



## 2020 COABE OUTSTANDING LOCAL EXCELLENCE IN ADVOCACY BONNIE ENTLER

Bonnie Entler, President and CEO of Seeds of Literacy, has spearheaded a variety of state advocacy efforts over the past year to raise awareness of the importance of adult literacy programs and Seed's value to the community, in particular.

In 2018, the State of Ohio removed its funding from Seeds of Literacy without warning, a loss of 14% of the nonprofit's income. The move was especially puzzling as there is a crucial need for adult education programs - according to a study by Case Western Reserve University, nearly 66% of adults in Cleveland are functionally illiterate.

Despite the reduction in funding, Entler refused to allow Seeds of Literacy students to feel any effects of the cuts and continued to provide the programing its students expected. She began lobbying local, state and federal lawmakers to educate them on the critical need for services such as those provided by Seeds of Literacy and enlisted several staff and volunteer supporters to advocate on Seeds' behalf. In addition, Seeds invited numerous lawmakers at all levels of government to visit one of its two locations in Cleveland, an offer that was taken up by many government representatives. Seeds of Literacy representatives also provided testimony to the Ohio Higher Department of Education Finance Committee in May 2019.

Seeds of Literacy is an award-winning, innovative adult literacy program that relies on individualized curricula and one-to-one tutoring to help students who did not succeed in traditional schools. It is the only nationally accredited literacy program in Ohio, and its mission is to provide personalized education that empowers adults to succeed in their communities. Seeds offers free basic education and HSE preparation to nearly 1,000 adults annually with the help of over 250 volunteers. Cleveland residents make up 86% of its students and 84% live at or below federal poverty guidelines.

Bonnie joined Seeds of Literacy in 2003 when the organization was a ministry of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. In 2005, she oversaw its transition from a ministry to a separate 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization. Since then, she has transitioned the organization's curriculum to meet new, rigorous standards set by the 2014 GED tests, developed digital literacy curriculum based on third-party national certification, and incorporated a computer lab into the classroom.

Bonnie has cultivated an innovative, award-winning adult literacy program from a grassroots beginning to national accreditation and recognition. She has overseen the growth of Seeds from serving 100 students to 1,000 annually, making Seeds larger than the average high school. She was instrumental in preparing for the 2014 GED, work that outpaced peer agencies state-wide and nationally.

Since 2011, Bonnie has served on the board of Ohio Association of Adult and Continuing Education. Bonnie is the current treasurer and has chaired their state-wide conference. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Bowling Green State University, a Masters in Non-Profit Organization from the Weatherhead School of Management-Mandel Center in Non Profit Organizations at Case Western Reserve University and has worked towards a Masters in Education Administration from Lake Erie College.