

Project
GRAD

AKRON

PROJECT GRAD AKRON'S 2025

ACHIEVING DREAMS



SATURDAY
09/06/25



**DoubleTree by
Hilton Akron/Fairlawn**

3180 W Market St, Akron, OH 44333

Graduation Really Achieves Dreams



Elliot Kolkovich

Summit County Prosecutor

We are proud to sponsor Project GRAD Akron as they help improve the lives of young people, their families, and our community.

Project GRAD Akron's 19th Annual Achieving Dreams "Back to School Bash 3" Saturday, September 6, 2025

DoubleTree Hilton Akron/Fairlawn, 3180 West Market Street, Akron, OH 44333

Your Syllabus

5:00 p.m.

School drop-off with valet parking
Registration – pick up your Student ID badges and class materials

5:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Reception (food & beverages served lobby level, veranda, and lower level)

5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Silent Auction "School Store" – Visit the School store on the first floor and bid on the amazing items.

Use your math and tech skills to place your competitive bids for a chance to win your items!
Good observation skills will be necessary!
Don't forget it is a fundraiser!

5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Last chance to donate to Homecoming Court candidates who have been raising funds for

Project GRAD Akron's Scholarship Fund

Scan the provided QR Code or <https://secure.qgiv.com/event/2025backtoschoolbashhomecomingcourt3/>
Cash and checks are accepted at the registration desk

6:00 to 6:45 p.m.

Elective "Classes" with an adult-twist – (lobby level and lower level)

6:55 p.m.

Program begins in the Ballroom
Welcome
Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq., Executive Director & Event Chairperson

Remarks & Introduction of the Mistress of Ceremonies
Theresa Carter, President, Synthomer Foundation

Mistress of Ceremonies
Shannon Smith
Emmy-nominated Morning News Anchor, 19 News

Remarks

Diane Miller-Dawson, Board Chairperson
Mary B. Outley, Superintendent of the Akron Public Schools

Presentation of the Homecoming Court

Dinner

8:00 p.m.

Live Auction & Fund the Future
Brooks Ames, Auctioneer

Drawings

"Class" Activities Baskets
"Lucky School Days Back to School Bash 3"
Lottery Raffle

8:45 p.m.

Crowning of the Homecoming Queen and King and Royalty

After-School Activities until 11:00 p.m.

Physical Education "Dancing" - Music
"Karaoke" - & Social & Emotional Health
"Socializing"

***Graduation
Really
Achieves
Dreams***



AKRON

Thank you for your support of
Project GRAD Akron!

#AchievingDreams2025

Project GRAD Akron - Our 23rd School Year!

Since September 2002, **Project GRAD Akron** has successfully partnered with the Akron Public Schools to positively impact the lives of thousands of students and families. In the fall of 2002, we began our journey with six schools in the Buchtel Cluster. In 2017-18, we piloted an expansion of services to North High School. During the 2018-19 school year, we expanded our services to the East Cluster. In the summer of 2021, Project GRAD Akron co-authored with the school district a federal GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant to benefit the Akron Public Schools. In September of 2021, the Akron Public Schools was notified by the U.S. Department of Education that the District was awarded more than \$7 million for the 7-year life of the grant. Based upon the organization’s vision, successful history, and evidence-based programs and services, Project GRAD Akron is the lead partner of the grant as well as one of the contractors. The grant afforded our organization the opportunity to expand our reach to include additional services for students and families, plus the expansion of two additional clusters, the Garfield Cluster (formerly Kenmore-Garfield) and the North Cluster. Currently, Project GRAD Akron provides extensive programs and services to students and families in the Buchtel, East, Garfield, and North Clusters of the Akron Public Schools, positively impacting the lives of thousands of young people on an annual basis.

The heart of the work that we do is showing the students the pathways to a successful life. We help students make positive transitions through programs including our Bridge to Kindergarten program; our College and Career Central (3C) classes and programming for 6th through 12th grades; our Summer Institutes in collaboration with our local colleges and universities; our GRAD Mentors program; our scholarships; and our GRAD Persists programs for our college students. Since 2006, Project GRAD Akron has awarded **more than \$2.5 million in scholarships** to graduates as they pursue a variety of post-secondary options as well as assisted them in leveraging thousands of dollars in additional funds!

Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Vision: We see a world of hope – where there are no limits on potential, the greatness in every child is inspired and celebrated, and dreams are realized through opportunities and education. As such, Project GRAD Akron will become one of the foremost enablers of underrepresented student success through unique and innovative programs.

Mission: In collaboration with community partners, Project GRAD Akron will provide a system of programs, supports, and scholarships for underrepresented students to achieve success from kindergarten through career.

Core Values: Mutual Respect; Honesty & Integrity; Teamwork & Collaboration; Passion

Thank You!

Project GRAD Akron is grateful for the significant support we receive from the Akron Public Schools, foundations, businesses, and individuals. Since 2007, Project GRAD Akron has hosted a signature fundraising event, Achieving Dreams Celebration, to raise funds for programs, services, and scholarships. For the past nineteen years, Achieving Dreams’ events have had some different formats and venues, but all have provided us the same opportunity to raise funds to help young people, from kindergarten through college, achieve their dreams!

The **Achieving Dreams’ Back to School Bash 3** will provide us the opportunity to support Project GRAD Akron’s programs, services, and scholarships. Additionally, 100% of the funds raised/donated by the 2025 members of the Homecoming Court will support Project GRAD Akron’s scholarship initiatives for students in the Akron Public Schools! **Thank you** for believing and supporting the GRAD motto that **“Graduation Really Achieves Dreams.”**



Project GRAD Akron’s 2025-2026 Board of Directors

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Model Risk Analyst (AI/ML & Qualitative Risk) Key Bank



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The Honorable Annalisa S. Williams
Judge Akron Municipal Court



Shanda-lyn Yaeger, GISP
Associate Professor Stark State College

Ex Officio



Mary Outley
Superintendent Akron Public Schools



Jacqueline A. Silas-Butler, Esq.
Executive Director Project GRAD Akron

Message from the Executive Director & Chairperson

Welcome to Project GRAD Akron's Achieving Dreams' Back to School Bash 3!

Let me begin by thanking each of you for your support of Project GRAD Akron and the students and families we serve in the Akron Public Schools. The 2025-2026 school year marks our 23rd year of being in existence! It is hard to believe that I have been with the organization for 19 of those 23 years! We have a great team at Project GRAD Akron and it is evident in our programs, services, and the relationships we have established in the community! We are a very small non-profit organization, but we operate with a big heart full of big dreams! We truly believe in the GRAD motto that Graduation Really Achieves Dreams!

To say the least, 2025 has been another eventful year! It has been both challenging and exhilarating! Project GRAD Akron is similar to many other non-profit organizations and educational institutions. Funding has decreased; however, we continue to be very blessed to have generous supporters who continue to believe in our mission and the important work that we do. In May, Project GRAD Akron was recognized by the East Central Province of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. as a Community Impact Award Recipient. In November, we will receive the inaugural Outstanding Philanthropic Institution Award from The Soul of Philanthropy, an initiative of the Black Giving Collective Fund of the Akron Community Foundation. Most importantly, we have continued to deliver outstanding programs and services and as a result of last year's Back to School Bash 2, we were able to award more than \$50,000 in scholarships to the Class of 2025 graduates as well as our students who are currently in college. Thank you!

For the Back to School Bash 3, we set many goals for our signature Achieving Dreams fundraiser. We wanted to have an interactive and unique fundraiser! We wanted people to have fun while we raise significant funds to support our mission. Finally, we wanted to showcase the great work that we are doing in the community! A special thank you is extended to our Board, staff, sponsors, donors, the steering committee, volunteers, and each of you! Finally, words cannot adequately express my sincere appreciation to the members of the 2025 Homecoming Court! Thank you for answering my request to serve on the Court. Collectively, the Court has done an outstanding job! As I write these remarks, they have already surpassed the scholarship fundraising goal of \$50,000.00 and they are on track to have a record amount raised for scholarships!

In keeping with our theme of a Back to School Bash, I have another request of each of you. I will begin with a backdrop. In August, we held the culmination ceremony for our Bridge to Kindergarten program for the Class of 2038. Every year, I read a poem that I first saw as a child on posters in the examination rooms at my pediatrician's office. The poem was titled "Children Learn What They Live" and was written by Dorothy Nolte. That poem resonated greatly with me as a child and it continues to have such a special meaning with me that I like to share it with others. The Back to School Bash would not be complete without giving you a little homework to complete. Your assignment is due by September 20th (2 weeks). Please read the poem and send me an email to info@projectgradakron.org and share how that poem resonated with you; at least one thing you can do to do to help a child; or one thing you can do to make this world better for children. With your permission, I will publish some of the answers in an upcoming Project GRAD Akron newsletter.

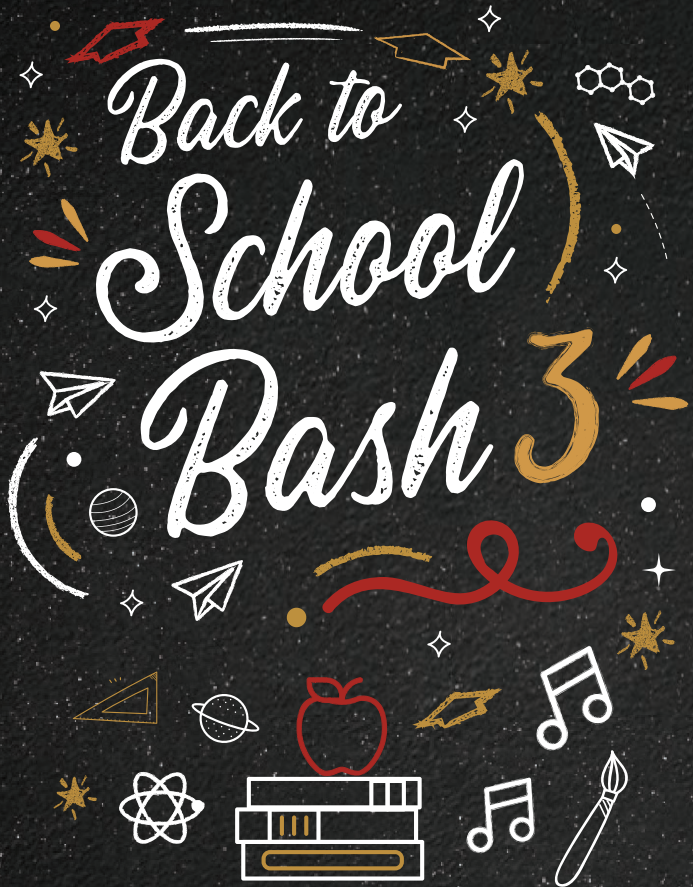
In closing, please accept my heartfelt thank you and appreciation! Your support of Project GRAD Akron shows your commitment to making a positive difference in the life of others and recognize the importance of helping students "achieve their dreams!" We hope that the Achieving Dreams' Back to School Bash 3 will be everything and more than what you anticipated! God's continued blessings on each of your lives!

Take care and be safe!

Jacqueline A. Silas-Butler, Esq.
Executive Director & Chairperson



ACHIEVING DREAMS



★ SATURDAY ★
SEPTEMBER 6, 2025



Champion Sponsor



Scholar Sponsor



Achiever Sponsor

Alpha Phi Alpha Foundation of Akron, Ohio

Mentor Sponsors

Akron Children's Hospital
Cleveland Clinic Akron General
County Executive Ilene Shapiro's
Department of Job & Family Services
Barry Dunaway and Peter McDermott
Meaden & Moore
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The University of Akron

Collaborator Sponsors

Akron Community Foundation
Akron Public Schools
Belsky & Waits Family
Jim & Maura Bozzelli
The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company

Marketing Sponsor

Amp Strategy

Achieving Dreams Back to School Bash 3 Committee

Meet the Steering Committee

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Elizabeth Z. Bartz

Maura Scanlon Bozzelli, Esq.

S. Theresa Carter

Laurie Curfman

Barry Dunaway

Laura Farris-Daugherty

Theresa Manzell

Ann Otto, Ph.D.

Debra North Sommerville

Shanda-lyn Yaeger, GISP

Sub-Committee Members

Auction

Elizabeth Bartz

Laurie Curfman

Laura Farris-Daugherty

Theresa Manzell

Ann Otto, Ph.D.

Jacqueline Silas-Butler

Debra Sommerville

Auction Wrapping & Design

Theresa Manzell

Centerpieces

Laurie Curfman

“Classes”

Laurie Curfman

Barry Dunaway

Shanda-lyn Yaeger, GISP

“Lucky School Days Back to School Bash 3”

Lottery Raffle

Theresa Manzell, Designer & Co-Chairperson

Laura Farris-Daugherty

Debbie Walsh, Co-Chairperson

Invitations

Kalisha Green of Amp Strategy,
Graphic Designer

Jacqueline Silas-Butler

City Printing - Printer

Marketing & Public Relations

Kat Allen Martucci & Lisa Buie, Amp Strategy

Project GRAD Akron

Souvenir Book

Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Chairperson

Laura Farris-Daugherty

Eric Hancsak, About 350 Creative

Kalisha Green & Kat Martucci, Amp Strategy

Akron Public Schools

Sponsorships

Theresa Carter

Jacqueline Silas-Butler

Administrative Support

Laura Farris-Daugherty

Yvette Johnson

Event Day Volunteers

Project GRAD Akron’s Board & Staff Members

Back to School Bash 3 Steering Committee

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Aunique Blackwell

Katie Bozzelli

Bonnie Blum

Lauren Byrne

Scott Curfman

Melcy Garcia

Katrina Halasa

Yvette Johnson

Sally Knorr

Dannielle Owens

Homecoming Court Auditors

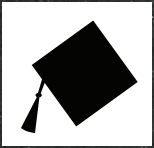
Charla Martin, Head Auditor

Valecia Pickett, Auditor/Cashier

Cathi Smith Bentley, Auditor

Christi Boyd, Auditor

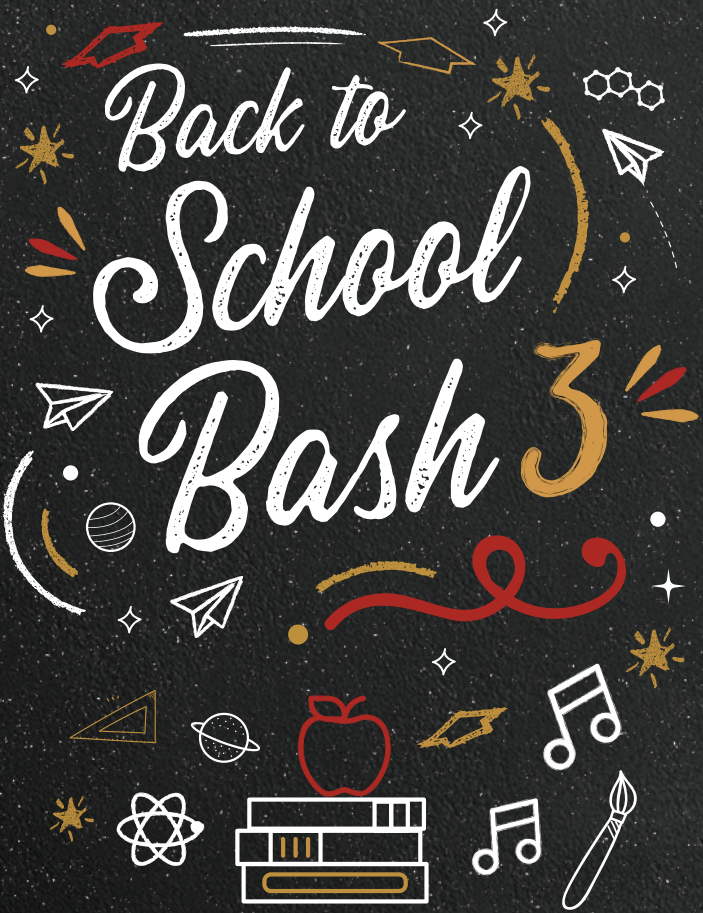
Ronda Hawkins, Auditor



Project
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A K R O N

ACHIEVING DREAMS



Achieving Dreams Back to School Bash 3 Steering Committee

EVENT CHAIRPERSON & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Maura Scanlon Bozzelli, Esq.

Theresa Carter

Laurie Curfman

Barry Dunaway

Laura Farris-Daugherty

Dr. Karen Kea

Theresa Manzell

Ann Otto, Ph.D.

Debra North Sommerville

Pamela R. Valentine

Debbie Walsh

Shanda-lyn Yaeger, GISP

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Diane Miller-Dawson



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Barbara & Denis Feld

Dana & Frank LaGarde

Diane Miller-Dawson & Lenwood Dawson

Ann Otto, Ph.D.

Debra & Marco Sommerville

Pamela R. Valentine

Debbie Walsh

Judge Annalisa & Michael Williams

*Thank you to all the Presidents of the
Project GRAD Akron's Board of Directors!*

Vivian Celeste Neal
2002

(Interim Director to establish the non-profit status)

Robert Kulinski
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2004 - 2007

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2007 - 2009

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2012 - 2013

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2013 - 2015

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2015 - 2018

Pamela R. Valentine
2018 - 2020

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2020 - 2022

Maura Scanlon Bozzelli, Esq.
2022 - 2024

Diane Miller-Dawson
7/1/2024 - Present

Meet Our Mistress of Ceremonies



Shannon Smith

Shannon Smith is an Emmy-nominated morning anchor waking up Northeast Ohio every weekday on 19 News This Morning!

She joined the 19 News team in September of 2020. Shannon currently covers everything from breaking news to human interest stories across Northeast Ohio.

Known for her engaging style, sharp reporting, and down-to-earth demeanor, Shannon brings a unique blend of professionalism and warmth to the morning desk. Her goal isn't just to report the story and get answers, but to connect with viewers both on and off air. She wants to make sure people know there is GOOD news to share.

With more than a decade of reporting experience, Shannon has lived and worked in every time zone (and season) in the U.S. — working as a reporter in Rockford, Illinois; Omaha, Nebraska; Fresno, California; and Buffalo, New York.

Hailing from the south side of Chicago, Shannon fell in love with journalism while working for a teen publication called True Star Magazine. While working there, she gained the experience of covering local stories, specifically issues impacting teens, along with interviewing various celebrities. Shannon is passionate about sharing stories that impact our youth, and highlighting young people making a difference in the community.

She graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with her degree in Broadcast Journalism.

When she's not on-air, you can find Shannon exploring Cleveland's restaurant scene, mentoring high schools students as a mentor with Minds Matter Cleveland, or spending time with mini-poodle mix, Sebastian.


Shannon currently serves as a board member for the Cleveland Association of Broadcasters, and an instructor at Ohio Media School. She's also a proud legacy member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

Join the 2025-26 Turning Tassels Leadership Society (Class of 2026)

To donate during the 2025-26 fiscal year (Class of 2026), please fill out and return this form with your payment, or use our online donation platform at www.projectgradakron.org

Auction Donors

As of August 29, 2025



Project

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Please join us for our Class of 2026

Turning Tassels Leadership Society Annual Campaign

Please join us during our Twenty-Second Year (July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026) as a member of our Turning Tassels Leadership Society. We will recognize our donors based upon their annual cumulative level of giving as a member of the Turning Tassels Leadership Society.

- 

Green - \$250.00 +
- 

Blue - \$500.00 +
- 

White - \$1,000.00 +
- 

Red - \$1,500.00 +
- 

Black - \$2,500.00 +
- 

Bronze - \$5,000.00 +
- 

Silver - \$7,500.00 +
- 

Gold - \$10,000.00 +

Yes, Count Me In!

Please find enclosed my donation in the amount of \$ _____

Or I would like to make a pledge in the amount of \$ _____ payable in _____ installments beginning _____.

All donations are greatly appreciated and are tax deductible.

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email: _____

Form of payment: ☐ Check or ☐ Credit Card

Credit Card Information

Name on card: _____

Visa/Master Card/Discover #: _____

CCV #: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Billing Address: _____


City/State/Zip Code: _____

Daytime Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Cardholder's signature required _____

Please make check payable to:
Project GRAD Akron
10 North Main Street, Suite 503
Akron, OH 44308-1958



Project

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For more information, please call (330) 761-3113 or email info@projectgradakron.org or visit www.projectgradakron.org

Lewis W. Adkins Jr., Esq., Shareholder, Roetzel & Andress, LPA

Akron 200

Akron Art Museum

Akron Civic Theatre

Akron Symphony

Akron Zoo

American Red Cross Greater Akron and the Mahoning Valley

Amp Strategy

Elizabeth Bartz & John Chames

Beau's Grille at DoubleTree by Hilton Akron Fairlawn

Blue Canyon Kitchen & Tavern

Blue Technologies

Maura and Jim Bozzelli, Esq.

CAK - Akron Canton Airport

Dr. Carla Chapman

Circle K-Great Lakes Division

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City of Akron Fire Department

Cleveland Cavaliers

Cleveland Clinic Akron General Lifestyles

Cleveland Clinic Akron General Philanthropy Department

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LRMR Ventures & The LeBron James Family Foundation

Theresa Manzell

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Diane Miller-Dawson

Christine Morris

Towanda Mullins

Mustard Seed Market & Cafe

Woodrow Nash

Nearest Green Distillery Tour & Tasting

Ohio & Erie Canal Way Coalition

Old Friends Catering

Ann Otto, Ph.D.

Mary Outley

PB&J Bites Berries and Blooms

Project GRAD Akron Program Staff

Red Sea Vending

Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

Craig & Brittany Rohner

Seven Grains Natural Market

Signet Jewelers

Jacqueline Silas-Butler

Debra North Sommerville

Isabella South

Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens

Team Byrne

The Cleveland Browns - Browns Give Back

The Little Tikes Company MGA Entertainment

The University of Akron - Office of Educational Outreach

Tito's Mexican Grill - Fairlawn

Totally Baked Pizza

Tuesday Musical Association

Brian Turner


Kate Vajda

Susan Warshay, Pampered Chef

Kristin Watt

Western Reserve Historical Society

Judith Zimomra



Project

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Graduation Really Achieves Dreams

Thank you for your support of Project GRAD Akron!

#AchievingDreams2025

2025 Special Acknowledgements

Achieving Dreams' Back to School Bash 3

Donors to Support Project GRAD Akron's Programs, Services, and/or Scholarship Fund

Akron Community Foundation's Read Family Fund

Leon Bibb

As of September 1, 2025

Christi Boyd

Roxia & Stanley Boykin

Frank C. Comunale

Dr. William & Atty. Olivia Demas

Magistrate Sharon Dennis

Jacquelyn Derrow

Judith Dimengo

M. Annette King

Margarita Kokinova

Dianne Newman

Rochelle Stone

Judge Jennifer Towell

Lou & Mary Joan "Micki" Trenta

Drs. Thomas & Diane Vukovich

Todd & Bernett L. Williams

Donations of Tickets for Special Guests and Volunteers

Belsky & Waits Family

Maura and Jim Bozzelli

Jacqueline and Lawrence Butler

Laurie Curfman

Laura Farris-Daugherty

Theresa Manzell

Roger & Sally Read

In-Kind Support

Amp Strategy

Scott Curfman

Theresa Manzell

Shannon Smith

"Lucky School Days Back to School Bash 3" Lottery Raffle Contributors

Project GRAD Akron

Theresa Manzell

Jacqueline Silas-Butler

Donations of Items for Classroom Raffle Baskets

Akron 200

CAK - Akron Canton Airport

Laurie Curfman

Barry Dunaway

Shanda-lyn Yaeger, GISP

Donations of Bottles of Wine for Wine Pull

Amp Strategy

Anonymous

Linda Bess

Maura Scanlon Bozzelli, Esq.

Theresa Carter

Laurie Curfman

Barry Dunaway

Laura Farris-Daugherty

Barbara Feld

Chelsea James

Dana LaGarde

Kat Allen Martucci

Diane Miller-Dawson

Mary Outley

Ann Otto, Ph.D.

Jacqueline Silas-Butler

Pamela Valentine

Yasmin Vann

Debbie Walsh

George William Whitfield-Smith



Don't forget to turn in your "Attendance Card" for the Classroom Baskets' Drawing!

SYNTHOMER FOUNDATION:
we do more together.



At Synthomer we know when communities come together, they can accomplish more, shine brighter, grow stronger, and envision more boldly.

It's this commitment to bringing communities together that allows Synthomer's purposeful giving to make the most impact.

Global Innovator of Specialty
Chemicals and Functional Surfaces





◆ **Elizabeth Z. Bartz**

State and Federal Communications, Inc.

◆ **William J. Blake**

Retired, Youngstown State University

◆ **Tammy F. Brand, PharmD, MBA**

Branded Outcomes, LLC

◆ **Tracy Burt**

Akron Community Foundation

◆ **Lisa Carey Dean, Esq.**

City of Green / Roderick Linton Belfance, LLP

◆ **LaCresia Denson**

Akron Public Schools

◆ **Susan Flowers**

Community Volunteer

◆ **Thomas Ghinder, Sr.**

Akron Promise

◆ **Dr. Lathardus Goggins II**

Applied Academic Solutions
and Saint Rest Publications

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Retired, CommonGood

◆ **Charles L. Greene, Esq.**

Law Office of Charles L. Greene

◆ **Ramona Hood**

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The University of Akron

◆ **Sherry Neubert**

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◆ **Chris Niekamp, Esq.**

Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLC

◆ **Walter Noland, Ed.D.**

Akron Public Schools

◆ **Katerina Papas, Esq.**

Retired, Summit County Children Services

◆ **Mary J. Parnell**

Retired, Registered Nurse

◆ **Richard M. Roberts**

Retired, Akron Public Schools

◆ **Dreama Mason Whitfield**

DM Whits Curator of Good Thoughts

◆ **Danny Young**

Shaker Heights City Schools

◆ **Chris Yuhasz**

Retired, Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority
and Community Volunteer

◆ **Brittany Grimes Zaehring, Esq.**

City of Akron

Members of the Homecoming Court
are raising funds to support
Project GRAD Akron's scholarship fund.

Meet the 2025 Homecoming Court and the reasons they are supporting Project GRAD Akron and raising funds for scholarships!

Elizabeth Z. Bartz

President & CEO, State & Federal Communications, Inc.

At the heart of it all we are helping students obtain scholarships. Nothing about what we do is for our personal glory. Students all the way.

Rev. Dr. William J. Blake

Retired, Retired College Administrator and Pastor

I am a proud graduate of John R. Buchtel High School, class of 1972. Throughout my professional career I have continuously supported and encouraged the educational pursuits of students. I continue to do that as a mentor and advisor in retirement.

Tammy F. Brand, PharmD, MBA

Pharmacist, Entrepreneur of Branded Outcomes, LLC

I believe in providing relief to those who are in need and worked hard to graduate high school. Higher education often comes at a higher cost. Scholarships will help reduce financial stress for the family and scholar-to allow more focus on studies.

Tracy Burt

Vice President, Marketing & Communications, Akron Community Foundation

Education is critical. It equips people with the tools they need to thrive and has been proven to impact so many facets of life, from income to health. Every student deserves a quality education and to understand the array of educational opportunities available to them.

Lisa Carey Dean, Esq.

Law Director/Attorney, City of Green

I am supporting Project GRAD Akron because education was my way out of poverty and my pathway to success as an adult.

LaCresia Denson

Academy Principal, Buchtel CLC, Akron Public Schools

I believe every student should have financial means to access their dreams.

Susan Flowers

Community Volunteer

Every kid deserves the chance to be their best.

Tom Ghinder, Sr.

Founder, Akron Promise

All students need caring adults around to help them plan for the future and achieve. Project GRAD Akron provides a platform/organization for students to get the support they are looking for and need.

Dr. Lathardus Goggins, II

Educator/Entrepreneur, Applied Academic Solutions

I support Project GRAD Akron's commitment to student success and community empowerment.

Barb Greene

Retired, founder and principal consultant, CommonGood Consulting, Inc.

I want to support young people in furthering their education and preparing themselves for their future.

2025 Homecoming Court Remarks, continued...

Charles L. Greene, Esq.

Attorney; Retired, Vice President, Human Resources, Kent State University

I am committed to supporting individuals who have a dream, and the work ethic to succeed. Further, I am willing to help as many students as possible to avoid the crippling burden of student loans.

Ramona Hood

Retired, President and CEO FedEx Custom Critical

I believe education is the cornerstone of personal and professional fulfillment and I'm aligned with the vision and work done at Project GRAD Akron.

Laura Lederer

VP, Chief Development Office, Akron Community Foundation

I am a strong supporter of education and I have great respect for Jackie Silas-Butler. Graduating is just the beginning.

Teresa R. LeGrair

Retired, President & CEO, Akron Urban League

Education is critically important & Project GRAD Akron has been at the forefront of caring for students for many years, so I'm excited to support them.

Keith Liechty-Clifford

Director School Improvement, Akron Public Schools

I'm proud to support Akron Project GRAD because it changes lives. Project GRAD helps students from underserved communities succeed by providing mentoring, academic support, college and career counseling, and scholarships. Supporting Akron Project GRAD means investing in kids, education, and the future strength of the community.

John C. Mobley

Retired, Researcher & Developer for Race Tires, The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company.

Substitute Teacher, Akron Public Schools

Obtaining my degrees has enabled me to have a rewarding continuous and successful career. That is why I support Project GRAD Akron so I can be a part of helping our young people be successful in whatever careers they choose.

R.J. Nemer

President, The University of Akron

The work of Project GRAD Akron is integral to our entire community. Strong communities value education. At The University of Akron, we uplift the principle of lifelong learning. If students are encouraged from a young age to accomplish incremental educational feats, their chances of valuing education, including a college degree, are exponentially raised. The scholarship fund supports this important work.

Chris Niekamp, Esq.

Attorney/Partner, Buckingham Doolittle & Burroughs

I am proud to offer my support for Project GRAD Akron. As a parent whose children all attended Akron Public Schools, I've seen firsthand how important it is to provide every student with the support, resources, and encouragement they need to succeed-not just in school, but in life. Project GRAD Akron plays a critical role in this mission. Their work empowers students to overcome obstacles, stay focused on their goals, and pursue higher education or career opportunities they may not have otherwise considered. I've long admired their commitment to equity, mentorship, and academic achievement. Education changes lives. Project GRAD Akron ensures that more of our community's students have access to that change. For that reason-and many more—I'm proud to stand behind their mission.

Walter Noland, Ed.D.

Campus Principal East CLC, Akron Public Schools

Working to close the opportunity gap.

Richard M. Roberts

Retired Administrator, Akron Public Schools

I worked with the superintendent to bring the program (Project GRAD Akron) to Akron. I believe in its goals and principles.

Sherry Neubert

“Executive Coach, Chief Inspiration Officer and Founder, The Symbiotic Collective

Retired VP Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company

I'm supporting Project GRAD Akron because I believe deeply in the power of education to transform lives and communities. As someone with a long-tenured career in leadership and innovation, I know that talent is everywhere—but opportunity is not. Project GRAD helps close that gap by investing in students who might otherwise be overlooked, ensuring they have the support and resources to pursue higher education and thrive.

Mary J. Parnell

Retired Registered Nurse

I believe in the vision and programs of Project Grad Akron. Providing programming and monetary means for the underrepresented students within our community affords them the opportunity to move forward academically as well as culturally.

Katerina Papas, Esq.

Retired, Deputy Executive Director/General Counsel, Summit County Children Services

I am honored to be invited to participate on the Homecoming Court of the Project GRAD Akron -Achieving Dreams Fundraising Event. Project GRAD Akron began in the Akron Public Schools in 2002. For 22 years, Project GRAD Akron has been helping students make positive transitions by programs including the Bridge to Kindergarten program in collaboration with Kent State University, the College and Career Central class, the Summer Institutes in collaboration with the University of Akron, the GRAD Mentors program, and the scholarship program. These transition pathways are supported by so many caring people who fervently believe in the motto: “Graduation Really Achieves Dreams”.

Dreama Mason Whitfield

Owner and Founder, DM Whits Curator of Good Thoughts

I spent a bulk of my career as a school counselor working in the Buchtel Cluster, where I had the privilege of supporting students and families. As a West Akron native, giving back to my community has always been a personal priority and passion.

Danny Young

School Counselor/Head Basketball Coach, Shaker Heights City Schools

I grew up in Akron and Akron made me into the man I am today. There were a lot of great male role models that inspired me to be great. It's my job to give back to the Akron community.

Christine Yuhasz

Retired, Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority

I believe they are providing great programming and educational experiences for the students in Akron Public Schools.

Brittany Grimes Zaehring, Esq.

Chief of Staff for the Mayor, City of Akron

As a proud graduate of Akron Public Schools—especially the Buchtel Cluster—I'm honored to support the incredible work of Project GRAD Akron. This organization, with its award-winning programs and passionate leadership, truly transforms lives. What I love most is that they stay grounded in their mission: walking alongside students and families to support APS learning goals, offer enriching extracurricular opportunities, and help students imagine and achieve bright, fulfilling futures. This kind of impact does not come for free. Supporting Project GRAD Akron is more than a donation—it's an investment in students, in families, and in building a stronger, more engaged community.

Thank you for your support of Project GRAD Akron!

#AchievingDreams2025



*Donations to Project GRAD Akron's Scholarship Fund
Homecoming Court Donations
(To the "Event" or to the Participants)*

Members of the Project GRAD Akron's Homecoming Court agreed to raise/donate a minimum of \$1,000 to support Project GRAD Akron's Scholarship Fund. One hundred percent (100%) of the Homecoming Court donations have been earmarked to support scholarships.

The fundraising period is from June 1, 2025 to September 6, 2025.

Thank you to the following donors (as of September 3, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.) for your contributions, including those of you who made multiple donations:

7-11 Corvette Club
Denise Adams
Lewis Adkins Jr.
Matt Akers
Akron Community Foundation
Lori Alamin
Barbara Allen
Jennifer Allen
Patricia Allen
Anonymous (Numerous)
Greg Ashby
Cheryl Bailey
Ruth Ann Bartholomew
Elizabeth Bartz
Suzanne Bausch
Cynthia Bell
Sherry Bennington
RaMona Benson
Catherine Bentley
Trevania Bethune
Ashton D. Blake
Chelsea Blake
Cynthia Blake
Darrell Blake
Francine Blake
Ida Streeter Blake
Jessyca Blake
Maxine Blake

Thelma Boyd
Roxia & Stanley Boykin
Sharon Boykin
Yolanda Bradford
Shirley & Melvin Brown
Shayla Brown-Dandridge
Kristin Brummond
Jennifer Bucheit
Buchtel Class of 1972
M. Montague Buckner
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Suzanne Capron
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Angela Carter
Theresa Carter
Tracy Carter
Trina Carter
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Carla Chapman
Jasina Chapman
Roseanna Clark
Darrell Claytor, CFP
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Krista Galloway
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Andrew Goodrich
Ellen O. Goggins
Judy Gray
Barbara & Todd Greene
Charles Greene
Delores Greene
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Jo Ann Jones
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Kishaun King
Knight Foundation
Willy Kollman
Sandra Landskroner

Morgan Lasher
Emmanuel LeGrair
Cathy Leuenberger
Myron Lewis
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Nakia Miller
Sue Miller
Diane Miller-Dawson
John C. Mobley
Terence Molson
Suzie Graham Moore
Najee Muhammad
R.J. Nemer
Fedearia Nicholson-Sweval
Chris Niekamp
Valarie Noel
Walter Noland
Nancy O'Dell
David Ochmann
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Sherry Pace
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Mike Parnell
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Steve & Julie Radwany
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Vicky Shaw
Eugene Shy Jr.
Jacqueline Silas-Butler
Christine Sims
Sandra Smart
Diane Smith
Diane F. Smith
Lenda Smith
Rebecca & Daryl Smyth
Marco & Debra Sommerville
James Strabic
Carla Sykes
Vernon & Barbara Sykes
The Village Is Us
Esther Thomas
Larry Thomas
Monique Toppin
James N. Tormey
Kirstin Toth
Deatra Trimble
Sylvia Trundle
Brandon Tucker
Willie Ann & Dr. Hank Tucker
Wendy Turrell
Quinton Upton
Misty Villers
Jeana Wade
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Jan Weaver
George Whitfield
Judge Annalisa Williams
Bryan Williams
Carl Williams
K. Rene Williams
Deborah Wood
Karen Woodall-Smith
Rebecca Guzy Woodford
Marcus Wooten
Dr. Sheldon Wrice
Mia Yaniko
Ebony Yeboah-Amankwah
Brittany Grimes Zaehringer
Danny & Anna Zampelli
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
Laurie Zuckerman



Meet Our Classroom “Instructors” for the Back to School Bash

All of our classes are interactive and have an “adult-twist”

The Psychology of Art Appreciation - Cathy Faye, Ph.D.

Cathy Faye, Ph.D., is the Margaret Clark Morgan Executive Director of the Drs. Nicholas and Dorothy Cummings Center for the History of Psychology at The University of Akron. She is also an Associate Professor of Research in The University's Department of Psychology. Dr. Faye is a historian of psychology and her work is rooted in the belief that historical understanding is an essential and powerful part of our shared human experience. At the Center, she leads a team of psychologists, historians, curators, and library and archives specialists to preserve and share archival materials that document the history of the human sciences. The Cummings Center is home to the National Museum of Psychology, a Smithsonian affiliated public museum in Akron, Ohio.

The Museum, with a collection of 1500 objects and 6,500 linear feet of documents, invites visitors to explore the many ways that psychology shapes and is shaped by our everyday world.



Geography - Wine Appreciation - Gina Krieger

Gina Krieger is Co-owner and Vice President of Seven Grains Natural Market in Tallmadge, Ohio. Since its inception in 1998, Gina has served as the Lead Buyer for several key departments including everything from seafood and poultry to grocery, supplements and wellness products. She speaks frequently to groups small and large about nutrition, self-wellness, and building and strengthening the immune system. She has helped guide Seven Grains Natural Market into one of the most respected Natural Food retailers in the Midwest.

Seven Grains was most recently honored by one of the US's largest national Natural Food distributor, as one of the top 2 stores in Ohio and in the top 250 Natural Food stores east of the Mississippi--an impressive honor, listed alongside multiple location chains including those in high grossing cities like New York City, Chicago, and Boston. Gina also directs all marketing including monthly circular layout and social media. Prior to Seven Grains, Gina was a Senior Account Executive with Radio One Marketing in Cleveland, Ohio. Gina spent several years in both broadcast sales and voice over talent with WKDD in

Akron and WMMS and WMJI in Cleveland for regional and national accounts including Coca Cola, Pepsi, and Belkin Productions. She graduated from Ashland University with BA degrees in Broadcasting, Business and Marketing and was a member of Delta Zeta Sorority. She currently serves on the board of directors for Crown Point Ecology in Bath, Ohio, is a three-time past chair for Crown Point's primary fundraiser Taste of Earth, and is a member of Akron Wine Club and Turkey Foot Island Club.

History - Akron Bicentennial - Mark Greer

Mark Greer is the Executive Director of the Akron Bicentennial and a longtime leader in community and economic development. As the City of Akron's former Great Streets Administrator, he oversaw more than \$4 million in revitalization grants for small businesses and neighborhoods. A passionate public historian and storyteller, Mark is the creator of Beyond the Innerbelt, a documentary exploring the impact of urban renewal on Akron's Black communities. A Leadership Ohio Fellow and frequent public speaker, Greer brings a deep understanding of Akron's history and its ongoing transformation.

Greer graduated from Bowling Green State University with a B.M., magna cum laude, in Music Performance, and Kent State University with a M.M. in Piano. He serves on many boards and commissions and has received numerous leadership awards for his community service and professional skills. An avid writer, historian, and documentarian, Mark maintains a private piano studio in Greater Akron, and serves as Assistant Pastor at The Family Church, a non-denominational ministry in Akron's University Park Neighborhood.



Language Arts - Let's Talk Artificial Intelligence (AI) - Shanda-lyn Yaeger, GISP

Shanda-lyn Yaeger is an Associate Professor at Stark State and Adjunct Professor at Kent State with 20+ years of expertise in GIS, data analytics, and database development. A passionate educator and mentor, she is known for her engaging teaching style and real-world approach. Committed to equity in education, she supports underrepresented and special needs communities through grants, mentorship, and workforce initiatives. Shanda serves on the board of Project GRAD Akron and volunteers widely across the community. Formerly GIS Director for Stark County, she supported public safety, health, and environmental efforts. Her federal work in spatial data intelligence included roles at Lockheed Martin, TechniGraphics, and EarthSat, where she held a TS/SCI clearance. Her career reflects a deep dedication to education, advocacy, and community impact.

Music & Physical Education - Tasha Young (DJ Tash Beatz) & Roni Jā

DJ TashBeatz, the founder & CEO of Rock The Crowd Ent, brings over 8 years of experience in curating a diverse music selection and promoting positivity and enjoyment through her musical performances. The mission of Rock The Crowd Ent is to use music as a means to unite, inspire, and create memorable and inclusive moments for their audience.

DJ TashBeatz has been showcased on various media platforms like 93.1 WZAK, Rebel 107.9, WNRV, Lock 3, Rock The Crowd Mix Show, and more. Furthermore, she has been spotted alongside Congresswoman Emilia Sykes, Sam Sylk, Coi Leray, Hubbs Groove, and many other notable figures.

Roni J, Chief Operating Officer of Rock The Crowd Ent is a talented vocalist hailing from Akron, Ohio. Renowned for her renditions of Tina Turner and the Emcee of Rock The Crowd Ent., she has collaborated with various bands in Akron and Cleveland, establishing herself as a powerhouse performer. Roni thrives on engaging with the audience during her shows, as music has always been a source of healing for her, aiming to entertain and provide solace to all who listen.

Her dynamic stage presence and soulful voice captivate audiences, leaving a lasting impression wherever she performs. Roni's dedication to her craft is evident in every performance, where she seamlessly blends passion and professionalism. Beyond her musical talents, she is also committed to mentoring young artists, sharing her knowledge and experience to help them navigate the music industry.





Helping Students Thrive from Classroom to Career

Quick Program Highlights:



College & Career Readiness & Persistence

Support for post-graduation planning, applications, and scholarships and services to enable students to thrive in a variety of post-secondary options.



Academic Support

College and career classes, summer and after-school programs, mentoring, and advising to build confidence and boost achievement.



Internships

Gain valuable experience in a real-world setting, make a positive difference in the lives of young people, and obtain a deeper understanding of your chosen field OR prepare yourself for your future



Mental Health & Mentorship

Encouragement and support to help students stay focused and feel seen.



Family & Community Engagement

Workshops, events, and resources to empower families.



Signature Events

March GRADness, Achieving Dreams, Turning Tassels, and more.



What we do

Project GRAD Akron helps students in the Akron Public Schools achieve success through academic support, mentoring, and real-world opportunities. From kindergarten through college and career planning, we walk alongside students every step of the way.

By the Numbers



Over **1,000** students served annually



\$2.5+ million in scholarships awarded



100% graduation rate for GRAD Scholars

Ways to Get Involved



Students:

Participate in your school's Project GRAD Akron program



Families:

Attend workshops and community events



Supporters:

Volunteer, mentor, intern, advocate, or donate to make a difference

Together, we're helping students succeed—in school and in life.

Website: projectgradakron.org • Email: info@projectgradakron.org
Phone: 330.761.3113 • Social: @ProjectGRADAkron

Scan the QR code to learn more or get involved.

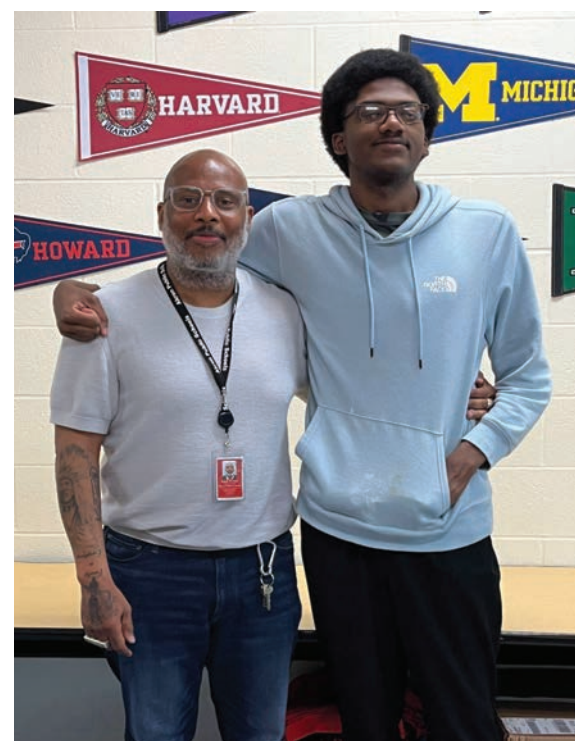


BECOME A GRAD MENTOR! 2025- 2026

Celebrating 10 Years of GRAD Mentors!

Since 2015, GRAD Mentors proudly has:
Recruited **468** Community Volunteer Mentors
Provided **18,259** Total Mentor Match Hours
Served **2,467** Total Student Mentees

- ★ Community Volunteer Mentors work with Akron Public Schools high school students to **increase their personal motivation, develop their sense of resiliency, realize social and academic success, and actualize their plans for life after high school graduation.**
- ★ We offer Traditional Mentoring, Team Mentoring, and Small Group Mentoring opportunities.



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO APPLY TO BE A MENTOR:
To request more information about becoming a GRAD Mentor, visit our website,
www.projectgradakron.org
click **GET INVOLVED** tab,
click **Become a GRAD Mentor** tab
and submit the requested information.
OR
Contact us by phone at **330-761-7952**

BRIDGE TO KINDERGARTEN (B2K) HIGHLIGHTS

2025 - 2026 Bridge to Kindergarten Summer Academy

Students and their Families Transitioning from home or preschool to begin their formal educational journey in Kindergarten



Since 2009, 645 students have successfully transitioned to an Akron Public School kindergarten classroom after completing Project GRAD Akron's Bridge to Kindergarten (B2K) Summer Academy. We very much appreciate the continued partnerships we have relied on over the years, including Akron Public Schools, Summit Education Initiative, ArtSparks, and this year we welcomed Red Oak Behavioral Health as a partner. The 2025 - 2026 program began with the Bridge to Kindergarten Summer Academy, which was held this year July 21 through August 8, 2025. The B2K Summer Academy was held at Schumacher CLC (Buchtel Cluster), with a total of 44 students in



three classrooms. Students worked on building and strengthening their kindergarten readiness skills in literacy, math, social and emotional learning, and transitions. We had a visit from the Akron Fire Department, held our own B2K Olympics, and celebrated all of the students' accomplishments at our Culmination Program at which time all of the students "crossed the bridge to Kindergarten"!



Parents as Partners: During the summer program, parent and caregiver meetings were held each week to provide literacy, social emotional, and mental health support as well as community/school resources for family wellness. Also, there was an opportunity for parents to support each other. Our speakers included: Christine Sullivan - Summit Education Initiative, Katy Durr, LPCC, ECMH - Red Oak Behavioral Health, and Stancy Sykes - Akron Public Schools.

Our program continues during the school year with programming and wrap-around services for parents, caregivers, and students to ensure our families and students have their needs met for a successful start to their beginning journey in their formal education.



Thank you to Akron Public Schools and Akron Community Foundation for your continued generous support of Bridge to Kindergarten.

PROJECT GRAD AKRON INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY PROGRAMS

Overview of outcomes for the 2024 - 2025 School Year:



Student participants in College and Career Central Classes: 2,105 students at Buchtel, East, Garfield CLCs, and North High School. 91% of students agreed, "I have the potential to succeed in college".

GEAR UP After-school Club: served 115 students in after-school and lunch time social emotional skill building programming at Buchtel, East, and Garfield CLCs, and North High School. 100% of students agreed that they can influence their own future and achieve their ambitions.

Bridge to GRADuation: A total of 34- 11th and 15- 10th grade students completed the Everyday Leaders Leadership Institute. These students have been in the Bridge to GRADuation Program since 8th grade. In addition to strengthening their leadership skills, they provided Peer Mentoring Workshops for 6th graders at Buchtel and 8th graders at East as a component of the City of Akron's Youth Violence Intervention and Prevention. One student beginning his 4th year in the program stated,

"Project GRAD Akron has shaped me into the person I am today and made me the leader I am today".

GRAD Mentors: Celebrating 10 Years! Since 2015:

468 Volunteer Mentors ~ 18,021 Mentor Match Hours ~ 2,419 Student Mentees served



GEAR UP Parent Academy: hosted a Parent Academy for GEAR UP Parents from the GEAR UP Schools, a total of 32 guests for breakfast and a workshop on "Handling Your Own Stress While Helping Kids Cope", presented by Lisa McCraney, M.Ed., LPCC-S. 100% of participants agreed that the workshop was valuable to them as a parent/caregiver.

Class of 2025: 121 seniors at Buchtel and East CLCs were served through our 3C classes. Of these, 81 students plan to enroll in college. 41 students completed the Bridge to College Workshop prior to graduation, 100% completed their FAFSA and are enrolled in college for Fall 2025. 26 scholars received the Project GRAD Akron Scholarship!

GRADs Persist: 78 college scholars participated in GRADs Persist during the 2024-2025 school year, receiving on-going support services, navigating campus-based services, mental health services, and financial aid services. Four of our Scholars graduated from college this spring!



Graduation Really Achieves Dreams

Our middle and high school programs have been generously supported by GEAR Foundation, The City of Akron's Youth Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant, The Maynard Family Foundation, and Akron Public Schools

Back to School Bash 3



Elizabeth Z. Bartz William J. Blake Tammy F. Brand, PharmD, MBA Tracy Burt Lisa Carey Dean, Esq. LaCresia Denson



Susan Flowers Tom Ghinder, Sr. Dr. Lathardus Goggins II Barb Greene Charles L. Greene, Esq. Ramona Hood



The winners will be crowned at this year's Achieving Dreams Celebration on Saturday, September 6, 2025
Proceeds support Project GRAD Akron's Scholarship Fund

Back to School Bash 3

Homecoming Court

Laura Lederer Teresa R. LeGrair Keith Liechty-Clifford John C. Mobley R.J. Nemer



Sherry Neubert Chris Niekamp, Esq. Walter Noland, Ed.D. Katerina Papas, Esq. Mary J. Parnell



Richard M. Roberts Dreama Mason Whitfield Danny Young Chris Yuhasz Brittany Grimes Zaehring, Esq.



Achieving Dreams Celebrations

2007 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 1st Annual

- **Date:** Wednesday, October 24, 2007
- **Location:** Tangier, 532 W. Market Street, Akron, Ohio
- **Keynote Speaker:** Leon Harris (Buchtel graduate)
- **Honorees:** PGA Educator of the Year: Johnnette Snowden Curry
PGA Parent of the Year: Russel C. Neal Jr.
PGA Volunteer of the Year: James E. Toles
PGA Volunteer of the Year: Susan Vogelsang
- **Event Chairperson:** S. Theresa Carter
- **Honorary Chairpersons:** Dr. Luis Proenza (President of The University of Akron) and
Dr. Sylvester Small (Superintendent of the Akron Public Schools)
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

2008 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 2nd Annual

- **Date:** Friday, October 3, 2008
- **Location:** Quaker Station, 135 S. Broadway, Akron, Ohio
- **Keynote Speaker:** Glynis Wheeler Redwine, Esq. (Buchtel graduate)
- **Honorees:** PGA Volunteer of the Year: Buchtel High School PTA
PGA Volunteer of the Year: Deborah Cunningham
PGA Parent of the Year: Pamela LeGrair
PGA Educator of the Year: Dreama Mason
- **Event Chairperson:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.
- **Honorary Chairpersons:** Robert W. Briggs (President of the GAR Foundation) and
Vivian Celeste Neal (Program Officer of the John L. & James Knight Foundation)
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.
- **Development Director:** Theresa Manzell

2009 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 3rd Annual

- **Date:** Thursday, October 22, 2009
- **Location:** Quaker Station, 135 S. Broadway St., Akron, OH
- **Keynote Speaker:** Dr. David L. Burnham (Buchtel graduate)
- **Honorees:** **Partnering to Achieve the Dream – Celebrating Our Partners**
with Kent State University and The University of Akron (recognized
various individuals from different departments at both universities)
Kent State University Top Honoree: H. Scott Curfman
The University of Akron Top Honoree: Dr. Deborah Owens-Fink
- **Event Chairperson:** Debra Adams Simmons
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.
- **Development Director:** Theresa Manzell

Achieving Dreams Celebrations

2010 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 4th Annual

- **Date:** Thursday, October 28, 2010
- **Location:** Quaker Station, 135 S. Broadway St., Akron, OH
- **Honorees:** **Celebrating Buchtel Alumni**
Young Alumna – Raynese Scott Fikes, DDS
Distinguished Service to Humanity – Betty Dalton, Fred Gissendaner,
and Gail C. Walker
Lifetime Achievement – Nicholas T. George, Esq., Judge Carla D. Moore,
and Edwin L. Parmes, Esq.
- **Event Chairpersons:** Judi Bevly Hill & Margaret Williams
- **Honorary Chairperson:** Eileen Burg
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.
- **Development Director:** Theresa Manzell

2011 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 5th Annual

- **Date:** Thursday, October 27, 2011
- **Location:** Quaker Station, 135 S. Broadway St., Akron, OH
- **Honoree:** **Community Service Honoree**
Tuesday Musical Association, Barbara Feld, Executive Director
- **Honorees:** **Celebrating Buchtel Alumni**
Young Alumni – Brandon Ford, RN, Esq.
Distinguished Service to Humanity – Gregory Hill, DO, Kymberly “Kym” Alford Sellers,
Victoria Turner-King, and Melodie Morgan-Minott, MD
Lifetime Achievement – Dianne Rubin Newman, Esq., Herbert Newman, Esq.,
and Judy Licklider Read and Roger Read
- **Event Chairpersons:** Judi Bevly Hill & Margaret Williams
- **Honorary Chairperson:** Eileen Burg
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.
- **Development Director:** Theresa Manzell

2012 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 6th Annual

- **Date:** Thursday, November 1, 2012
- **Location:** St. George’s Family Center, 3204 Ridgewood Road, Akron, OH
- **Honorees:** **Celebrating Buchtel Alumni**
Memorial - Stanley M. Bober, CPA
Community Service - Magistrate Sharon Hairston Dennis
Young Alumna – Brittany Grimes Zaehringer, Esq.
Distinguished Service to Humanity – John Saros, Esq. & Marilyn Sanders Mobley, Ph.D.
Lifetime Achievement – Dr. Robert Stone & Mrs. Rochelle Dienoff Stone
- **Event Chairpersons:** Iris Harvey & Bernett L. Williams
- **Honorary Chairpersons:** Attorneys Dianne and Herbert Newman
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.
- **Development Director:** Theresa Manzell

Achieving Dreams Celebrations

2013 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 7th Annual

- **Date:** Thursday, October 3, 2013
- **Location:** St. George’s Family Center, 3204 Ridgewood Road, Akron, OH
- **Honorees:**

Community Service Honorees
Robert “Bob” Kulinski, President, United Way of Summit County
Stewart & Calhoun Funeral Home

• **Honorees:**
Celebrating Buchtel Alumni
Memorial – Barbara Dirden Mathews
Young Alumna – Shayla L. Brown
Distinguished Service to Humanity –
Leon Harris and Pamela Hamilton-Stubbs, M.D.
Lifetime Achievement – Senator Tom Sawyer
- **Event Chairpersons:** Judi Bevly Hill & Iris Harvey
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

2014 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 8th Annual

- **Date:** Thursday, October 2, 2014
- **Location:** St. George’s Family Center, 3204 Ridgewood Road, Akron, OH
- **Honorees:**

Community Service Honorees
Bishop F. Josephus “Joey” Johnson II, Pastor Cathy L. Johnson, and The House of the Lord

• **Honorees:**
Celebrating Buchtel Alumni
Young Alumna – Kelley Coleman Walton
Lifetime Achievement – Thomas DeBord, Howard Hewett, and Stacey Hodoh
- **Event Chairpersons:** Judi Bevly Hill & Stephanie “Stevie” Turner
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

2015 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 9th Annual

- **Date:** Thursday, October 1, 2015
- **Location:** St. George’s Family Center, 3204 Ridgewood Road, Akron, OH
- **Honorees:**

Community Service Honorees
Elizabeth Z. Bartz, Judi Hill, and State & Federal Communications

• **Honorees:**
Celebrating Buchtel Alumni
Distinguished Service to Humanity –
Atty. Crystal Jones and Father Jonathan Morris
Lifetime Achievement – Woodrow Nash
- **Honorary Chairperson:** Dr. Beverly Warren, President, Kent State University
- **Event Chairpersons:** Traci L. Buckner, Katerina C. Papas, Esq., and Mona Sarkar, Esq.
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

Achieving Dreams Celebrations

2016 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 10th Annual

- **Date:** Thursday, October 6, 2016
- **Location:** Greystone Hall, 103 S. High Street, Akron, OH
- **Honorees:**

Community Service Honorees
Deborah Owens, Ph.D. & Richard M. Roberts

• **Honorees:**
Celebrating Buchtel Alumni
Young Alumna - Savannah Brinson James
Distinguished Service to Humanity – Yanick Rice Lamb, MBA
Lifetime Achievement – Judge Carol Dezso
- **Event Chairpersons:** S. Theresa Carter & Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

2017 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 11th Annual

- **Date:** Thursday, October 5, 2017
- **Location:** Greystone Hall, 103 S. High Street, Akron, OH
- **Honorees:**

Community Service Honorees
S. Theresa Carter, David James, & OMNOVA Solutions Foundation

• **Honorees:**
Celebrating Buchtel Alumni
In Memoriam - Frank Marina Jr.
Lifetime Achievement – Marco Sommerville
Lifetime Achievement – Dennis Weiner, M.D., FAOA
- **Event Chairpersons:** Fedearia Nicholson-Sweval & Stephanie York, Esq.
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

2018 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 12th Annual

- **Date:** Saturday, October 13, 2018
- **Location:** John S. Knight Center, 77 E. Mill Street, Akron, OH
- **Honorees:**

Community Service Honorees
Dana K. LaGarde, St. Paul A.M.E. Church

• **Honorees:**
Celebrating Buchtel Alumni
Distinguished Service to Humanity – Dana Mitchell Rosser
Lifetime Achievement – Edward “Ed” Yeager
- **Honorary Chairperson:** Dr. Brian Harte, President, Cleveland Clinic Akron General
- **Event Chairpersons:** Fedearia Nicholson-Sweval
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

Achieving Dreams Celebrations

2019 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 13th Annual

- **Date:** Friday, October 11, 2019
- **Location:** John S. Knight Center, 77 E. Mill Street, Akron, OH 44308
- **Honorees:**
 - Community Service Honorees**
 - Christine Amer Mayer, Esq.
 - Judge James R. Williams and Alpha Phi Alpha Foundation of Akron, Ohio
- **Honorees:**
 - Celebrating Buchtel Alumni**
 - Distinguished Service to Humanity – Denise Brandon
 - Distinguished Service to Humanity – Regina King
 - Lifetime Achievement – Leland Jones
 - Lifetime Achievement – Sheldon Ocker
- **Event Chairpersons:** Barbara A. Feld and Dana K. LaGarde
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

2020 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 14th Annual

- **Date:** Saturday, October 3, 2020
- **Location:** A Reimagined Virtual Event
- **Keynote Speaker:** The Honorable Stacey Abrams
- **Honorees:**
 - Community Service Honorees**
 - The Honorable Emilia Strong Sykes
 - Bernett L. Williams
 - Akron Community Foundation
 - United Way of Summit and Medina Counties
- **Honorary Chairperson:** Dr. Clifford Deveny
- **Event Chairpersons:** Barbara Feld & Dana K. LaGarde
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

2021 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 15th Annual

- **Date:** Saturday, October 9, 2021
- **Location:** A Reimagined Virtual Event
- **Keynote Speaker:** Al Roker, Anchor of NBC News’ TODAY
- **Honorees:**
 - Community Service Honorees**
 - Danielle J. Kimmell, CPA
 - William R. Ellis, Jr.
 - The Reporter Newspaper
- **Event Chairpersons:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq. and Pamela R. Valentine
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

Achieving Dreams Celebrations

2022 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 16th Annual

- **Date:** Saturday, October 15, 2022
- **Location:** John S. Knight Center, 77 E. Mill Street, Akron, OH
- **Honorees:**
 - CHAMPIONS OF GRAD HONOREES (20th Anniversary)**
 - Leon Bibb
 - Laurie Curfman
 - Curtis Eaton, Jr.
 - Mary Outley
 - Dr. Sylvester Small
 - University of Akron School of Social Work, represented by Dr. Timothy McCarragher
- **Event Chairpersons:** Pamela R. Valentine & Jacqueline Silas-Butler
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

2023 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 17th Annual

- **Date:** Saturday, September 9, 2023
- **Location:** Hilton Akron/Fairlawn, 3180 W. Market Street, Akron, OH
- **Theme:** Back to School Bash
- **Homecoming Queen:** Christine Amer Mayer, Esq.
- **Homecoming King:** Barry Dunaway
- **Royalty Court Members (based upon overall contributions):**
 - Carol Hodge Poe
 - Dr. Karen Kea
 - Debra Sommerville
 - Dr. Vernon Sykes
 - Dr. Fedearia Nicholson-Sweval
- **Additional Participating Homecoming Court Members:**
 - Elizabeth Bartz
 - LaCresia Beecher
 - Rebecca Considine
 - Romona Davis
 - John Galonski, Esq.
 - Edward Gilbert, Esq.
 - Dr. Gregory Hill
 - Sue Hobson
 - Gina Krieger
 - Frank G. LaGarde Sr.
 - Karen C. Lefton, Esq.
 - Jerry Myers Jr.
 - Walter Noland
 - The Hon. Ilene Shapiro
 - Dr. Leah E. Shaw
 - Jim Simon, Esq.
 - Larry Tolson
 - Ebony Yeboah-Amankwwah, Esq.
- **Event Chairpersons:** Susan Flowers & Jacqueline Silas-Butler
- **Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

Achieving Dreams Celebrations

2024 Achieving Dreams Celebration - 18th Annual

- Date:** Saturday, September 7, 2024
- Location:** DoubleTree by Hilton Akron Fairlawn, 3180 W. Market St. Akron, OH
- Theme:** Back to School Bash 2
- Homecoming Queen:** Catey Breck Scanlon
- Homecoming King:** Steven Dimengo, Esq.
- Royalty Court Members (based upon overall contributions):**
- John Garofalo
 - Myron Lewis
 - Elizabeth Bartz
 - Montrella Jackson
 - King Lewis
 - Pam Klemm
 - Sylvia Trundle
- Additional Participating Homecoming Court Members:**
- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| - Holly Harris Bane | - Angelia Leggett |
| - Lakisha Barclay | - Nikki Marchmon-Boykin |
| - Dr. Angela Brake | - Tony Martucci, Esq. |
| - Alexia B. Curry | - Kimberly Moses, Esq. |
| - Brandi Davis | - Job Esau Perry, Esq. |
| - Elizabeth A. England | - Lynn Cheri Puryear |
| - Ellen Esakov | - Larry F. Thomas |
| - Larry W. Johnson, Jr. | - Asuama Yeboah-Amankwah |
| - Carolyn Brooks Joyce | |
- Event Chairperson:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.
- Executive Director:** Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Esq.

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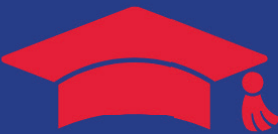
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Kristen
Scalise

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Administrative/Presiding
Judge



Judge
Annalisa S. Williams



Judge
Jerry Larson



Judge
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Judge
Ron Cable



Judge
Nicole Walker

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Congratulations Dr. Yanick Rice Lamb

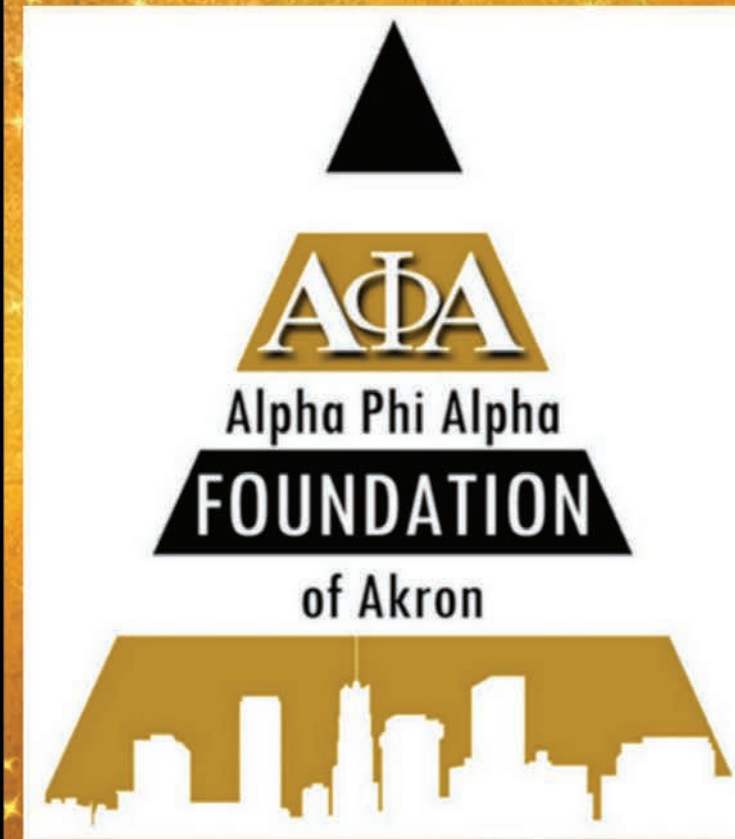


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Buchtel Grad 1976

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— Alikah R.
associate of arts major

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Thank you for your work with Akron Public Schools' students!

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*Dr. Leah E. Shaw-Bruton
President*

**Thank you to all the
Homecoming Court
participants!
Project GRAD Akron,
thank you for twenty-
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The Butler Family
Lawrence, Jacqueline & Christopher

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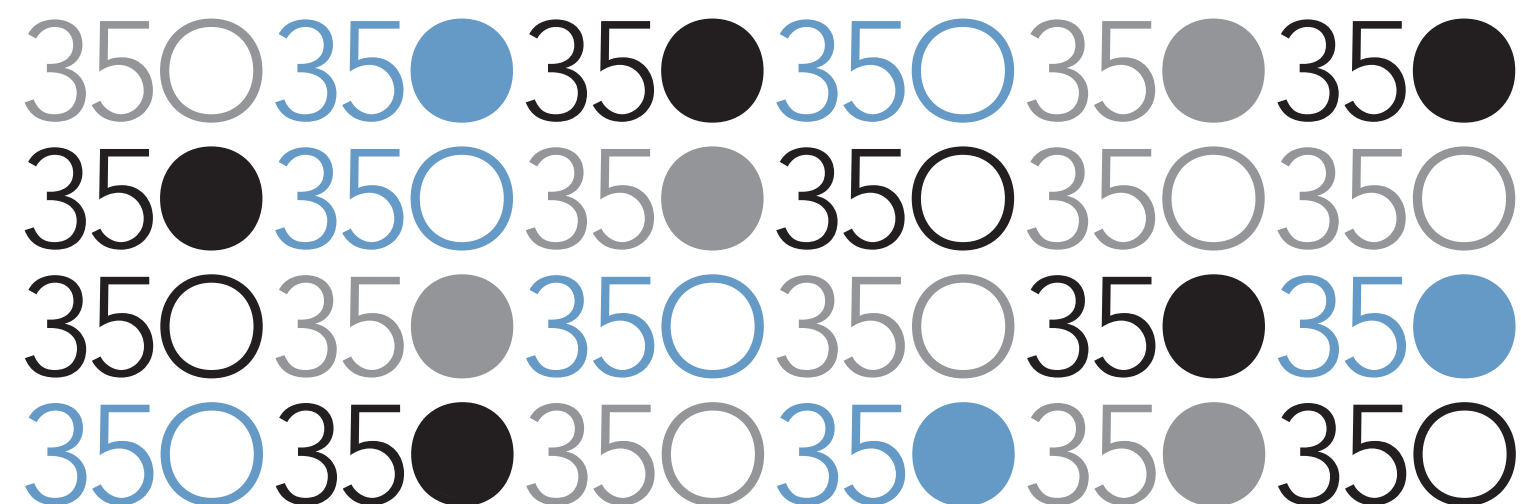
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Project GRAD Akron's Additional Scholarships



Leon Harris Book Scholarships

The Leon Harris Book Scholarship was established in 2008. Mr. Harris, a Buchtel graduate, was the keynote speaker for the First Achieving Dreams Celebration Gala. He donated \$10,000 to fund the Project GRAD Akron Leon Harris Book Scholarships.



Atha & Muriel Walker Scholarship

The Atha & Muriel Walker Scholarship was established independently in 1997 for the benefit of Buchtel graduating seniors. In 2011, the family began awarding scholarships through Project GRAD Akron for Buchtel High School seniors. For decades, the late Mr. and Mrs. Walker were local leaders who were active in many community projects. Mr. Walker made a mission of helping raise funds for Buchtel projects through his association with the service group Frontiers International. He also assisted high school and college students with job placement. The Walkers' five children are all graduates of Buchtel High School and they have all earned college degrees.



The India Ola Douglas Memorial Book Scholarship

India Ola Douglas was a 2013 graduate of Buchtel CLC (High School) in Akron Public Schools. Active in school, she was a member of Project GRAD Akron. India was committed to pursuing her post-secondary education and she took classes at The University of Akron and Regency Beauty School. A hard worker, she was employed by JC Penney and as a consultant for Avon. Her ultimate goal was the pursue a career in fashion design. On May 6, 2015, India had just left home to attend classes. At 8:30am, while sitting in her car a red light, she and other cars were struck by a driver going twice the speed limit. On May 11, India tragically died as a result of injuries she sustained. The driver was later convicted of multiple offenses and sentenced to prison.

The India Ola Douglas Memorial Book Scholarship was established in 2016 by India's family and friends. The scholarship was the brainchild of India's brother, Donte Douglas, a 2008 Project GRAD Akron Scholar, 2008 Buchtel graduate, and a 2013 graduate of Muskingum College. He wants other students to "chase their dreams" as his sister was doing.

Project GRAD Akron's Additional Scholarships



The Ken Walker Book Scholarship

The Ken Walker Book Scholarship benefits a Buchtel alumnus pursuing a degree at the University of Akron. Ken Walker (1951-2019) Ken graduated from Buchtel (Class of 1969) and earned his B.A. from U of Akron (Class of 1973). He built his life in Akron, marrying (Gwen) and raising a family, all the while remaining active in the community and nurturing strong friendships. He was athletic and particularly enjoyed playing basketball and executing his perfectly arced, nothing-but-net fade away jump shot. He served as a long-time member of several civic boards. Intellectually curious, Ken was an avid reader with a keen interest in political and social justice issues, Old English literature and sports biographies.



Project GRAD Akron Carolyn Stokes Reed Memorial Scholarship

Carolyn S. Reed was employed by the Akron Board of Education for 30 years, as a teacher at Robinson Elementary and principal of Rankin and Glover Elementary Schools. Mrs. Reed was the first African American to be elected president of the Ohio Association of Elementary School Principals and was a president of that Akron Elementary School Principals Association. Carolyn Stokes Reed knew she wanted to be a teacher since she was in the Second Grade. At the start of every school day for 16 years, as a principal Carolyn Reed would say, "This is the most important day of your life. Do your very best. Follow the directions of your teacher the first time they're given."

Mrs. Reed believed that whatever path you decide to follow, you make sure you do your best and be the best you can be. She believed if you had your education, you could write your own ticket in life. She was very involved in other numerous civic activities and achieved many honors. She is still remembered as a motivator, a lover of people and a lover of children.

Contributions to benefit Project GRAD Akron's programs/scholarships:

Mail: 10 N. Main St., Suite 503, Akron, OH 44308
Website: www.projectgradakron.org
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Staff and Team Members 2025-2026

Jacqueline A. Silas-Butler, Esq. ~ Executive Director

Laurie Curfman ~ Director of Programs

Matthew Futch ~ College and Career Advisor

Frank G. LaGarde, Sr. ~ College and Career Advisor

Wynter Mason ~ College and Career Advisor

Isabella South ~ College and Career Advisor

Theresa Manzell ~ Community Engagement Coordinator

Kathyrn Vajda ~ Parent Engagement Coordinator

Laura Farris-Daugherty ~ Executive Administrative Assistant

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AmpStrategy ~ Marketing Consultants

Interns

Jonathan Kilmer - The University of Akron, School of Social Work

Ashlee Oris - Kent State University, Department of Psychology

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

- Nelson Mandela



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- Debby Boone



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