

SPEAKER BIOS



Pamela Good is cofounder and CEO of Beyond Basics, a nonprofit offering structured literacy interventions to K-12 students in Metropolitan Detroit. The Beyond Basics data-driven, multisensory program achieves academic grade-level movement in an average of six weeks. Beyond Basics' proven method unlocks the power of reading to open a new world to those who need it most. Under Good's leadership, Beyond Basics has established a tutoring model that helps students who are farthest behind achieve grade-level movement – and beyond – in reading. What began as a volunteer initiative 20 years ago has grown to become a \$10 million organization that partners with Detroit area schools serving vulnerable communities. As a trusted vendor for Detroit Public Schools Community District, Beyond Basics works to ensure that students can read so that they can access their education, graduate, and pursue life's beautiful opportunities. Beyond Basics has touched the lives of 90,000 children, published 75,000 student books, and delivered nearly 40,000 coats. In October 2018, with the support of General Motors, Beyond Basics opened its inaugural Family Literacy Center at the Durfee Innovation Society.



Cynthia Webber Helisek serves as the president of the Wayne and Joan Webber Foundation. The foundation supports endeavors related to healthcare, education, and providing nourishment, clothing, and shelter for the less fortunate. At age 14, Cynthia developed a lifelong passion for caregiving, pedaling her bicycle to a nearby nursing home to volunteer for the aged in her community. After high school, she began working in the medical field. Upon marrying Alan Helisek and starting their family, Cynthia transferred her interest to education as the couple raised three children in Farmington Hills, MI. Cynthia's active engagement as a school and church volunteer throughout her adult life prepared her to take the helm of the Wayne and Joan Webber Foundation in 2009, knowing everything she had accomplished until then aligned with the position. Cynthia's leadership honors the memory of her uncle, Wayne Webber, who played an integral role in her upbringing. Cynthia and Alan reside in Farmington Hills.



Chrystal Wilson, APR, serves as the Assistant Superintendent of Communications for Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD). Ms. Wilson has led DPSCD through a successful leadership transition, rebrand and COVID-19 communications while executing strategic communications plans for community engagement, media relations, political advocacy and high-level crisis. Previously, she served as press secretary for DPS and the Education Achievement Authority of Michigan managing crisis communications and media relations. Ms. Wilson's public relations experience spans through education, automotive, entertainment and consumer goods industries while working at Michigan's most prominent public relations agencies. In 2013, The Michigan Chronicle highlighted her as one of 40 under 40 making a difference in Detroit. She was also inducted into the 2019 Michigan Chronicle's Women of Excellence cohort. Born and raised in Detroit, she is a proud graduate of Osborn High School and Wayne State University where she earned her bachelor's degree in journalism.



Jacob Durrah is a software engineer who participated in Beyond Basics as a Finney High School senior in 2012. Durrah especially enjoyed publishing center activities and a mentoring program that facilitated interaction with business leaders in the community. That year, Jacob was named a Ford Blue Oval Scholarship winner. He attended the University of Michigan, where he worked as a teaching assistant, pursued research, and held an internship at J.P. Morgan. Upon graduation in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in computer science engineering, he joined Ford Motor Company as part of its College Graduate Program in product development. He joined General Motors as a Senior Software Engineer in 2021. Jacob says that Beyond Basics provided him with the confidence he needed to become a leader.