



# September, 2023 **NEWSLETTER**



## **On the Horizon**

### **Harvest Gratitude Kickoff Celebration**

Saturday, October 14th, 2023 from 1pm-3pm  
Gail Borden Public Library  
270 N. Grove Ave, Elgin, IL 60120

### **SCORE! Family Orientation**

### ***Year of Gratitude, Growth & Gathering Launch***

Thursday, October 26th, 2023 from 5:30pm-7:30pm  
Elgin Community College - Art Center  
1700 Spartan Drive, Elgin, IL 60123

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# REFELCTION

Risé D. Jones, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Hamilton Wings



Thanks to an NEA Big Read Initiative grant, Hamilton Wings, along with collaborators Gail Borden Public Library District, Sanctuary Poets, Mujeres Latinas Unidas en Arte y Bienestar, various community organizations, community leaders and volunteers, will be hosting a year-long celebration of “Unabashed Gratitude, Growth, and Gathering.” With Ross Gay’s book *The Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude* as our springboard, we will be hosting book discussions, arts installations, poetry writing and gratitude journaling workshops, wellness programs, arts and nature programs, and cultural exchanges.

I was recently challenged to consider what the word “unabashed” meant in terms of gratitude and expressions of gratitude. In sharing my thoughts with others, I considered gratitude without limitation, without restriction, and without shame – not shying away from the inherent and necessary exuberance and effervescence of the pure thrill and trill of whole-hearted and whole-(em)bodied thanks. In considering the fullness of “unabashed gratitude,” I am reminded of two things: a belief that my mother (co-founder of Hamilton Wings) always held and wanted to instill in me and a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. My mom always encouraged me that if a kind word or compliment for someone came to mind that I shouldn’t hold back in sharing it. This simple notion was imbued with deeply spiritual significance of our divine connection to one another. To stifle or deny sharing of the smallest or biggest recognition of light and beauty in others would be to stifle and deny the spirit that breathes life into us, connects us, moves through us, and moves us forward.

Whether it be an observation of how someone exhibited extraordinary patience in a very difficult situation or how someone took odds and ends to make a welcoming setting, expressing gratitude is just one way of saying:

“I see you.”

“I see how you move though this world of ours.”

“I see you and I appreciate you!”

If offered with good intention and respect, offer these expressions with abandon (whether quiet, off to the side abandon or ringing out-loud abandon)!

Let our light of appreciation and thanksgiving speak through us. Let us not underappreciate or underestimate our collective and shared gifts.

*“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch,  
a smile, a kind word,  
a listening ear, an honest compliment,  
or the smallest act of caring,  
all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”*  
~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sometimes it can feel like the word “gratitude” is overused, has become trite, or that it encourages complacency or settling. But as Dr. King’s quote suggests, gratitude can and should be active, proactive, community building, and life changing.

Yes, we should be happy with what we have...and... And given the gifts within us and around us, how will we continue to learn, grow, become better, seek justice, build community, and raise each other up?

Like the arts, gratitude can be transformative. “Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow.”

~ Melody Beattie

Looking forward to all that will be built and that will flourish through our year together of “Unabashed Gratitude, Growth, and Gathering”!

# NEA BIG READ GRANT

We are excited to announce that Hamilton Wings is one of 62 organizations nationwide selected to receive a 2023-2024 NEA Big Read grant - and one of only two in the State of Illinois. We are proud to partner with Gail Borden Public Library District, Sanctuary Poets, Mujeres Latinas Unidas en Arte y Bienestar & various other community organizations on this 2023-2024 NEA Big Read grant initiative.



**YOU'RE INVITED!**

## Harvest Gratitude Kickoff Celebration



Saturday, October 14th, 2023  
 from 1pm-3pm  
 Gail Borden Public Library  
 270 N. Grove Ave, Elgin, IL  
 60120

The kickoff event will offer children, adult and family enrichment activities exploring cultural traditions of gratitude, thanks-filled art, poetry writing activities, a book give away and a gratitude give back food drive.



The NEA Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest, the NEA Big Read broadens our understanding of our world, our neighbors, and ourselves through the power of a shared reading experience. Showcasing a diverse range of themes, voices, and perspectives, the NEA Big Read aims to inspire meaningful conversations, artistic responses, and new discoveries and connections in each community. The main feature of the initiative is a grants program, managed by Arts Midwest, which annually supports dynamic community-wide reading programs, each designed around a single NEA Big Read title.



In these uncertain times, we yearn to restore and celebrate gratitude - to see beauty and feel the good that exists around us. Unabashed Gratitude, Growth and Gathering is inspired by the poems and themes in Ross Gay's *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude* and supported by the NEA



Big Read Grant. Visit our website at [www.hamiltonwings.org/neabigread](http://www.hamiltonwings.org/neabigread) to learn more, view upcoming events, and access information and resources surrounding Unabashed Gratitude, Growth & Gathering.

# 20TH SCORE! ORIGINAL



Through the program, SCORE! students learn “life-skills” such as the value of collaboration, group dynamics and leadership skills.



*The Inescapable Nightmare - 2023 SCORE! Original*

*Thank you to all of our donors and alumni for a night to remember!*



Enrollment is now open for the 21st SCORE! Original. This year will look a little different. This year we are going to create multidisciplinary visual and performing arts pieces to be shared and performed around the theme of "Gratitude, Growth, and Giving." To enroll your 5th-8th grader scan the QR Code.



*As fabulous as the red carpet we walked in on!*

Over the last 20 years, SCORE! has provided a safe space for students to find confidence in themselves while developing the social skills that will aid them through life. The SCORE!

HAMILTON WINGS' SCORE!

**20**<sup>TH</sup>  
ORIGINAL

Alumni Reception gave us the opportunity to celebrate the children who have grown through the program and congratulate them on the adults they are today.



*Photo credits: Alyssa Copeland of beYoutiful Moments Photography*

# MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION GROUP



To learn more about this organization and their amazing work, please visit: [Multicultural Education Group | Facebook](#) [Multicultural Education Outreach Foundation \(MEOF\) | Embracing Culture. Preserving Heritage. Educating Youth. Uniting Community.](#)



At the invitation of Rev. Denise Tracy and the Multicultural Education Group (MEG), Risé had the opportunity to speak to outstanding student leaders participating in MEG's Summer Camp



2023. What a pleasure to be a small part of this joyful, mind-enriching, soul-expanding leadership opportunity for young people that was established in 2014!



## ELEVATING EQUITY GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Don't miss it! Applications for the next round of grants with Elevating Equity will open on Monday, September 25, 2023. Elevating Equity is a unique grant opportunity focused on supporting innovative and impactful grassroots-led projects addressing systemic inequity, including racial inequity in Elgin. To learn more please visit <https://linktr.ee/elevatingequityelgin>



Amplifying the underheard and overlooked voices of Elgin, to nurture creativity and visions. Hamilton Wings is a proud steward of Elevating Equity and grateful for the opportunity to aid in their growth as they flourish towards becoming a stand-alone initiative in the Elgin community.

Elevating Equity was created and continues to be funded through the [GRAND VICTORIA FOUNDATION](#)

# CREATE!

The overall goal of CREATE is to support development of the social emotional skills of self-awareness, social-awareness, self-management, goal directed behavior, relationship skills, personal responsibility, decision making and optimistic thinking through fun-filled, arts-based experiences, exploration, and expression for young people and their families.



Visit our website to learn more about upcoming **CREATE!** programs at various schools and community locations  
[www.hamiltonwings.org](http://www.hamiltonwings.org)

At Hamilton Wings, we are so grateful to the **SEIGLE FOUNDATION** for the operational funding through the Arts Grant that continues our initiatives in the CREATE! program.

## HAMILTON WINGS

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If you would like to support CREATE! through a donation or through your artistic or youth development expertise as an instructional leader, please contact

**Risé D. Jones, Ph.D. at**  
[hello@hamiltonwings.org](mailto:hello@hamiltonwings.org)

Hamilton Wings is an In-Residence Ensemble of Elgin Community College



We are so grateful and thankful for the teachers, families, volunteers and community engagement and commitment with Hamilton Wings. We truly appreciate your donations, time and support to continue *giving our children the wings to soar!*

***Donate to Hamilton Wings***