

A note from John Zitzner

By the time you read this newsletter, there will be less than 925 days to January 1, 2020. Our goal is to work with legislators to fix school funding for high-quality charter schools, like Breakthrough, by 2020. There is still a \$1,500 or so gap per student that is filled by philanthropy. That adds up to over \$4 million per year... a huge number for us, a rounding error in the state budget. Your generous contributions help fill the gap. Thank you.

Next year, Breakthrough will open two new schools, bringing our total to 11. The two new schools are E Prep on West 93rd and Willard Avenue, a middle school (5-8) sharing a campus with Village Prep (K-4), and Citizens Leadership Academy East, a middle school (6-8) on the same campus as Citizens Academy East (K-5). As you know, going forward, The Intergenerational Schools will continue to operate their excellent schools, however they elected not to renew their services contract with Breakthrough, and therefore will no longer be part of our network. Breakthrough and Friends of Breakthrough will support the Intergenerational schools through the transition so that students are provided with the same excellent education.

A huge thank you to the Chuck and Char Fowler Family Foundation and the Nordson Corporation Foundation for renewing significant pledges to help Breakthrough over the next few years. They are amazing. If you run into anyone in the family or from Nordson, please say THANK YOU.

The best way to help us right now is to invite one or two friends to visit our schools and receive an updated briefing on what we're trying to accomplish in Cleveland. Call me anytime to set something up — 216-373-7801.

All the best,



INVEST IN EDUCATION—  
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SUMMER  
2017  
NEWSLETTER

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### ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

*Terrance Reynolds, E Prep Cliffs '09 and Ohio University '16, traveled to Washington D.C. with Friends of Breakthrough President John Zitzner, Breakthrough supporters, and charter advocates from other states to let Congress know about the impact of high-quality charter schools. Terrance is Breakthrough's very first college graduate, and he has recently moved to Japan, where he will teach English. He credits Breakthrough for helping him achieve his successes and was happy to inform members of Congress about the importance of equitable funding for charter schools. Read these excerpts from a longer interview about his political advocacy, his impressions of DC and the wider United States, as well as his advice for current Breakthrough students and recent graduates!*

#### On why he felt compelled to advocate for charter schools on Capitol Hill

Charter schools serve a benefit to the nation as a whole that we don't think the country has recognized yet. But, as high-performing charter schools- all the other schools that we were there with on Capitol Hill- we want to pose the position of, "If it works, let's keep funding it."

#### On making his case on the Hill

I just shared my story of how I went to Breakthrough Schools, how I think it benefitted me, and where I could have been if I didn't go to Breakthrough. I believe the Congressional offices that heard my story were influenced by it. I would like to believe that.

#### On his impressions of the political process

There are actually people, actual staffers, who genuinely care. And, I guess because of the system and whatever is going on, it seems like it's ineffective. It seems like it's not working, but these are real people trying to make a difference.

#### On the highlight of his DC experience

To walk through a piece of American history (Capitol Building) really put things in perspective for me. And, I guess ultimately, if I had to say what was the highlight of the experience, it was just walking through that building and just talking to some really amazing people about their stories, where they are from, what they do, and just sharing my story.

#### On staying engaged with Breakthrough Schools after advancing to high school or college

There's a whole network, a whole community of people within Breakthrough Schools and the city of Cleveland, who absolutely want to see you succeed. They imagine themselves being you at a younger age, and they just want to see you do better because you're the up and coming generation. There's a huge amount of people that want to help you learn. They want to help you see the world. They want to see you go places. Take advantage of those opportunities. Say yes to things.



Help fund a classroom!



Class of 2017 Graduates featured in video  
Jordan, Parice, John, Demitria, Justin

# BASH

**BREAKTHROUGH BASH 2017**

The 6th Annual Breakthrough BASH held on Saturday, January 28th at the Hilton Cleveland Downtown was a huge success. We celebrated with nearly 1,000 of our closest friends as Breakthrough students and alumni once again stole the show for a truly special evening.

Thanks to our Presenting Sponsor **KeyBank** 

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Wrap-Tite

We'd like to thank everyone who supported the event in any way. Whether you purchased a ticket, volunteered, raised your paddle, bid on an auction item, bought raffle tickets, invited a friend, or joined us in celebrating the hard work of our dedicated staff, teachers, students, families, and board members over the past six years – THANK YOU! The event would simply not be possible without you. We would like to give a special thanks to our dedicated BASH Host Committee who worked tirelessly to make this a top notch, sold-out event!

**The event net proceeds neared \$650,000 – A NEW RECORD!**

## **THANK YOU to our BASH Host Committee:**

*Jeffrey and Julie Cristal (Co-Chair) | Diane Singer (Co-Chair)*  
Guniya and Suresh Bafna | Susan and Michael Cristal  
Ann and Joe Dreher | Anshawn Ivery | Megan Johnston  
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Tracy and Bruce Wilhelm  
Hillary Goldberg Zashin and Stephen Zashin

# THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

## **SAVE THE DATES!**



**Monday • July 10, 2017**

Swing for the Stars – 7th Annual Golf Outing presented by Wells Fargo

**Wednesday • August 23, 2017**

Blue Plate Special 3rd Annual Community Luncheon  
Featuring guest speaker *Howard Fuller, education reform advocate and civil rights activist*

**Saturday • January 27, 2018**

7th Annual Breakthrough BASH!

For more information contact Karen Solomon at 216.373.2795 or [ksolomon@breakthroughschools.org](mailto:ksolomon@breakthroughschools.org)

This email from a 2017 BASH attendee to his friends sums up the night:



Hello all:

Sorry that you couldn't join Mary and me at the Breakthrough Schools Bash last Saturday night. We had a great time. Here's a couple of quick thoughts.

Attendance at the Breakthrough event has grown into four figures with more than 100+ tables of 10 in the new ballroom. While you might think it was a crusher, actually the new Hilton next to the convention center is very comfortable. Plenty of room to move around and plenty of bars and eats before being gonged to the table. There was enough room to talk privately with friends about the craziness from Washington or to just ignore it. Valet Drop off on either St Clair or Ontario and you get to wait with a free coffee in the warm lobby – you don't have to go out until you see your car and the exit is on Ontario where less wind comes off the lake. Maybe you won't be in Florida next year?

The donations were impressive. The total of the paddle raise where the guy runs around yelling WOW, AMAZING was \$382,000, and that's on top of the money for the tables and sponsorship which based on my math skills may have been over \$1 million.

The program of course included the super inspiring rock star John Zitzner who came out in cape. After his quick thanks and a couple interesting facts, he turned the mic back over to the MC for the evening, Teon, an extroverted 10th grader at St Ed's who had started at Breakthrough in 3rd grade and pulled himself up to proficiency by the time he graduated in 8th grade. An impressive 8th grade girl and a 5th grade boy also wowed the crowd with their stories and life objectives. We met one of the first college graduates from EPrep's first class of 6th graders from when the first school started in 2006. The student led program and frequent videos held the audience in quiet attention to witness the emotion of the moments and the messages – there were laughs, shouts of encouragement and standing ovations. Very uplifting.

There are those in Washington, big universities, the national press debating hour by hour whether we have the right leadership in place for education, whether school choice is something for everyone, what type of testing, what kind of teaching, what kind of monies are needed and at which levels, who is beholden to who... La di da.

Here in Cleveland we have a group that's getting the job done. John Zitzner started an amazing thing, leading and building a very strong leadership team that is making results now for 3,300 students in 11 schools in the poorest areas of Cleveland. Their vision is to have 6,000 children by 2020.

Many of you know the Breakthrough story very well already and you know a lot of the people that are involved in a big way and what they are achieving and you are already contributing. For the others I encourage you to go for a tour and become more knowledgeable about what top charter schools are doing to break the cycle of poverty for many kids already. When you talk about Cleveland, we not only have one of the best basketballers and brew pubs, we have an unbelievable success story in scaling up a successful charter school.

Thanks for listening to my thoughts and please consider Breakthrough Schools in your giving plans!

WE NOW HAVE LESS THAN

**925 DAYS**

TO MAKE SURE OHIO'S LAWS GET CHANGED TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS CAN ACCESS HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION.

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# THE 8TH GRADE MENTOR PROGRAM



If you are interested in learning more about becoming a mentor, we are actively recruiting for the 2017-2018 school year! Please contact Kelly Berg at [kberg@breakthroughschools.org](mailto:kberg@breakthroughschools.org) or 216-373-2818 to get started.

“Most days, I work with numbers and financial information, but on Thursdays at 7:15 a.m., I head to Citizens Leadership Academy and mentor 2-5, 8th grade girls, all excited to start high school in the Fall. The main purpose for the mentoring was to help the girls navigate the high school application process. However, it turned into much more. During our weekly sessions, I was able to develop relationships with the girls and get away from my desk to be directly involved with the students – what the mission of Breakthrough is all about. The girls are all headed to high-performing high schools (one with a 4-year scholarship to Laurel) and all are nervous about making the transition. Things like: “I don’t want to meet new people”, “Will the lunch be bad?”,

“What happens if I’m late?”, “I am nervous for safety about getting to school on the bus or walking”, “Will classes be too difficult?” are common topics of discussion. We spend time talking about their concerns, but we also laugh a lot and talk about the latest fashion trends and shopping choices for 8th graders, coffee preferences, travel dreams, and of course lots of hearing about their basketball and volleyball games (which were fun to attend and watch). It was a terrific diversion from my regular world of numbers and broadened my personal landscape as well. The intent was for the girls to feel good about themselves and their choices. On the last day, we made friendship bracelets together to wear until their graduation day and one student made a bracelet that says, “strong girls rock,” which perfectly sums up our time together.”

–Liz, a Friends of Breakthrough employee and volunteer mentor

## THANK YOU! VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### DR. SEUSS DAY:

We had 17 volunteers from the local KPMG office join us at Village Prep Willard for their celebration of Dr. Seuss’ birthday. Members from KPMG’s Cleveland office organized a book fair to coincide with the Dr. Seuss-themed celebration. The volunteers provided each student with two new books and participated in small group reading of Dr. Seuss books and other themed activities. It was a fun day for kids and adults alike – THANK YOU, KPMG!



### APPRECIATION FINANCIAL BEAUTIFIES CITIZENS ACADEMY

Appreciation Financial volunteers spent a Saturday beautifying Citizens Academy Mahatma Gandhi Campus. The team worked hard painting the front office, door trimmings, and stairs, replacing old drapes with new window coverings, and topped the day off by completing a large, colorful indoor mural designed by local artist Nicolette Capuano. The mural was definitely the highlight of the day. It incorporates the school’s seven virtues of respect, courage, generosity, responsibility, perseverance, honesty, and loyalty and it even includes the Cleveland skyline! In addition to the supplies, time, and labor, the team also presented a surprise \$1,500 donation to the school. We can’t thank Appreciation Financial enough for such an amazing day!



### AN APOLOGY

In the 2016-2017 annual report, we attempted to list all donors in the proper category. *Our sincere apologies to Bruce and Barbara Akers!* The Akers are long-time generous donors and should be listed in the “Honor Roll” category which recognizes donors who have given between \$1,000-\$4,999 during the fiscal year. We are sorry Barbara and Bruce!

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