



DEACONESS  
FOUNDATION

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friends,

Deaconess Foundation's mission is to help people in need sustain themselves and their families through a career, and never has there been a more interesting, challenging, and urgent time to consider how to do this than 2022. Together with our partners, we have dauntlessly pursued learning, evolving, and acting to help more people onto a good career path, and despite what you might hear, there are many successes.

**Our annual report features people for whom work has been transformative in their lives. They exemplify Deaconess Foundation's belief that people have the inherent capacity to effect positive changes in their lives, organizations, and communities through work in a career which offers family-sustaining wages. We hope you will enjoy their stories and celebrate them with us.**

Our energetic and dauntless Board of Trustees continues to dedicate countless hours to serving job seekers, employers, and the workforce ecosystem in Cuyahoga County. You can learn more about who they are on our website and at the back of this annual report. We're endlessly grateful for their contributions.

Most of all, thank you for being our partners in this effort. We look forward to continuing to work with you to scale effective workforce programs, address gaps, and evolve and innovate to improve performance so we can have more people sustaining themselves and their families through careers.



**Carrie Clark**

Chair of the Deaconess  
Foundation Board

A handwritten signature of Carrie Clark in black ink.



**Cathy Belk**

President and CEO

A handwritten signature of Cathy Belk in black ink.

# STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION THROUGH WORK



## Venus Jones

### Administrative Assistant

Venus Jones wanted to increase her earnings potential. “I chose to participate in the Cuyahoga County Library Pilot because I wanted to improve my chances of being hired as a Administrative Assistant or to work in the customer service field. I hoped my initial salary could be between \$15 - \$20 per hour.”

The Cuyahoga County Library Pilot is targeted to women who have left the workplace due to COVID and haven’t yet found a way to return. In addition to being trained for Administrative Assistant roles, the pilot also includes the opportunity for a paid internship.

Venus found the program just her speed. “When I started the class, I knew a few things about Microsoft Word. My instructor was very patient and knowledgeable in class.”

“Participating in a paid internship upon completion of the class was a blessing because I was unemployed... and the paid internship enabled me to buy Christmas presents for my family,” Venus comments. “In my internship, my duties include creating and editing Word documents, making telephone calls to

Venus Jones, on left, next to her work experience supervisor Jessica Untch and Terry Echols, the Cuyahoga County Public Library’s Director of Adult Education.

participants, and preparing for 2023 classes. Everyone in the office was very welcoming and professional. I really enjoy my job. It has been a plus to make \$15/hour and get paid weekly!”

Venus noted four beneficial aspects of the program:

- 1 Free RTA All-Day bus passes to get to and from class.
- 2 Job Searching classes presented by Cuyahoga Works and OhioMeansJobs.
- 3 Free laptops, enabling us to practice exercises out of class.
- 4 The chance to take the MOS test certification text free.

Deaconess Foundation provided funding for the Administrative Assistant’s pilot.

*“The paid internships re-introduced me to the workforce again, gave me a sense of purpose, and made me accountable.”*



## Mario Gross

### CNC Machinist

Mario Gross was looking for something different. “I was trying to change my life, because I was tired of clocking into a regular job.” So Mario joined the ACCESS to Manufacturing Careers program and graduated in just 4 weeks, in March of 2022. The ACCESS program is targeted to those with experience in the criminal justice system, young adults 18-25, and any adult looking for a new career path. ACCESS provides work readiness skills, technical training, and hands-on lessons taught by manufacturers.

“I knew absolutely nothing about manufacturing, but ACCESS showed me how to become a person who can be relied upon, be responsible, and manage time,” says Gross. “ACCESS actually changed my life.” ACCESS is run by MAGNET and Towards Employment, together with other partners.

Since Mario graduated, he has been promoted and has found a career as a CNC Machinist. He has established a 401(k), contributes regularly to his savings account, and feels good about providing for his family. “These are the things I’ve only dreamed of,” Gross says. “I’m in a position now to have a career, not just a job.”

Gross plans to keep growing, connecting, and sharing his love of manufacturing with those who will listen. “I love it. Manufacturing is the way to go,” he said. “I plan on being a supervisor and seeing how far I can take my career.”

*“These are the things I’ve only dreamed of. I’m in a position now to have a career, not just a job.”*

*Deaconess Foundation contributes to the Workforce Funders Group, which provided funding for the ACCESS To Manufacturing program.*



# Yolanda Starks

## Front-of-House Manager

Yolanda Starks worked for 25 years in a commercial bakery, supporting herself and her son. But throughout those years, she yearned for a more direct role as a chef. In March of 2021, she was able to take the plunge.

“I applied to EDWINS Leadership & Restaurant Institute so I could follow my passion. I always wanted to be a chef; culinary school was too expensive and too far from my family. The EDWINS program – was something I could do for me,” It was a chance to follow her own dreams. “What a blessing that it was free. The mission at EDWINS is awesome,” says Starks.

Now, almost two years later, Yolanda is wrapping up her first year in the Management Training Program after completing the Culinary Arts Program; she has a passion for “front of the house” work. “I love the energy, the smells, the music, the laughter. I love recognizing our regular customers and welcoming them back,” says Starks. “I love seeing people enjoy food, socializing, and being happy over food.”

Starks’ perspective on her career has also changed due to her participation in EDWINS. “I love this industry. I’m doing my passion, so it doesn’t feel like working. Now I can go anywhere and work; I could open my own space, and I have all the resources I need. It’s attainable for me.”

*“You are never too old to follow your dreams. Don’t let anyone get in the way of what you want to achieve.”*

Yolanda has some parting words for anyone considering a career change. “You are never too old to follow your dreams. Don’t let anyone get in the way of what you want to achieve.”

*Deaconess Foundation provides funding for the Management Training Program at EDWINS Leadership & Restaurant Institute.*

# Francisco Castillo

## Medical Assistant

When he moved to Cleveland from Columbus, Francisco Castillo wanted to gain a certification which would allow him to do the work he loves doing in one of the prestigious Cleveland hospitals. “I was working as a medical assistant in my former role, but I was uncertified.” Moving here was a chance for Francisco to step up his chosen career ladder, in healthcare.

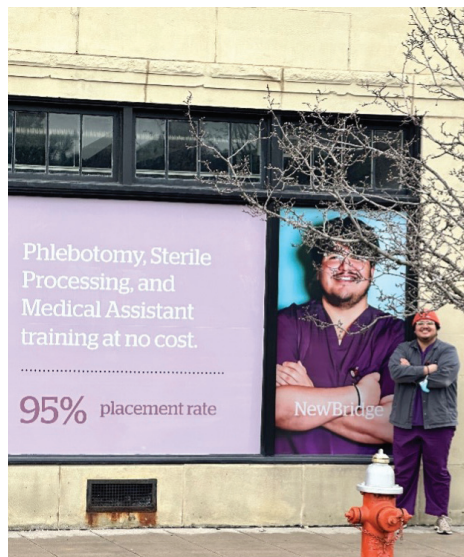
NewBridge was the place to start. “NewBridge helped me get my certification at no cost,” says Francisco, who was the first of his class to pass his certification tests on March 3, 2023. In his program, Francisco spends 3 days a week at “school” at NewBridge, then practices what he is learning at a local hospital 2 days a week (referred to as “clinical hours”). Francisco plans to start a full-time role at that hospital.

“I look forward to coming to NewBridge,” he says. “The faculty, the students, studying, laughing together, being focused...” Francisco is going to miss NewBridge, but he’s eager to work full-time in the healthcare industry. “I really like helping people when they are at their lowest,” says Francisco. “We’ve all been there: concerned or scared.”

“The [Medical Assistant] role is so perfect if you love helping people, you enjoy moving around during the day and multi-tasking, and you want to make a difference.” Francisco notes the role is an excellent jumping off point for continued career advancement. “It gives you a chance to see so many other roles in the medical field.” He’s considering continuing into a Physician Assistant role, but one day at a time. “With this program, you are ready to help someone, acting as a support system for them.”

*“It gives you a chance to see so many other roles in the medical field.”*

*Deaconess Foundation provides funding for NewBridge healthcare certification programs.*



*Francisco Castillo is also in marketing materials on the NewBridge building*

# Carlos Polanco

## Construction



Carlos Polanco came to Cleveland from the Dominican Republic, where he had some experience with construction. But when he arrived, he knew he needed to start somewhere else. “I was first interested in English classes. I heard SAC (Spanish American Committee) was providing free classes, so that’s why I initially went to SAC. As soon as the English class was over, I went to talk with Juan Medina, and he explained about the classes, the benefits, and how I would be able to apply for jobs through the union.”

Unions have not always been well understood by non-union members. “I was really excited about the possibility; before, I didn’t know many positive aspects of unions. All I knew was that they paid well, but I thought only white people worked for them. Juan gave me hope about the possibility of working for one, and how unions are now open to more applicants.”

*Carlos plans to enjoy a long-term career. “I see myself working in the construction trade for the next 15-20 years; the opportunities are endless because there is continued training about my trade, and different other trades.”*

Furthermore, Carlos recommends the construction industry for many people. “I would recommend working in construction to anyone who likes to be active. Construction allows you to improve your trade (whatever you like to do best; I like concrete the best) and it brings stability to you and your families. Stability is hard to find, but there is always work in construction. This is a good opportunity for kids; there is so much potential, and you can apply what you have learned all over the country and the world.”

*Translated from Spanish by SAC Director of Programs Angie Lastovka. Deaconess Foundation supports the Latinx Construction program at the Spanish American Committee.*



## Krishna Carr

TBD, but interested in architecture and art

Krishna Carr was a typical 15 year old sophomore in high school; she wasn't sure what types of careers might be good ones for her. "I knew that I loved drawing and art; singing and acting, and I have always found math easy." When she saw a flyer about the Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.) summer internship program at her high school, her guidance counselor connected her.

The Y.O.U. program ended up providing Krishna with not only her first job, but also with exposure to a career she wasn't even considering: architecture. "The Y.O.U. team asked me to narrow down my interests, and so I landed on math and art, wondering how I could combine them." The Y.O.U. team identified architecture as a good first step, work Krishna knew nothing about but was willing to try. She completed a internship before her junior year at City Architecture.

What did she learn? "I learned that architecture can be really hard. The team set those expectations for me. I also know how long the work hours can be. Most of all, I learned that I really like to push myself. This isn't work like schoolwork; you can't put it off, and you have to stay focused and motivated, no matter how you do it. I'm proud of myself for staying motivated."

Krishna is preparing now to apply to colleges in the fall to study art or architecture. "I'm going to be interested to have a career with people I like. The people you work with are very important to you."

*"This isn't work like schoolwork; you can't put it off, and you have to stay focused and motivated, no matter how you do it. I'm proud of myself for staying motivated."*

*Deaconess Foundation is proud to support Youth Opportunities Unlimited's summer jobs and internship programs, among other youth workforce programs.*

## DEACONESS FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHTS

Deaconess Foundation is inspired every day by our mission to help those in need build careers that support themselves and their families. Highlights of the Foundation's 2022 activity:

- ➔ Financially supported 38 different organizations in the workforce ecosystem. Due to our intentional focus on addressing systemic underinvestment in small non-profits, and to diversify our grantees:

**34%** of the organizations receiving grants have a leader/Executive Director who identifies as BIPOC

**37%** of grantees had not received a grant from Deaconess Foundation in the prior 36 months

- ➔ Deaconess supported both ongoing, proven efforts in workforce development as well as new innovations, including pilots at Cuyahoga Community College, the Cuyahoga County Library, and the Universal Basic Employment pilot.
- ➔ Recognized the success of systems change initiatives with the Deborah Vesey Systems Change Champion Award. This year's award recipient, CollegeNow of Greater Cleveland, and finalists NewBridge and the Center for Arts-Inspired Learning, are working with dozens of partners to address the root causes of joblessness and change how they deliver workforce development activities to improve effectiveness.



**Welcomed Todd Greene, executive director of WorkRise and a Fellow at the Urban Institute, to speak about workforce systems change at the City Club of Cleveland. We also sponsored other workforce speakers at the City Club to increase the visibility of this critical part of our civic infrastructure.**

- ➔ Participated with other organizations to galvanize new workforce development funding needed to meet needs in our community. The results included \$19M in American Rescue Plan Act investments from Cuyahoga County and (in early 2023) the City of Cleveland for scaling workforce programs supporting manufacturing, construction, and green energy industries, among others. ARPA funds also supported the expansion of STEM internships at GCP, and the Youth Career Exposure and Experience Platform led by Greater Cleveland Career Consortium.
- ➔ Led and participated in collaborations focused on workforce systems change, including the Cuyahoga County Workforce Funders Group, the OhioMeansJobs Cleveland-Cuyahoga Workforce Development Board, various other committees at the Fund for Our Economic Future, the National Workforce Matters Funder Collaborative, and the Funders Collaborative on Covid Recovery.

## UNRELENTING PARTNERS

Thank you to our grantees for a year of incredibly dedicated work:

- Center for Employment Opportunities
- Centers for Family and Children
- Cleveland Center for Arts & Technology (dba NewBridge)
- Cleveland Neighborhood Progress
- College Now Greater Cleveland
- Cuyahoga Community College Foundation
- Cuyahoga County Workforce Funders Group
- Cuyahoga County Public Library
- EDWINS
- Esperanza, Inc.
- Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation
- Family Promise of Greater Cleveland
- Fund for Our Economic Future
- Fund for Workforce Equity
- Greater Cleveland Career Consortium
- International Student Services Association, Inc.
- Junior Achievement
- Legal Aid Society of Cleveland
- LISC
- Literacy Cooperative
- May Dugan Center
- McGregor Foundation Collaborative
- MetroWest CDC
- National Association of Workforce Boards
- NEOSTEM
- NewBridge
- Ohio Guidestone
- Ohio Workforce Coalition
- Open Doors Academy
- Seeds of Literacy
- Smart Development, Inc.
- Social Venture Partners
- The Salvation Army
- The Spanish American Committee
- Thea Bowman Center
- Towards Employment
- Universal Basic Employment
- Urban City Codes
- Youth Opportunities Unlimited

Deaconess celebrates its Mission Outreach partners, United Church of Christ churches working every day to meet the basic needs of individuals across Cuyahoga County. Grants to support these churches' outreach activities are in honor of the legacy of the Foundation's original strategy and partnership with the United Church of Christ.

- Archwood United Church of Christ
- Church of the Redeemer
- Denison Avenue United Church of Christ
- Faith United Church of Christ
- Imani United Church of Christ
- Middleburg Heights Community United Church of Christ
- Mt. Zion Congregational Church, UCC
- Ridge Road United Church of Christ
- Saint Paul's Community Church
- Strongsville United Church of Christ
- West Park United Church of Christ

## THANK YOU

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