

Author Biographies

Mohammed Abu-Kawik – p. 132

My name is Mohammed. I came to America in 2006 because I want to study here.

Vicki Addy – p. 25

Vicki Addy is 23 years old and the mother of Ryan, age 4, who is a cancer survivor. She attends Even Start Family Literacy classes in New Philadelphia and is working to improve her basic skills, so she can attain her GED. She says she likes interacting together in class to learn new things, and she loves to write poetry. She would like to work with animals some day.

Jesse Altman – p. 28

My name is Jesse Altman. I'm 20 years old, and I'm originally from Dayton, Ohio.

Victor Ankiambom – p. 137

I was born in Africa and suffered many hardships before coming to the United States. I would like to pass the GED test and go to college to pursue a career.

Denise Baas – p. 13

My name is Denise Baas. I am an enthusiastic adult learner who enjoys being in the ABLE classroom, learning new things and helping others. I am a person who enjoys music and talking with others. I am a devoted mother to my children. I would also like to dedicate my poem "Freedom Is..." to the soldiers in Iraq.

Kim Backer – p. 10, 62, 102

My name is Kim Backer, and I live in Milford, Ohio. I am 49 years old, married, and have one beautiful daughter and one grandson. I am pursuing getting my GED because I dropped out of high school in my senior year. I worked for

a company for 19 1/2 years and now want to change careers. In today's job market, a high school diploma or GED is required for most companies. For this reason, along with self gratification and self esteem, I am pursuing this challenge.

Rebecca Baker – p. 39, 62, 66

My name is Rebecca Baker. I'm an achiever in life. I'm trying very hard in life to get my GED, and I want to thank my mother, Nancy, and my boyfriend, Shane, for supporting me through my journey to further my education.

Tami R. Ballas – p. 14

Tami is the single parent of a teenage boy. She returned to school last year to work on her GED, not only for herself, but for her son Josh. Her biggest obstacle is her lack of self-confidence. Tami was convinced she couldn't write until she was asked to imagine what her life would be like if she were a sidewalk.

Corey T. Barnes – p. 65

Linda Barrett – p. 4, 11

My name is Linda Barrett. I attended GED classes to get the education that I missed out on. I am an avid reader and want to convey the love of reading to others. I am just an everyday housewife of three grown children and six grandchildren.

Maite Yoselin Barrios – p. 121

My name is Maite Barrios, and I was born in Venezuela. I am 19 years old, and I moved with my family to USA five years ago. I graduated from high school the spring of 2007, and I am currently assisting Owens Community College of Toledo, Ohio.

Rose M. Buckner – p. 39, 62, 143

After graduating from Milford High School in 1948, I didn't feel as if I was college material, so I dropped the idea of

further education. One thing that stayed in my mind was my sophomore journalism class with a very firm English teacher. During the month of February, I wrote an article on the two presidents whose birthdays were in February. The teacher accepted it, and my article was published in our school's newspaper, "The Reflector." Many years later, I started in the ABLE Class at Live Oaks and was introduced to the Ohio Writers' Conference in 2000. I was inspired by a wonderful teacher, Marty Lopinto, to write again. I have been published or received honorable mention in *Beginnings* every year for five or six years. At this late date in my life, I found that it is never too late to learn and pick up where you left off.

Maria Bulucea – p. 45

My name is Maria Bulucea, and I am from Romania. I became a teacher of Romanian literature and grammar. I was also a teacher of French and Russian. I studied many languages. In 2003, my husband and I decided to come to America to be together with our married son. It was interesting being in America and getting to know different cultures and people. I look forward to new things every day including learning English and being involved in many aspects of American life.

Kilcha Canfield – p. 61, 108, 113

My name is Kilcha Canfield. I received my GED this year and fulfilled a life long dream. I am interested in furthering my education and pursuing a degree. Being part of the Writers' Conference has been a great honor for me.

Heidi Coffey – p. 101

Heidi Marie Farley-Coffey was born in Coshocton, Ohio, on October 10, 1981. She is a mother of three children, all boys, and a stepmother to two children. She has always enjoyed reading and writing. In November 2007, after preparing at the Coshocton Family Literacy Program, she obtained her GED. She now attends Central Ohio

Technical College with a major in Registered Nursing. She hopes to work in labor and delivery.

Stephanie Cole – p. 40

My name is Stephanie Cole, and I have three children: two sons and a daughter. I am working on getting my GED. My faith is in the Lord. I would like to add a special thanks to my teacher, Amy Guda, because she has been a great help.

Charlee Daniels – p. 145

My name is Charlee Dainels, and my contribution to this book is a short story called "Dear Abby." I was born in Zanesville, Ohio, in 1952. I am currently 55 years old. I attended Zanesville High School as well as our local vocation school, which was referred to as MAJVS (Muskingum Area Joint Vocation School) in my day. It is now known as Mid-East Technology Center. I majored in printing.

When I graduated, in 1972, I got married and started to work. Between 1972 and 1993 I was blessed with two children, a girl named Lea and a boy named Billy. In 1993, I found a job working for the state of Ohio. My job title started out as, "highway maintenance worker." Over the years the title changed to Tech 1, but it's really the same job.

I began coming to the ABLÉ program to improve my basic literacy skills so that I could pass tests at work and receive raises. So far, I have started to pass these tests, but they keep adding more. I have improved my reading, spelling and writing skills since I began coming to the program, but I want to continue working on these same skills because I am considering attending Zane State College sometime in the future. I am interested in a degree concentrating in the area of construction/highway repair.

Ida Davis – p. 126

My name is Ida Davis. I am 71 years old. I am a Christian. I love the Lord. He is my life.

Amadou Mika Dia – p. 20

My name is Amadou Mika Dia. I was born in Mauritania, West Africa, where I went to school and became a civil engineering technician. I came to the United States in January 2004. I work at Pierre Foods as a grinder. I attend classes in their learning center to improve my skills to attend college in the USA.

Amanda DiCapo – p. 3, 5, 19

My name is Amanda Ashley DiCapo. I am 19 and live in Chardon, OH. I've been writing since I was in the 3rd grade, and it is my one true passion in life.

Amy Dunham – p. 59

My name is Amy Dunham, and I am currently studying at night to get my GED. I have written about my mother because she has always been there for me, and I am very grateful for her.

Karen Sue Flick – p. 104

My name is Karen Flick, and I am married with two children. I have told this story to my children, and they have asked me to tell their friends this story also. I thought I would put this story on paper, so it can be shared for generations to come.

Rachel Forrider – p. 117

My name is Rachel. I am 18 years old, and I live in Elyria, Ohio. I have an 11-month-old daughter named Jasmine; she is everything to me. My goals for the future would be to get my GED and go to college and to be a good provider for my daughter so she will never have the life I have had in the past.

Ronald W. Fugate – p. 48, 84

My name is Ronald Fugate. I have a 10th grade education; yet, I was illiterate for most of my adult life. When I was 18, I got married, and we had three children. My wife passed away. I had a low self-esteem, and I dealt with people who were in the same category. After I raised my children, I wanted to do something about my illiteracy to better myself. I've been tutored for the past two years through The Literacy Council of Clermont and Brown Counties. It has profoundly changed my life and is helping me become a more confident person. I'm on my way to bigger and better things.

Valerija Glad – p. 109

My name is Valerija Glad, and I'm from Sombor, Serbia, but I currently live in Milford, Ohio. My native language is Serbian, but I've been studying English for a year. I have improved my conversation and pronunciation skills by attending ESOL class. I also feel that I'm learning a lot about American Culture. I come to ESOL class every week in hopes of enlarging my vocabulary and speaking more fluently. I arrived here in America four months ago, and I have learned a lot. Not only have I learned the English language but also how different things are here than what I'm used to in my home country. For example, I've never driven on a highway before. In my country, I usually walk or ride a bicycle. I like it here, and I hope my family and I will prosper here. I really like the people here, and because of this, I feel very good here in the United States of America.

Ashley D. Green – p. 74

Ashley is 24 years old and has been married to Oran for seven years. They are the proud parents of three children: Oriana, 6, Oran, Jr., 5, and Olympia, 2. This is the third of several accomplishments for her this year. The other two include earning her GED in February and being accepted to Ohio University Chillicothe for the spring quarter. Her goal is to become a registered nurse. When not caring for her

husband and children, Ashley enjoys cooking, swimming, bowling, and writing.

Daveeta Grether – p. 108

I am a visually impaired student who has always wanted to get my GED. I volunteer at a nursing home, and the staff at the home has helped me to come to classes at Scarlet Oaks.

Sereice C. Harris – p. 26

I thank everyone who is trying and not giving up! I'm here, and you are too!

Matt Haynes – p. 77

My name is Matthew Haynes. I am 21 years old and live in Lancaster, Ohio, with my mom and sister. I work at night and go to GED classes in the morning. I'm working on getting a better job. I enjoy playing basketball and Guitar Hero with my friends.

Shellie Hicks – p. 67

Lee Scott Hoffman – p. 98

My name is Scott Hoffman, and I am 28 years old. These stories are the first time I have written since the third grade. I have had bunnies as pets for about three years.

Ann Holbrook – p. 49

I am 18 years old and currently in my freshman year of college. After graduating, I hope to become an elementary school teacher. During my free time I like to play music, go shopping, and talk on the phone.

Wenyuan Hou – p. 41

My name is Wenyuan Hou. I come from Beijing, the capital of China. I was a performance manager in Beijing. I got married on Christmas Eve in 2006 and then came to America so that my husband could pursue his Master's degree. In my ESL class this year, I have improved my

English and made a lot of friends. I am enjoying my life here.

Laura Ickey – p. 124

I was born and raised in Akron, Ohio. I am the youngest of three girls. I am also a mother of a two-year-old boy named Ayden. He is definitely a handful! My parents are wonderful people. They have stood by my side through some very trying times! I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for the people in my life helping me along the way.

Johnathon K. Janney – p. 123

My name is Johnathon K. Janney, and I live in Fairborn, Ohio. I've been moving and fighting my addiction for three years now. It's been difficult, but I hope to improve my life.

Tonia S. Jones – p. 97

My name is Tonia Jones, and I live in Hamilton, Ohio. I am a single mother of two teenagers, Lindsey and Sam. I've worked at Pierre Foods for 21 years.

Jade Jones – p. 72

I am a 25-year-old mother and wife who lives in North Central Ohio. This has always been a hard issue for me to talk about, but I wanted to write about it and put it out for the public eye to view because I don't feel, as a victim, I should be ashamed of it anymore. I hope reading my story will make it easier for another woman to talk about her issues and not feel shame. On a personal note to you victims, "You didn't do ANYTHING wrong; don't beat yourself up and let it ruin your life."

Jennifer Karlsson – p. 8

My name is Jennifer Karlsson, and I'm from Finland. My native language is Swedish, but I have been studying English for 10 years. Currently I'm in the United States for a year working as an au pair and living in Covington, Kentucky. One thing that I've learned in ESOL class is the different slang sayings. I continue to come back to ESOL

class because I want to work on my English pronunciation. In my country, I am studying to become a teacher. In my spare time I like to run. My goal is to go back to my home country after this year and finish my education. When I have my degree in education, I might come back to the USA for a few years because there are still many parts of this country that I want to see and explore.

Kum Sun Kim – p. 103

My name is Kum Kim, and I have been coming to GED classes for 7 years. I am trying my best to achieve this goal so I can go on to a higher level and get a better job. I know my children will be proud of me. Thank you so much GED classes, staff and volunteers.

Antwan Leggett – p. 125

My name is Antwan Leggett, and I am a father of one. I live in Youngstown, Ohio. I like to play basketball on the weekends.

Anastasia Lohner – p. 21

Anastasia Lohner, a student at the Columbus Literacy Council, is originally from Germany and has lived in Central Ohio for the last 29 years. She would like to dedicate this poem to her daughter, who she is extremely proud of, and thank her for always offering her encouragement and support.

Meredith Martin – p. 141

Meredith Martin, 37 years old, is the mother of David, (19 months), Jocelyn, (5), and Justine, (9). She presently attends Even Start Family Literacy classes at New Philadelphia where she hopes to attain her GED this year. Born in San Pedro, California, and having had various retail jobs and life experiences, she finds the greatest adventure of all to be raising her children. Her goals include working in research or social services some day.

Tonda L. Minney – p. 94

I am a wife and mother of four and a grandmother of nine. My life is pretty full, but getting my GED would make my life complete. I attended my class faithfully and plan to pass my test really soon.

Jamar Mitchell – p. 139

My name is Jamar Mitchell, and I am 23 years old. I have two children: a boy and a girl. After I receive my GED I plan to go into a kitchen/bath renovations and landscaping business with my cousin.

Margaret Moore – p. 81

My name is Margaret Moore, and I am a 51-year-old woman who quit school at sixteen to work and help support my mother, who had a lot of health problems. Now I am going back to school to get my GED and then beginning to take classes to become a supervisor where I'm working. My family is supporting me all the way!

Samantha Naylor – p. 10, 56, 62

I'm a 30-year-old, loving mother of three boys – 12, 8, and 4. I'm also a wife of 12 years, but I've been with my husband for 15 years. We are all very happy! I would like to thank everyone in the ABL program. I'm so much happier now since I'm back in school.

Rosco Pearce – p. 140

My name is Rosco Pearce. After receiving my GED, I would like to help build and design bridges.

San Pol – p. 10, 39

My name is San, and I am from Cambodia. I have lived in the United States for 11 months, and I really like living here. Before I came here I was a salesperson in a small market in Cambodia, but my new job is as a nail technician. I think if I had more education I would probably get a better job. I try to study hard, and I hope I will succeed in the future.

John Reed – p. 17

My name is John Reed, and I am 19 years old. My hobby is writing. After I receive my GED, I hope to go into a career in the health field.

Kathleen Reid – p. 10

My name is Kathleen Reid. I'm 40 years old and have two children. I love nature walks because they are good for the mind and body.

Shannon Reynolds – p. 69

Shannon Reynolds is a single mother working on her GED. She loves to write and share her passion with others. She is very good at motivating the other students. This poem was written in honor of her niece, Tristan, who was badly injured and continues to struggle from an accident she encountered a few years ago. Shannon is currently employed as an STNA. She plans to attend Clark State Community College later this year to study writing and psychology.

Caleb Robertson – p. 29, 39

My name is Caleb Robertson. I attended Live Oaks ABLE class in Milford, Ohio, and received my GED in November, 2007. I am intent on being successful in life in everything I do. I expect the best of myself in the large and small objectives of life. My dream is to graduate from college and one day own my own business. Receiving my GED is the first step in achieving these goals.

Evelina Robinson – p. 53**Niny F. Rosso – p. 82**

Her name is Niny F. Rosso, and she is an ESL student from Colombia. She is hoping to be able to get a job in her field of Psychology. She currently lives in Columbus, Ohio, with her husband and is looking forward to visiting with her family again soon.

Elizabeth Sacksith – p. 83**Jennifer Samons – p. 79**

My name is Jennifer Samons, and I am an ABLE/GED student in the London program. I have lived in London for most of my life. I also volunteer in the center and have a part time job at Bob Evans restaurant.

Shanaz Shalli – p. 115

My name is Shanaz Shalli. This is a Kurdish name, which means proud in English. I am from northern Iraq. I attended medical school there and met my husband, who is also a doctor. We moved to Germany to continue on our medical careers and then came to the United States where there are more opportunities for us and our future children.

Megan Marie Smith – p. 86

My name is Megan Smith, and I am 20 years old and live in London, Ohio. I have a 1-year-old son named Dwyane. I am enrolled in ABLE/GED classes in London.

Donna R. Sousa – p. 95

My teacher really encouraged me to write this during a hurting time. At first, I did not want to write, but putting this into words helped heal the pain. I dedicate this in memory of my brother, John Jesse Sousa. I thank my teacher for helping with my grammar and for her support in helping me work for my GED.

Jessica M. Tate – p. 70

My name is Jessica Tate, and I come from a big family. I am the mother of one child. I'm working on getting my G.E.D. and improving my basic skills. I want to make a good life for my child.

Joshua Lee Tatman – p. 18

My name is Joshua Lee Tatman. I was born on the 18th of July in 1989. I now live in Shawnee, Ohio. When I was young, we used to travel a lot. I have been from D.C. to

L.A., as far north as Canada, and as far south as Mexico. I have always loved to travel, so I do it as much as possible.

Mary E. Torres – p. 78

My name is Mary Torres, and I am 21 years old.

Angela Traylor – p. 54, 62

My name is Angela Traylor. I am a single mom to a 10-year-old boy, Codey, who inspired me to start GED classes, which I love!

Gloria Neely Tucker – p. 32

My name is Gloria Tucker. I have three daughters and five grandchildren. I write poems and short stories in my spare time. A few of my poems have been used for funerals. I would like someday to have all my work published.

Harry Van Loveren – p. 91, 108

I am a 79-year-old man who was born in Holland. I have owned my own business but always wanted to get my GED. I received my GED in February of this year.

Xeng Veopraseuth – p. 85

There are three authors who wrote the story, "Raccoon and Rooster".

Rhonda D. Ware – p. 38

I have daughters and two grandchildren, and a son-in-law in the military. I love to cook and read. God is very important to me and my household. I would like to go to Youngstown State University.

Wei Wei – p. 43

My name is Wei Wei. I am from China, and I came to America with my husband, who is a PhD student at Case. When I first came here, I had a hard time: I was far from my family, with no friends, and I couldn't speak English very well. Then I enrolled in an ESL class, which led me to a new life in the U.S. No winter lasts forever. I am now enjoying

my life here. My ESL teacher encouraged me to write, and I am grateful that she helped me gain the skills to be a good writer.

Caroline von Westernhagen – p. 30

My name is Caroline von Westernhagen. Because my father was in military, we moved very often. After getting my degree I worked for an insurance company, but I did not find this interesting. After my son was born, my husband and I owned a pizza delivery service, which was very successful. When my marriage ended I became a tax accountant. After some difficult times, I remarried, and my husband's company offered him a job in Cleveland. I like the challenge of going to another country. In ESL class I improved my English. I began to study to be a Yoga teacher. My previous writing had only been for school, but I like to read. I do keep a journal of my life. In Cleveland, I began to write in English because now all the books I read are in English. I feel now that I can think in English and express my feelings as easily as I can in German.

Kin Wijasa – p. 130

My name is Kin Wijasa, and I came to the United States eight years ago from Indonesia. I have two daughters and one son. I am also a 65-year-old grandmother of four, learning English as a Second Language.

I study ESOL because I want to set a good example for my children and grandchildren about life-long learning and trying new things. Cooking is a favorite hobby of mine. Recently, my young granddaughter and I competed in an international recipe cooking contest, and we won!

I enjoy my English classes and my teacher, Nancy Maynard. Through these studies, I have gained the confidence and ability to submit writings to the Beginnings publication and to take the U. S. Citizenship test later this year along with my husband, Antono.

Coreal Lynn Wilson – p. 22, 39, 107

My name is Coreal Lynn Wilson. I am 37 years old and have four children and one grandchild. I am a stay-at-home mother right now and take care of my grandson. I hope to be able to open my own daycare soon. I am very happy to be able to go back to school and be able to get my GED. I am very grateful for my children and my family for being there for me and being supportive of me at this time. I am also very grateful for the people in my class for being there and encouraging me and all the others to keep all of our hopes up everyday.

Afi Wozufia – p. 128

My name is Afi Wozufia, and I am from Togo, West Africa. I have three children that I am very proud of. I work at Pierre Foods and attend the Learning Center. Soon, I will be a US Citizen.

Clay E. Young – p. 6, 138

Clay Young is an ABLE/GED student at Lancaster Fairfield Community Action Agency.

Ye Zheng – p. 46

My name is Ye Zheng. When I was in China, I worked as a high school teacher. I came to the United States to be with my husband so that he can devote more time and energy to his work.

When I got the essay assignment during ESL class, a lot of scenes and feelings came into my mind. The first few weeks in the U.S. were really hard for me. It wasn't the lack of money or physical pains that made life hard. It was the totally different surroundings, my deep homesickness that made me scared spiritually. I knew nobody else but my husband. However, my life was to change when I joined the ESL class, where I met some friends and got to know U. S. life. With all the scenes sliding in my mind, I wrote the essay smoothly. After the essay, I felt tears on my cheeks. I knew it was about happiness and hope.

