

# LITERACY CENTER

PROMOTING RESEARCH & STUDY OF LITERACY & LANGUAGE

THE EDWARD STEVENS CENTER  
FOR THE STUDY AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY  
AND LANGUAGE



## Dennis Blair

Pickaway-Circleville ABLÉ

Dennis Blair loves to cook. In fact, he enjoys it so much he is pursuing an Associates Degree from The Bradford School's Culinary Arts program in Columbus. He began the program in July, 2008 and plans to graduate in December, 2009. His GPA is 3.61 - quite an accomplishment for a man who left high school nearly 15 years ago with no plans and no thoughts of returning to school.

School was difficult for Dennis and while in high school, his stepfather died, leaving him heartbroken and angry. Shortly after, he left school and started working. Although Dennis had to do things on his own, he credits his mother and grandmother for helping him discover his love for cooking. It was during the time he cared for his grandmother that she guided him in the kitchen, especially in the ways of southern cooking.

Eventually Dennis married and started a family. Unfortunately, he lost his job and was faced with the knowledge that to provide for his family and find fulfilling work, he would need to get his GED. He knew Nancy Moshtaghi and of the Pickaway/Circleville ABLÉ program. Looking back on those first weeks, Dennis said, "I was nervous. I didn't know if it was something I could achieve." His wife and extended family encouraged him to go for it. Brenda McMahon, Dennis' instructor, concludes, "Dennis was a really engaged, hard worker, we could see him doing a great job. We could see he was a great student."

Dennis noticed a change in his attitude about learning. "School itself is difficult for me - I never cared for school. Now that I'm older, I feel more like I want to learn, instead of being forced. I have reasons why, I feel like I *like* to learn now." Dennis began the GED program in November, 2007 and passed the GED in May, 2008. His thoughts: "I was surprised I passed! It was the hardest test because I'm hard on myself - but it wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. The night before, I couldn't sleep - I was afraid of failure."

Immediately after passing his GED, Dennis enrolled in The Bradford School's Culinary Arts program. Although they accepted his GED, he was required to take an entrance exam - which he passed. "The first day of school, I cried - there is no way I can do this. I'm not smart enough. My wife talked me through it...I just knew I was supposed to be there." Dennis relies on the confidence he gained through getting his GED to push ahead with his schooling.

Dennis takes his life day by day and believes in the goals he has set for himself. "...if you don't have a goal, you never have anything to look forward to!"

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