



**2023 Peace in the Pages
Presented by David and Monique Miller
Award Honorees**

READ TO LEAD

Betty Seabrook Burney, Founder & Exec. Dir. at I'm A Star Foundation



Betty Seabrook Burney is the founder and Executive Director of the “I’M A STAR” Foundation. A foundation committed to empowering and equipping youth to transform themselves into solution-oriented leaders in their schools and respective communities, “I’M A STAR” recently won 1st place among America’s largest cities in the U. S. Conference of Mayor’s Childhood Obesity grant awards and was recognized by the NAACP for dedicated civic engagement. Betty joined the Duval County School Board in November 2004 and held the distinction of serving as a two-time Board Chairman (2006 and 2011) and a two-time Vice Chairman (2005 and 2010). At the end of her term as Chairman, Duval County achieved the distinction of having all chronically low-performing schools exit the state of Florida’s intervention list. She counts being the School Board representative for her alma mater, William Raines High School, as one of her greatest honors. Burney serves as a consultant for the Center for Reform of School Systems, working with School Boards and Superintendents throughout the country to provide technical assistance on governance strategies and practices designed to impact student achievement and to narrow the academic achievement gap. She is the recipient of the WJCT Public Television’s American Graduate Champion Award and was the United Negro College

Funds Educator of the Year award, and serves on the Board of Directors for the Jacksonville Historical Society.

Betty Seabrook Burney earned her BA degree at the University of Miami and her Master of Arts in Public Administration at Northern Illinois University. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and St. Paul AME Church. She deeply cherishes her family - sons Dr. Calvin and Craig, daughter-in-law Dr. Tashlai and grandson, Calvin III.

Growing up on the Eastside of Jacksonville, Betty was the youngest of Oliver Seabrook, Sr. and Helen Robinson Seabrook's nine children, eight of whom earned college degrees. "My parents were born in 1914 and 1919 respectively and raised in rural South Carolina where their schooling only went to 6th grade, due to segregation. They both yearned for an education and pushed us to go to college," recalls Betty. "They believed that education was the great equalizer." Betty's father used to put up a bookshelf with a small number of books on each shelf and challenge his kids to read as many as possible - the one reading the most books to be awarded a quarter (Big money back then!). The Seabrooks also had a Wall of Respect where their children eagerly posted certificates and awards from school. The love of reading was tangible in the Seabrook household.

"My father would have been over the moon if he could have been in 7th grade," notes Betty, whose "I'M A STAR" Foundation works with Duval County middle school students in programs such as GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) and sponsors a Youth Leadership Initiative for middle and high school students, and much more. "I love READ USA," said Betty, "Especially the teen tutoring reading program that helps both the tutors and the students they are tutoring." She is grateful and honored to be chosen by READ USA to receive the 2023 READ TO LEAD Award, particularly at this time of educational turmoil. "My life's mission is to empower children," she says. "Reading is education and education is knowledge and knowledge is power."