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HOW HAS Adult Literacy CHANGED DURING THE LAST 20 YEARS?

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Fewer Resources Exist.

There are 65% fewer state funded programs in Ohio than there were 20 years ago.

THE NEED IS GREAT.

Seeds has seen a 400% increase in annual enrollment.

67% come with less than a 9th grade reading level.

93% come with math levels below 9th grade.

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

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

The Need is Great.

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

"I came for a GED®. Seeds gave me back my self-respect."

"Coming to Seeds reminded me that all things are possible," shares Seeds of Literacy GED® graduate, James McKelton. "Here I was, 54, a grandfather, and I realized that I still hadn't finished high school."

James is bright. He was a studious high school freshman and promising athlete until he started experimenting with drugs and alcohol at 14. "School got in the way of partying," he confesses. He dropped out just one credit short of graduation.

Despite his lack of diploma, high entrance exam scores earned him a place in the Navy, but James was soon discharged when his drug addiction resurfaced.

James remembers the odd jobs that filled the next two decades: gas stations, car dealerships, janitor, and window washer. He bought a convenience store in Cleveland with a friend, operating it for 12 years.

James worked hard, but when he got frustrated or bored, he'd return to old vices. "I would be working, get sidetracked, and then stuck in the same circle of people who were using." That took a toll on his health, his marriage, and his work. By his early 50s, he had sold the store, was unable to work because of open-heart surgery, and still used drugs and alcohol to cope. It was then that his life took another turn: he became homeless.

In 2016, James entered Y Haven, a transitional housing, recovery services, and treatment program. In recovery, he realized that education was his key to breaking free: "I knew that another $10-an-hour job would turn me back into the working poor. That is not what I wanted for my last years of work."

A counselor referred James to Seeds.

"I had lost confidence in my ability to comprehend and retain because of my addiction," confesses James, softly. "But Seeds had the right amount of push, and [Site Coordinator] Sharon instilled confidence in me, telling me that I could accomplish this."

Fueled by his motivation, James took off like a rocket. During his first week at Seeds, he took and passed three of the four GED tests: Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. Then he started preparing for Math.

"I was balancing my recovery, a job, and school. Sometimes I had to take a step back from Seeds to rebalance my life. But everyone was patient. They reminded me with emails and post cards to come back. They didn't scold me. I didn't have to come here in survival mode. I could let my armor down. Instead of protecting myself, I could absorb and learn."

"I came for a GED®. Seeds gave me back my self-respect."

"This job will keep me connected with where I have been. I know what the men are going through, because I went through it, too." James is finding an apartment and is enrolled at Tri-C’s Computer Numeric Control (CNC) Machining and Composite Manufacturing Program.

His plan after graduating from Tri-C is to work as a CNC Operator, save money, and return to college to become a licensed counselor. "I want to hold myself up as an example of what can be done if you’re willing to roll up your sleeves and follow suggestions." James continues, "I want to get more knowledge and a better understanding of addiction and then share that with others."

Beyond his career, James is also reconnecting with his family. "I want to be a good role model for my grandchildren," he says, desiring to give back and inspire others in the same way Seeds of Literacy helped him to grow.

To learn more, visit us online at www.seedsofliteracy.org.
When Sister Kathleen Kilbane, CSJ founded Seeds of Literacy in 1997, she planted the hope and purpose that staff, tutors, and students would grow into Seeds’ mission today. To provide personalized education that empowers adults to succeed in their communities.

Sr. Kathleen founded Seeds as part of the Congregation of St. Joseph’s celebration of its 125 years of service to the Diocese of Cleveland. After teaching at an elementary school for 22 years and working with the poor and disenfranchised for over 30 years, Sr. Kathleen knew the importance and empowerment adults through education, earning breath. But like you, I know how it’s tempting to sit back and take a well-deserved break. However, this work hasn’t ended, and in many ways, it’s just beginning.

More people in need of literacy services walk through our doors each day, and Seeds’ small but mighty operation helps them achieve their goals. Sometimes we don’t have a lot of room, and we don’t always have a lot of resources, but at Seeds, we have heart. Each day, I’m in awe of what my staff and our tutors accomplish.

As we look ahead to our next 20 years, I know that to give our students the best in adult education, Seeds needs to grow. The technical term for that growth is “capacity building” but to put it simply, Seeds needs more — more staff, greater resources, and improved processes.

I’m delighted to announce that friends like you have made that capacity building possible. This fall, we’ve almost doubled our staff, adding new positions to accommodate more digital literacy instruction and curriculum changes, increasing our number of site coordinators, and adding a communications director to the team. Our existing staff even shifted responsibilities as we laid the groundwork for an exciting future.

Our square footage continues to grow as well. In late September, we acquired the corner suite on the first floor of Seeds West and are in early planning discussions for how to use this incredible space.

Through all of these changes, we’ve maintained a singular focus on what matters the most: educating our students.

Seeds has come a long way from our early days in a church basement. It’s been an incredible 20 years — imagine what the next 20 will hold!

Sincerely,

Bonnie Entler
Executive Director

NOW & THEN • Seeds’ Leadership

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate our 20th year of empowering adults through education, it’s tempting to sit back and take a well-earned break. But like you, I know how much more still needs to be done. Our work hasn’t ended, and in many ways, it’s just beginning.

The Seeds Family continues to grow! Please join us in welcoming Site Coordinator Billy Hallal and Todd Seabrook; Digital Literacy Instructors Sue Brown and Ty Evans; Receptionist Angel Gardon; Student Engagement Coordinator Latasha Crawford; and Communications Director Kate Kucerak. Each new staffer brings unique talents that will better prepare Seeds for the next 20 years of service for adults in Cleveland.

Recently passed SECTIONS of the GED®:
Tabitha Angyal, Maurice Brown, Curtis Crute, Jeremiah Evans, Karen Florence, Charmanne Harper, Fatima Kaba, Michael King, Donna Libbahn, Kamwanya Luhatu, Shako Luhatu, Melissa Shepherd, Jazman Smith, Raynette Taylor, Tasia Thomas, Gloria Ward, Carrie White

Recently passed the ENTIRE GED®:
Lakisha Brown, LaShawn Clinton, Jessica Howard, James McInton, Melissa Medina, Angelique Silva, Tharamattie Singh, Akiria Taylor, Dion Turley

New Faces
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As Sr. Kathleen knew the importance of service to the Diocese of Cleveland. Seeds of Literacy flourished under Sr. Kathleen’s leadership. Forty-five years as part of the Congregation of St. Joseph’s celebration of its 125 years of service to the Diocese of Cleveland. After teaching at an elementary school for 22 years and working with the poor and disenfranchised for over 30 years, Sr. Kathleen knew the importance and empowering adults through education.

When Sister Kathleen Kilbane, CSJ opened Seeds’ doors 20 years ago, but what remains is a deep connection with the Seeds program. Dolores happens to be one of them. She taught students in the Mentor school district, at the Huntington Learning Center, and was a tutor at Brush High School — in math, of course.

It was pure happenstance that she ended up at Seeds of Literacy. “I was actually signed up to train with another program,” she admits. Several miscommunications and cancellations prevented it from happening, and she knew it then when she saw an ad for Seeds in her church bulletin.

“I prefer Seeds’ one-to-one format to any other program out there. My students love it, too,” she said. “Some of them have tried classroom programs. If the class is working on fractions, but they’re beyond fractions, they get frustrated because they’re not learning anything new. That doesn’t happen at Seeds.”

She’s been with Seeds for more than seven years now — first at the West side, and then transferring to the East side when the Kinsman location opened.

Dolores knows that not every student comes to Seeds planning to take their GED. “I don’t judge their goals,” she says firmly. “I love to see the things students get excited about, when they draw connections between what they’re learning and real life.”

Recently, Dolores was working on percentages and the student had an epiphany. “When my grandkids tell me they got a 90% on classwork, I should be REALLY, REALLY proud of them. I didn’t know that before,” the student told her.

“I really enjoy connecting with people,” Dolores explains. She knows that she and her students might never understand each other’s worlds, but that they can come together with math.

The middle of the week is a busy time for Dolores. Tuesday mornings, she volunteers at the Cleveland Clinic before coming to Seeds in the afternoon. Wednesdays, she starts her day at Seeds and ends at the Cleveland Foodbank. Every other Saturday, she gives her time to a food and clothing bank run by various parishes in East Cleveland.

But volunteering at Seeds is different, Dolores explains. “I actually see the individual I’m helping. I develop a personal relationship with them. I get to know them as a person. They talk, I listen.”

Kucera

To share your time and talent, contact Volunteer Coordinator Sharon Farrer at SharonFarrer@seedsofliteracy.org.

Dolores Kirn: Connecting Through Math

“People think you need to be a teacher or retired educator to tutor here, but you don’t,” Dolores Kirn says of the common misconception about volunteers at Seeds. Tutors just need to have patience, compassion, a desire to help, and at least a high school equivalent.

“I’m terrible at English,” Dolores confesses. “Tutor math. I was always good at it, even at a time when it was unusual for a girl.” Seeds volunteers tutor to their strengths, so if they aren’t comfortable with high-level math, they can leave to Dolores and instead work with students on English, Science, or Social Studies.

Although many tutors aren’t educators by trade, retired teachers are often drawn to the Seeds program. Dolores happens to be one of them. She taught students in the Mentor school district, at the Huntington Learning Center, and was a tutor at Brush High School — in math, of course.

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