

Freedom in Maker Spaces

BCGA Arts Impact Story

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Jeff M. Poulin: BCGA Arts Impact is an audio series telling the stories from members of the Boys and Girls Club of America community about the power of arts, cultural, and creative programs around the world.

Hey there, Jeff here. Tabetha is the Unit Director for Boys & Girls Clubs of Bloomington and talks about the importance of creating unique **learning environments** and programming centered on **youth voice** that result in meaningful **culminating experiences**. Tabetha's Club features various maker spaces, allowing youth freedom to create projects that are meaningful to them. She believes that providing youth freedom in the arts supports their confidence and sense of pride, which is essential for youth development. Check it out.

Creative Generation: Can you introduce yourself and where you're from and what you do in your club?

Tabetha G: I am the site director of Boys and Girls Clubs of Hutchinson in Hutchinson, Kansas.

CG: Amazing. Thank you. What kind of arts programs do you lead or work within your club,

TG: within our clubs right now we really have a makerspace mentality where we have a space designated for kids to come in and just make and create. And we partner with our local library that has even more opportunities. And they go there once a week, and they'll start their projects, and then they'll bring it back. And they'll create. But we have a large painting with a lot of free paint and creating lots of origami has come in big now. And I was out for a couple days. But I came back and my desk was full of little signs of filth and glitter and glue guns. And so we're kind of unstructured kids just have the space to make it what they want.

CG: I love that model. Oh, thank you. Yeah, I mean, creativity, so organic. And so at the moment, yes, absolutely. Yeah. It's like a moment to make something that's incredible. Please tell me a story of your favorite memory of the work that you've been doing.

TG: I would say probably the biggest impact is when the kids go. And they, again, have the creativity to create anything that they want. One day, a gal came in, she was so excited, she had created a cell phone on the 3d printer, and it was a dinosaur. And so they, they love to create, and they take things and they make so during Christmas, you know, they might not have money to buy separately, but they create and everybody went home with Christmas presents for family and for teachers. And whether it was with the Cricut machine or the 3d printer or painting or Christmas ornaments. And so I think the kids when it's Mother's Day coming up, they know that they can go in and they can leave with something.

CG: Wow. That's amazing. Yeah, it's such a gift that gives back.

TG: Absolutely. And, you know, those are the gifts that we can't stand apart from. We have my desk covered in them and, and parents are so excited. And so I think that's really, you know, the kids when they're creating stuff in the hall, and we're in a remodel, and so are signs and they're remaking stuff. And, and so I think you know, as they walk down, they see that hey, I did that I made that. That's a nice thing. Oh, that's like such a gift to give you.

CG: Yes. Oh, wow. What impact do you think your program has had on the youth?

TG: Who has been involved? I think definitely, you know, confidence and connection. And our MakerSpace is kind of just always open. So no matter what has happened throughout the day, when they get there. It's their space to make it what they wanted. And so sometimes it's music, and sometimes it's no music, and sometimes it's one time I walked into galleries having just a rough day and she was teaching a vision leader who happens to be six foot eight and a football player had to make friendship bracelets and was talking about her mom and and he had lost his mom. And so it was just a quiet, you know, and so I think it's not only do they create, but they connect, and I think that's huge.

CG: That's amazing. Thank you. Thank you so much for sharing. Those are all the questions I have. All right. Anything else that you'd like to say?

TG: That's all. Thank you.

Jeff M. Poulin: Thanks for listening to BCGA Arts Impact. This episode was produced by the team at Creative Generation: Katie Rainey, Valerie Killebrew, and Emma Lamberti. The series executive producer is me, Jeff M. Poulin. The cover art is by Bridget Woodbury. Music from Scott Waltz. A special thanks to the series contributors and the staff at Boys and Girls Club of America for their support.