeds will feature a health topic bulletin board in the classroom that offers take-home information designed with the reading levels of our students in mind. Workshops will be offered between class sessions on student-suggested topics like diabetes, heart disease, fitness and nutrition, women's health and others.

*If you would like to learn more, or to offer your health expertise, please contact Dan McLaughlin, Program Officer, at 216.661.7950 or dan@seedsofliteracy.org.*



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Seeds of Literacy  
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Cleveland, Ohio 44109

#### Our Mission

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

Designer: Andrea Vargas

## Seeds Alumni: *Onward & Upward*

### Class of 2013

**Rebecca Blondeaux** is a certified pharmacy technician at Walgreens; **Makisha Cox** attends Polaris Career Center for Medical Billing & Coding; **Tara Dennison** has her STNA and is working toward an LPN at Central School of Practical Nursing; **James Gadomski** will graduate in March from Ohio Technical College in Auto Diesel Technology; **Steven Garcia** is currently working as an HVAC tech and is enrolled at Tri-C in Physical Therapy; **Brian Harper** attends Tri-C and maintains a 4.0 GPA; **Demetrius Liddell** has his CDL and is employed as a long distance truck driver; **Andrea Parra** is in her second semester at Tri-C in Medical Billing and received a promotion at work; and **Nancy Vargas** is enrolled at the Institute for Medical Massage.



Andrea Parra



Nancy Vargas

### Class of 2012

**Steve Butler** works as a cabinetmaker and enjoys being a Dad to his 18-month old son; and **Natasha Gant** holds a retail job while attending STNA training.