

# The Faces of Adult Learners: 25 Years in the Making

## Paul Mayes

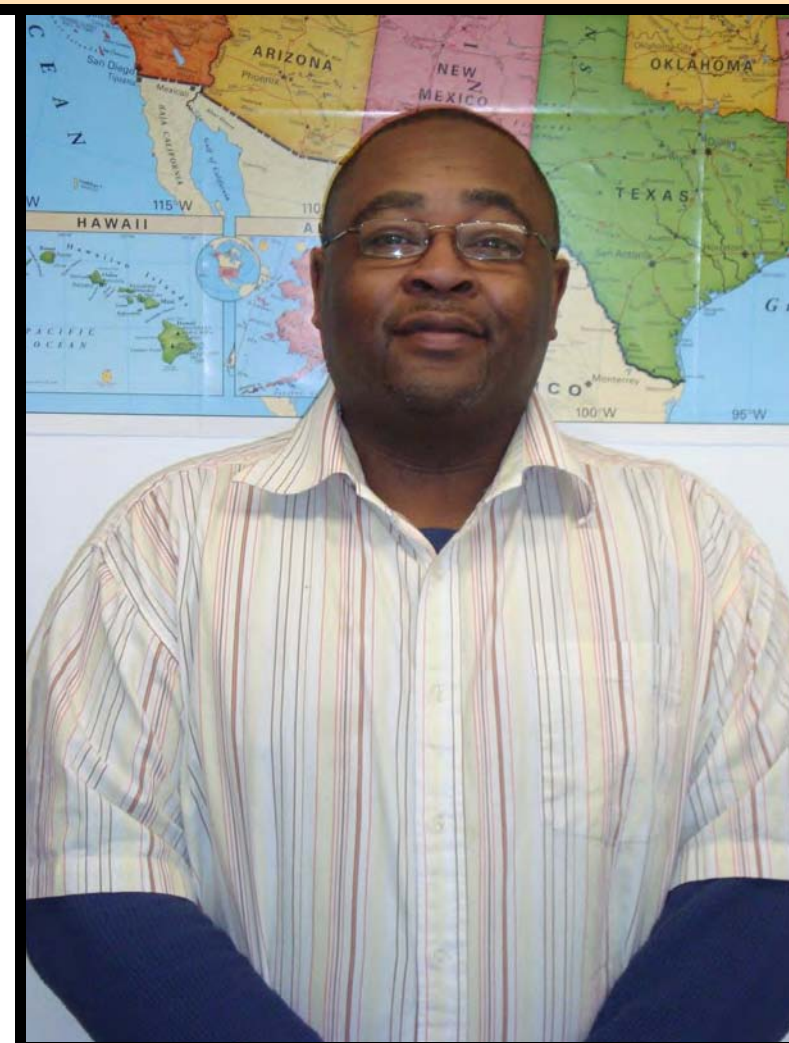
Paul Mayes, a Boston native, found himself forced to choose between school and providing for his family in the late 1980s. Lackluster about school anyway, he chose to seek employment. Paul soon found himself struggling to stay afloat. Without a high school diploma or college experience, many opportunities passed him by.

After being laid off in 2007, Paul applied to the Dimock Center's GED Program and was accepted in April 2008. He took advantage of every opportunity offered at Dimock and seven months later, found himself advancing into the Pre-GED class. Just three months later, Paul took and passed four out of the five GED exam areas.

Paul recounts how he felt before attending classes, "Before Dimock I was horrible at math. I didn't think I could go back to school. I had no confidence in myself. Now I know that anything I put my mind to, I can accomplish. I know I can be a fast learner. I AM a fast learner. I see everything my life can be. Going back to school gave me an inner strength. I have hope now."

Being in the Dimock program also made Paul more aware of his health and it was there that he learned he had Type II Diabetes. He controls his diabetes through medication, diet, and exercise. He says that he never knew that going back to school would have such a great effect on his life.

After graduation, Paul wants to study culinary arts to become a chef of American and French cuisine.



**Age:** 38

**Adult Education Program:**  
The Dimock Center Adult  
Basic Education/GED  
Program

**Adult Education Coalition:**  
Roxbury Adult Literacy  
Coalition

## This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Boston Adult Literacy Initiative. (ALI)

### What is ALI?

We are Boston adult basic education providers that receive funding from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or/and the City of Boston.

### What do we do?

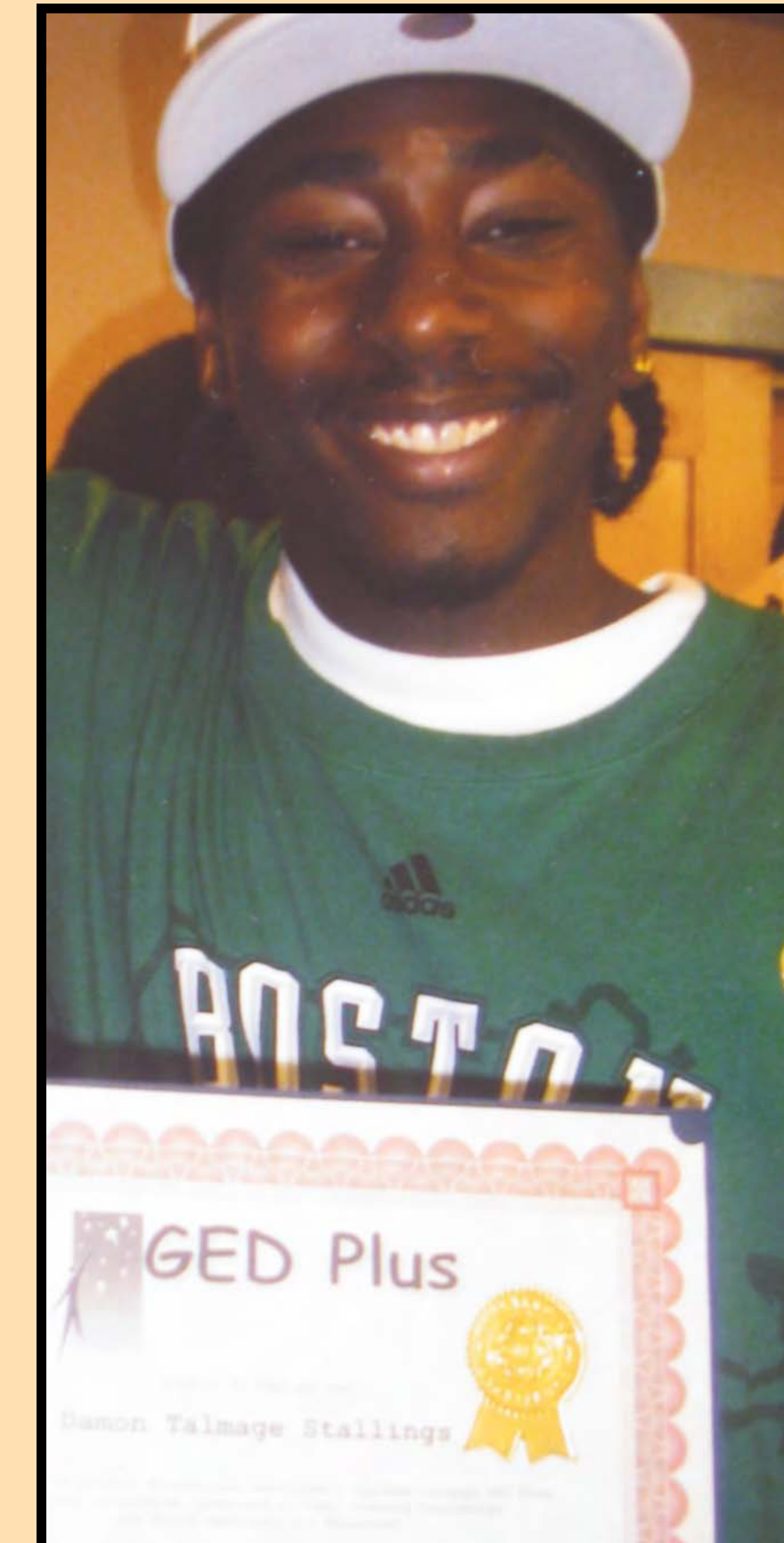
We provide services that help adult learners reach their educational and career goals as workers, parents, and community members:

- ◆ GED preparation
- ◆ English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- ◆ Adult Basic Education: literacy and numeracy
- ◆ Transition to college and job training programs
- ◆ Adult Diploma

**These profiles highlight the accomplishments and challenges of just a few of Boston's 6,500+ enrolled adult learners; another 5,500 are waiting to enroll.**

***Education: Improving Lives and Creating Opportunities!***

For more info: Brunir O. Shackleton, Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services, (617) 918-5244 or [brunir.shackleton.jcs@cityofboston.gov](mailto:brunir.shackleton.jcs@cityofboston.gov)



**Age:** 23

**Adult Education Program:**  
GED Plus at ESAC

**Adult Education Coalition:**  
Roxbury Adult Literacy  
Coalition

## Damon Stallings

Damon Stallings is a 2008 graduate of ESAC's GED Plus program in Roxbury. He writes: "My life has been filled with heartache and pain. Due to my mother being a single parent, she had to do a lot to make ends meet. We lived in a housing development and had no furniture but our beds and a little clothes on our back. As I got to my pre-teen years, life got even rougher and more depressing, but I kept pushing on to fulfill my dreams. ...[S]ome nights we would go with nothing to eat, but when we had food we cherished every last bit of it. ... [I]n my neighborhood, I watched a great amount of violence, and I was exposed to struggles every day."

After leaving high school, Damon took time off to re-evaluate his goals, and then discovered GED Plus. Initially, he had reservations about obtaining his GED. As time went on, Damon experienced a renewed lease on life. An essay he wrote about his exclusion from high school was featured in a report published by Teen Empowerment entitled, "Voices of Children Left Behind in Massachusetts Public Schools." Impressed by the work Teen Empowerment was doing, he sought out and obtained employment with them as a Peer Leader and youth educator.

After graduating, Damon was accepted to the Year Up program. Through Year Up, he has earned 18 college credits and has gained invaluable experience in computer technology and business. He says his dream is "to realize my true potential."