



The SEED

FALL 2021

New Board Chair Has Walked the Walk

"We make time for the things we care about."

New Chairman Jonathan Khouri has seen first-hand how critical volunteers are to the success of the Seeds program because he's been a tutor since 2016. That unique insight is what made him want to be even more involved. Even now, while juggling a legal career, new baby, and leading the Board of Directors, Jonathan still makes time to tutor. And he wants others to join him in the classroom.

Prioritizing What Matters

He admits his plate is much fuller than it was when he started volunteering at Seeds in 2016.

After four years at the Office of the Ohio Attorney General, Jonathan is now General Counsel at Westlake-based Carnegie Management and Development Corporation, managing legal work through every step of the real estate development and management process.

In addition to tutoring, Johnathan served on the Brunch fundraising committee and then led the Program Committee. In July 2021, he was appointed Chairman of the Board at Seeds, replacing outgoing Chair George Miller, also a long-time tutor.

One month later, Jonathan and his wife welcomed their first child, Leon Samuel.

But still, Jonathan makes tutoring in the classroom a priority.

"We make time for the things we care about – and at only 2 hours a week,

tutoring is a very easy commitment," he explained. "On days that I'm not sure I can make it but find a way to go anyways, I ALWAYS feel so good that I did."

Tutoring Adult Learners

Jonathan was a young man when he started tutoring at Seeds. Even now, at 33, many of the adults he tutors are older than him. He was initially worried about appearing condescending, or not being taken seriously. He quickly realized his fears were unfounded and that students were grateful for the support, no matter the age of the tutor.

Working one-to-one with students, he learns about the daily challenges each student faces and is impressed by how they continue to persevere. "So many of our students have already figured out how to make a living and support their families, but they want *more* for themselves – and in many cases, they overcome a lot to prioritize their education and realize a goal they've pushed aside (in some cases, for decades)."

You Know More Than You Realize

As a lawyer, reading and writing is a huge part of Jonathan's day-to-day life and he's learned that he has a lot to offer students in that area as a result.

"The impact of increased literacy is far-reaching and rewarding in a variety of ways," he said. "Students can come away from tutoring with the reading comprehension necessary to make more informed medical decisions, write a solid email to a prospective employer, and be better at helping their kids with homework."

Removing Barriers

"Seeds is such an excellent volunteer opportunity because we meet students where they are," he continued. "By providing the flexibility they need to actually reach their goals, at their own speed, on their own schedules, we can make a difference in their lives." *

www.seedsofliteracy.org/tutor

Read the complete interview with Chairman Jonathan Khouri: www.seedsofliteracy.org/blog

Dear Friends,

Fifteen months is a long time for an adult learner to put his education on hold for the second (or third) time in his life. So much has changed since we closed.



BONNIE ENTLER,
PRESIDENT & CEO

Although some students pressed on, adapting to technology and graduating virtually, many waited until they could return in-person for instruction.

New staff have joined the Seeds Family, bringing a wealth of expertise and enthusiasm. Students and tutors have been so welcoming and incredibly patient during their training.

And now, finally, we're back in the classroom. Side by side — albeit with masks, plexi glass, and filtration system — together again.

Sadly, there are a few loved ones missing from our return.

I'd like to dedicate this issue to those we lost this year, including students **Demetrius Pate, Sr.** and **Rodney Pulley**, as well as long-time tutor **Carol Ross**. All three were active members of the Seeds Family and their absences are profoundly felt. We owe it to them to look forward with bravery and hope.

The accomplishments shared on these pages are a reminder that good things are possible, even during a global pandemic and its aftermath.

None of this would have been possible without YOU. I hope you'll join us on our path forward.

~ Many thanks, BE



In June, Seeds did something the staff hopes to never have to do again: celebrate the graduating class virtually. But what we wouldn't mind repeating is the number of graduates — **94 ADULTS** last fiscal year. In fact, it's one of the largest graduating classes since 2014.

"Even more remarkable than *the size of the class* are *the circumstances* in which these adults completed this monumental achievement," said Vice President of Programming Carmine Stewart. "COVID-19 brought the world to a halt, and sectors of the economy to its knees, decimating on-site learning for all. But that didn't

stop these adults from reaching their academic goals."

GRADUATES FROM NEAR....

With physical classrooms closed for 15+ months, students had to adapt to online learning. One of those students was **Tachonna Frisco**.

"I graduated twice this year, actually," she said in her address. After getting her GED, she graduated from an 11-week dental assisting course.



Of the 94 graduates, 20 are a unique subset, having found Seeds online, enrolled online, participated online, and finally graduating — without



SEEDS MOURNS LOSSES



Seeds East lost two original members of Book Club this year.

DEMETRIUS PATE, SR. passed away in January from COVID complications.



RODNEY PULLEY lost his battle with pancreatic cancer the following month.

Seeds West said goodbye to a treasured tutor, **CAROL ROSS**. She's been a constant presence in our classroom since the church basement days. Carol suffered complications from heart surgery in August.

Without their smiles, our classrooms will be dimmer.



NATIONAL ACCOLADES! Seeds was a big winner at the 2021 ProLiteracy Conference (postponed). The Award for Program Innovation and Collaboration was given to Seeds for our work with Case Western Reserve University students on health literacy curriculum. Graduate Desire Barb (pictured opposite page, far right) received the Ruth J. Colvin and Frank C. Laubach Award for Adult Learner Excellence.



ON THE NEWS! 19 News Reporter Steven Hernandez interviewed alum Maria Rodriguez and volunteer Maryann Nicolay as part of a prime time special "Cleveland Comeback: Facts about the Vax." Fox 8 reporter Kevin Freeman interviewed Dr. Stewart about the impact of low literacy during the pandemic. Channel 5's Jade Jarvis returned to Seeds, this time to address the impact of vaccine hesitancy on the classroom.



SEEDS HAS GONE GLOBAL! On one particular August day, two new students in Bangladesh and one in South Africa logged on to the Virtual Classroom. They studied with Seeds tutors currently in Korea & Germany.



ever stepping foot inside the physical classroom. Some even live outside of Northeast Ohio. Seeds refers to those students as the "Class of COVID".

...AND FROM FAR!

Students from 25+ states — and tutors from across the US and several countries — have Registered for the Virtual Classroom.

One of those students was 34-year-old **Jeff Bohannon**, who logged into class from his home in Georgia, three times a day, four days a week.

"Soon after joining, I began to realize just how awesome Seeds really is," he said. "Achieving that GED has been the greatest accomplishment in my life."

MEDIA GUEST SPEAKERS

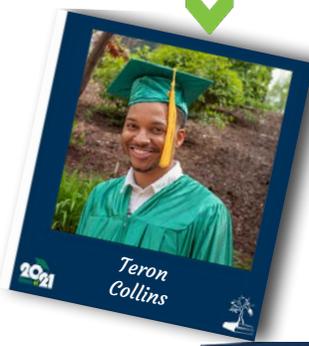
Reporters and friends of Seeds **Harry Boomer** (19 Action News) and **Jade Jarvis** (News5) recorded congratulations and inspirational addresses for the graduation ceremony.*

When Teron finished his GED, he was "immediately blessed with a higher paying job that provides the skills" he'll use in the future. He was our first Class of COVID grad.



Ashley got sick. She lost her job, her car, and her home. But she made her education a priority, joining the Virtual Classroom from the homeless shelter.

You can watch all of the speeches on our website www.seedsofliteracy.org/graduation2021.



With 5 young children at home, Desire wasn't sure she could make the transition to Virtual learning. But she did it! And she graduated!



A great time was had by all at Seeds of Literacy's first **TRIVIA TIME**, a virtual game night.

New Grad (and mother of 5) Desire Barb shared her incredible story. Tutors Brian Burch and Maya Malhotra discussed their experiences as volunteers.

The main event included 3 rounds of GED trivia played on Kahoot. More than 30 participants competed for cash prize and bragging rights. Round 1 went to tutor Bryan Javorek and Round 2 went to Board member (and

tutor) Mark Yanochko. Round 3 for all the marbles, and by far the hardest — was won by Board member Brooke Emmel.

Players from our friends at the Community West Foundation didn't even place, but their team donated back as though they did. THANK YOU, COMMUNITY WEST!

Thank you to all of our generous sponsors for making this event free for participants. **BECAUSE OF YOU, WE RAISED NEARLY \$70,000 FOR ADULT LITERACY!**

TRIVIA TIME

Sponsored in part by **Huntington**

Carnegie Management & Development Corporation
 Bill & Joyce Litzler and George & Pat Miller
 Frantz Ward LLP
 Hylant
 Oswald Companies
 The NRP Group
 AND OTHERS!

Hear Graduate Desire Barb's story by visiting our website at www.seedsofliteracy.org/gamenight



3104 W. 25th Street
Suite 3
Cleveland, Ohio 44109
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OUR MISSION

To provide free personalized education that empowers adults to thrive in our community.

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