

the SEED

Learning Conquers Fear

Yoko Ferrell isn't afraid of a challenge. "I love reading and learning. If it doesn't frustrate me, it's not worth learning!" A twenty-something mother of two, Yoko is one of the regular students at Seeds East, located in Cleveland's Mt. Pleasant neighborhood.

Yoko grew up in Florida and moved to Cleveland when she was nine. Until then, she had enjoyed school. In middle school, Yoko felt unfocused and retreated into a shell of shyness. Her high school closed at the end of her 9th grade year, and she never really adjusted to her new school. Yoko dropped out in the 10th grade and got a job.

A motivated, energetic young woman, Yoko worked as a cashier at fast food restaurants and retail stores. She attended vocational training and received certification in customer service, completed an online diploma program, and entered a program in dental tech. But those weren't enough. Yoko wanted to continue her education and become a certified dental technician.



"Those other credentials don't feel real to me," Yoko says. "I've always wanted to earn my GED and satisfy my goal. I'm ready to scratch that off my list."

Yoko attended three other GED programs before Seeds. All three were

classroom-based, and Yoko felt like she was just following the instructor, rather than learning. She heard about Seeds from a friend who was also a Seeds student.

"Seeds is different. It's so calm here, and people are serious about their work. As soon as you walk in, you know you are going to learn something! And the tutors are willing to sit with you and help you learn. Even if it takes you 20 times before you get it, they'll be there, right at your side."

Seeds tutors and students work one-to-one on reading, writing, science, social studies, and math. A Seeds staff member matches what each student needs with the abilities of each tutor, so both feel comfortable. Class sessions are flexible, with morning and afternoon classes at Seeds East, and morning, afternoon, and evening classes at Seeds West.

Since starting at Seeds in April, Yoko has written strong, extended response essays in social studies, has conquered percentages and fractions – she's able to figure out discounts at the store, now – and has passed the Language Arts section of the GED exam. But she says her greatest accomplishment is her new ability to help her children, ages nine and eleven, with homework.



Yoko Ferrell

"We sit down together, spend time learning, and aren't afraid," says Yoko, her eyes shining. "I want to show my kids that they can do anything. And I can't wait to see my children's faces when I walk across the stage after finishing my GED." Neither can we.

To learn more about Seeds of Literacy, contact Jo Steigerwald, Development Officer, at 216.661.7950 or jo@seedsofliteracy.org.

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Bonnie Entler, Executive Director

Executive Director's Message: Meet Our Ambassadors

Friends, I want to introduce you to some of Seeds of Literacy's hardest-working ambassadors: our students. Even though we live in a digital world, old-fashioned word-of-mouth still works wonders: so many students say they came to Seeds because a friend or family member recommended us. This vote of confidence from our students is very powerful! We are grateful for their trust and willingness to spread the word about Seeds.

In addition, many of our students graciously share their stories with us and with you. In addition to this newsletter, students' stories are featured on our website, as part of grant proposals, and in fundraising appeals. Year after year, the most inspiring speakers at our events continue to be our students. We're proud of the great courage it takes to share a story that often begins with a dark period in one's life.

We are very lucky to have current and

former students who go above and beyond to help Seeds. One such person is graduate Margo Hudson. She tutors at Seeds each week, pitched her story to Connie Schultz and was featured with Seeds in *Cleveland Magazine*, collects in-kind donations from coworkers and friends, and has gotten us on the radio more than once! Margo works at the President's Club at the airport, and her customers have made many donations to Seeds in her honor. She says that Seeds has given her confidence to be a lifelong learner, and she spreads that confidence throughout her community. It is with delight that we thank Margo for being an outstanding ambassador.

We thank all our students for their hard work and willingness to share.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Entler



Volunteer Spotlight: Going the Distance for Literacy

Twice each week for the past year, Tracey Frierson drives 68 miles round trip to tutor students at Seeds East – a hefty commute for a volunteer gig, but she knows that Seeds of Literacy's students have also come a long way. "The dedication of Seeds students is remarkable," states Tracey. "These aren't young kids, but adults with full lives who make room for education."



Education has been the center of Tracey's life. She recently retired from a full career as an elementary school teacher, principal, school psychologist, and instructor at Ashland College. She remembers seeing Seeds of Literacy's request for tutors in her church bulletin years ago, and came across the opportunity when she searched volunteer opportunities online last summer.

"I felt needed," comments Tracey, "A human being answered the phone when I called, and the tutor training was interesting and well-organized. Seeds has great follow-through with its volunteers." Seeds is fortunate to have over 250 tutors and volunteers sharing their gifts with nearly 1,000 students each year. In Tracey's case, she shares her razor-sharp math skills, as well as her ability to see the larger educational picture.

Tracey carries her love of learning into her everyday life. She is an active research partner with her grandson, one of ten grandchildren, and is brushing up her math skills through an online college course. Tracey is also an avid outdoorsperson, and spends time hiking and gardening.



Tracy Frierson

"I've been at Seeds East since it opened, and have seen an increase of folks coming in," comments Tracey. "It's a great group of people supporting each other. I'm glad I can be a part of it, assisting whoever I can, and keeping my love of learning active."

To learn more about volunteer opportunities, contact Alexandria Marshall, Volunteer Coordinator, at 216.661.7950 or alexandriamarshall@seedsofliteracy.org.

What's New at Seeds?

■ Sparkling Celebration



It's Sowing Seeds of Hope's Crystal Anniversary! The **15th Annual Fall Benefit Brunch & Auction will be held Sunday, October 25, 2015** from 11 am – 2 pm at Westwood Country Club. Join us for a savory brunch, fantastic auction items, scholarship rally, and inspiring student speakers. Tickets start at \$45 and benefit student instruction. We hope you join us!

■ Seeds Shines

Congratulations to our Executive Director, Bonnie Entler, for being named the 2015 Sharon Stubbs-Davis **State Administrator of the Year** by the Ohio Association for Adult and Continuing Education. This statewide award is given to those individuals who exhibit outstanding performance as an administrator of an adult or continuing education program, and is in honor of Ms. Stubbs-Davis, a longtime supporter of adult and continuing education.

■ 66%

To celebrate National Literacy Month in September, Seeds rolled out its **"66% - Empower Our CLE"** campaign to raise awareness about adult literacy. With a new website, outdoor kiosk posters in east and west side neighborhoods, free window

clinging, and citywide flyer distribution, Seeds took to the real and digital streets! 66% is the percentage of Cleveland residents considered to be functionally illiterate; Seeds provides a successful solution to improve literacy rates. Visit seedsofliteracy.com/66 for more information, and to request your FREE window decal.

■ Shining Support

Lakewood's H2O, a program connecting middle and high school students to volunteer and service opportunities, chose Seeds of Literacy as one of its summer partners this year. H2O camp participants learned about the importance of literacy for individuals and communities with the help of Seeds Program Officer, Dan McLaughlin. Campers wrote cards of encouragement for Seeds students and waged a **Penny War that raised \$1,244.46 – in change!** Our thanks to H2O for their incredible support!



For the second year, **Farmers Insurance - Independence Office**, has supported Seeds as part of its corporate "Thank America's Teachers" initiative. Their spring employee fundraiser raised \$380, which will be matched by the corporate office, and they also held a fall back-to-school supply drive. We appreciate their ongoing commitment to our students!

■ Brilliant Achievement!

We congratulate the following Seeds students in passing all four sections of the GED. **Seeds' GED completion rate is higher than the state average.**

- Darryl Blackman
- Joel Hughes
- Khalia Johnson
- Deborah Landis
- Ashley Lee
- Ryan Longcoy
- Marcholas Spraggins
- Shauntia Williams

Remember to designate Seeds of Literacy when you participate in this year's **United Way giving campaign at work!**



All In The Family

Many Seeds of Literacy students are parents, grandparents, or caregivers of young children, attending classes to be a stronger role model and provide a better life for them. According to a National Institutes of Health study, the single greatest predictor of a child's academic success is his or her mother's reading level.

Over the past few months, Seeds has increased its family literacy activities. We partnered with the Reach Out & Read+ program in MetroHealth's Broadway Clinic, which provides a "literacy-rich waiting room" for pediatric patients, and issues age-appropriate books to families at checkups. Our partnership included a ROR+ trained volunteer who served as a Family Literacy Specialist at Seeds East in July. She worked with Seeds students with young children, offering books, recommending reading strategies, and providing information on pre-K and early literacy programs.

This fall, the Cleveland Transformation Alliance is helping Seeds students make informed choices about high-quality elementary and high schools in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. CTA is visiting classes, talking with students, and offering print and online materials about school choice.

Adult literacy impact the entire family. We want to build more partnerships with early childhood and family literacy programs so we help our students take their academic gains home with them.

If you would like to learn more, or to offer partnership suggestions, please contact Dan McLaughlin, Program Officer, at 216.661.7950 or dan@seedsofliteracy.org.





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

Designer: Andrea Vagas

WHY *Adult Literacy* MATTERS



of Cleveland adults are functionally illiterate

They may have trouble understanding  bus schedules  utility bills  or a doctor's instructions

Seeds of Literacy provides personalized education that empowers adults to succeed in their communities.

Every year, over 200 volunteer tutors help nearly 1,000 students improve their knowledge and their lives.

- 
One-to-One
Tutoring
- 
Free
Education
- 
Individualized
Learning
- 
Flexible
Schedule
- 
Award-Winning &
Nationally Accredited

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