

## PASSION FOR YOUTH LITERACY LEADS TO A GLOBAL VISION

In 2011, after-school teachers Lori Pickens '13 (pictured right) and Erica Walton (left) developed a big vision. A global vision, in fact. A vision for bettering lives, inspiring hearts, and helping individuals pursue their purpose and establish their destiny. Their vision was sparked by their heartfelt passion for addressing the needs of youth in their own inner city community. And that heartfelt passion started when they were students at Pittsburgh Seminary.



At PTS, Lori and Erica found that the Metro-Urban Institute helped them not only see that “our inner city communities have a vital need, but also challenged us to consider how we would address that need.” Then, through the World Mission Initiative, Lori’s heart was “set aflame for missions and evangelism.” Through three mission trips, she “discovered a passion to introduce youth to missions, to teach them how to be servant leaders through whom Christ can transform the world, and to realize that Christ has deposited a great gift in each of them—a gift that needs to come forth.”

“We began by simply researching the education system and deciding to help kids build libraries in their homes by giving them free books. Feedback from their families and our experience as teachers made us realize so much more must be done,” Lori notes. So in 2011, they started Global Destiny. “We decided to take a holistic approach, through literacy and through service learning and mission work, to revitalize disadvantaged communities, teach youth how to become servant leaders, and develop disciples equipped for evangelism and prayer to serve Christ in the world.”

Their program of educational enrichment and mission work aims to transform and rebuild families and communities through two avenues. Discover Books creates fun and innovative ways for families to engage in reading that leads to academic success. “In the last two years, through community events, schools, libraries, and shelters, we have provided roughly 2,000 new books to youth in Pittsburgh and Erie, Pa. And in the past year, through the workshop ‘Amazing Authors,’ we’ve also taught 90 kids how to construct, write, and illustrate their own books,” notes Lori.

Through the second avenue, Trailblazers, participants build personal development skills such as research, proposal writing, fund raising, marketing, and project planning, as well as training in evangelism and prayer. In the last two years, more than 30 high school students have joined Trailblazer projects planting gardens in the inner city, providing Christmas gifts for children locally and globally, preparing meals for a battered women’s shelter, distributing care packages to the homeless, assisting with literacy activities in the Pittsburgh public schools, and more.

“Global Destiny is about making positive change in the lives of the people we serve,” says Lori. “We seek to give them hope, to understand that we serve a God who provides resolutions in impossible situations, as Christ did for all of us.” With Isaiah 49:8-12 as their foundational scripture—“In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you . . .”—Lori and Erica understand their work as a lifelong vocation.

With the motto, “Inspire hearts, pursue purpose, and establish destiny,” Global Destiny is sure to keep building, growing, and lifting people up—one heart at a time.

Both Lori Pickens and Erica Walton—as well as Global Destiny, Trailblazers, and Discover Books—can be found on Facebook. Connect with them at [Globaldestinyinc@yahoo.com](mailto:Globaldestinyinc@yahoo.com) or [Teamtrailblazers@yahoo.com](mailto:Teamtrailblazers@yahoo.com).

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Pittsburgh Theological Seminary  
616 North Highland Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206  
Phone: 412-362-5610



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