

Bridge To Freedom School

Vision:

We equip youth to set goals and cultivate within them the self-confidence, discipline and determination needed to realize their individual hopes and dreams.

Mission:

We help youth define and achieve their academic and career goals. We facilitate the engagement of youth and their parents/guardians in community programs and resources that will aid in their future success.

Directors:

Dania Montgomery
MA.ED



Harry London Chocolate Factory Visit



India Daniel
CEO, Huckaby Heart



Sherman Lawson
Baldwin Wallace University Intern



What is Bridge to Freedom School?

The Bridge to Freedom School is a literacy program designed to empower children, igniting in them a passion for learning. On average, children lose 1-2 months of classroom learning every summer. Summer learning loss can affect all students, but studies indicate that literacy intensive efforts such as Bridge to Freedom School improve outcomes. Within our program, the daily 5 literacy structure is used. Scholars spend classroom time writing, reading with a partner, listening and discussing books with their teachers, word work (building vocabulary) and computer time (listening to readings online via Tumble Books). As part of empowering our children, we refer to them as scholars throughout this program. This brings a level of responsibility as well as confidence boost to each child. A positive name encourages positive outcomes throughout the program. A person cannot be a scholar without putting in the effort into it. This also raises the children's view of themselves. They are seen as someone of high value and each day they prove us right. The scholars are in classrooms and workshops designed to expand their thinking. From quiet learning time to influential members of the community coming to speak, they are learning to love learning.

Teen Peer Mentor Leadership Development

Bridge To Freedom School began with a week of training for Peer Mentors, teens ages 14 and up who assisted in directing the program. The teens participated in team building activities. They heard from guest speaker Martinique Mims of City Year. They worked to prepare for the arrival of young scholars by decorating classroom spaces and preparing program materials.

Teen Peer Mentor Leaders



Cleveland Metroparks Zoo



United Skates



Learning A Praise Dance



Good News Club



Morning Devotion

After an opening prayer and a good breakfast, the scholars moved to morning devotion. Morning Devotion was led by Peer Mentors (Teens trained to lead and serve, assisting the younger scholars). They start off their day with important announcements, affirmations, Bridge to Freedom School chants, a song, recognitions, and guest readers. The chant and song help the scholars identify the qualities we want them to better understand. The recognition period is a time for everyone to recognize scholars, volunteers, or leaders who have shown good character. Even the little things are recognized. Our guest readers are various community leaders who come in to share their favorite book with the scholars. This is followed by a discussion of the reading, and its message. Morning devotion addresses all different learning styles such as audio, visual, and kinesthetic learning. It is designed to emphasize the fun elements so the scholars don't even realize they are learning.

Field Trips

The scholars went on a series of field trips this summer. First, they spent a day at the zoo learning about and discussing various animals and exhibits. Then the scholars went to United Skates and had a fun time skating together and enjoying pizza. The final field trip for the summer was a visit to the Harry London Chocolate Factory. Scholars had the opportunity to learn about the history of the Chocolate Factory as well as go behind the scenes to learn the step-by-step process used to craft gourmet chocolates. Special thanks to the Deacon Wesley Spencer of the Warrensville Community Baptist Church for driving the church van and serving as a chaperone.

Afternoon Theme

After a day of reading and writing the scholars got to unwind into more relaxed learning styles such as dance, art, missionary talks, and music. Gwen Warren, Warrensville Community Baptist Church Praise Dance Leader taught the scholars a dance. They learned a dance choreographed to the song "Everybody Dance" ("dancing for the Lord") by James Roberson. Lindia Pannell also a member of the Warrensville Community Baptist Church led the scholars in arts & crafts activities. Included was a rainbow activity wherein they were prompted to identify and display their individual character traits.

Child Evangelism Fellowship "Sharing The Good News Gospel"

The scholars participated in a *Good News Club* and *5-Day Club* provided by Child Evangelism Fellowship. It was a fast-paced program wherein the scholars had opportunity to hear and discuss the Gospel of Christ on their level in their environment. At the end of the program the scholars received special t-shirts to continue sharing the good news!



Scholars hard at work writing, presenting, READING!

Contact & Donation Information:

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**A Message From: Rev. Dr. Gregory Walker, CEO &
First Lady Patricia Walker, Program Executive Director**

*“Now all glory to God, who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think”
(Eph. 3:20, NLT)*

In the midst of the Covid-19 with all of its tragic impacts on youth and their families, God used the Warrensville Road Community Baptist Church to make a difference! In mission with God, the doors of the church were open to serve and provide a loving, safe and trusted environment for youth and their families. Academic, nutrition/health, social emotional, and spiritual needs were met throughout the school year through our Academic Learning Pod and during the summer by our Bridge to Freedom School.

We celebrate seven successful year of our Bridge To Freedom School Program! Since its beginning in 2015, each year we've grown. In the summer of 2020 during the height of Covid-19 pandemic with all of its fears and impact, a virtual Bridge to Freedom program was provided. This year we were thankful to be back in-person with a program that included educational field trips, personality and character development, recreational games, arts, crafts, dance and two meals each day. Literacy continues to be the key focus of our program. During this time when learning loss is at an all-time high, our Bridge To Freedom School scholars completed collectively 1,680 hours of reading in total, averaging 420 hours per week.

Bridge to Freedom School continues to be an example of a program that mobilizes a faith-based organization and the greater community to work together to “Make a Difference” in the lives of children and families. The program also serves as a wonderful example of an effective intergenerational leadership model. We are thankful for the many adult volunteers of the Warrensville Road Community Baptist Church and greater community that served to make this year's program a success. We are especially proud of the teen volunteers (Khamiya Daniel, Brionne Hamilton, Lazarhia Mayes and John Woodson) who spent time in leadership training and then served as mentors for the young scholars participating in the program. They worked alongside our awesome team which included Baldwin Wallace college intern, Sherman Lawson (author of this newsletter) and directors, India Daniel and Dania Montgomery to make this year's program a success. Also, special thanks to Carol Brown and Jackie Reed. We appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with organizations such as MyCom, Cleveland Catholic Charities, City Year, Child Evangelism Fellowship, Greater Cleveland Interfaith Alliance and Signature Health to meet the intellectual, nutritional, physical, and spiritual needs of families.

There is yet much work to be done! The pandemic has increased disparities in educational opportunities and achievement. We recognize that students, families, educators are now immersed in the hard work of building back better to ensure equal educational opportunity for all students. We, the church empowered by almighty God, stand ready to serve. Together we can continue to make a difference!



