

The Power of Combining Arts and S.T.E.M.

BGCA Arts Impact Stories

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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. In this interview, Angel discusses the importance of **youth voice** and the power of creating safe and productive **learning environments** as teen coordinator for Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater St. Louis. Angel details how their teen program combines S.T.E.M and the arts to drive program engagement. Angel finds joy in supporting youth to achieve new goals, such as providing support and mentorship to one of the Club's 12-year-old youth as they perform an original poem about their life at the Boys & Girls Clubs of America's National Conference in front of thousands of people. Angel believes that the impact the arts have is creating spaces for youth to meet new people to see themselves in adult and peer role models so that they can imagine what is possible to achieve. Check it out.

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

Angel Jackson: My name is Angel Jackson. I'm from the St. Louis, Missouri Boys and Girls Club. I am the team coordinator. I work with people between the ages of nine and up. And I pretty much cover myself in STEM programming. So STEM programming, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. I just want to be able to give them a fun way of being educated.

CG: What kinds of arts programs do you lead or work in within your club?

AJ: Um, so one of the one of my favorite things that I like to do is combine art with all of the stem components. So combining art with science, and we do science I practice combined, or with technology, I'm trying new movies and videos. I'm making it theatrical, or giving a huge part to play each piece of the movie. So making the music, designing the art for the film, or in anything that pretty much takes all of the components and breaks it down. And given a huge opportunity to participate in each part of the questions. Awesome.

CG: I mean, we definitely need more steam so please tell me a story of your favorite memory in this work.

AJ: I'm actually living in one of my favorite memories now, bringing in one of my members to this trip to Chicago to perform a piece that she wrote. So she's a spoken word artist. And she's only 12. And she wrote a ridiculous piece to perform in front of 1000s of people.

CG: Hey, kudos, kudos right there. And our last question, what impact do you think your program has had on the youth involved?

AJ: Oh, I think the main impact that my program has had is allowing the members to be able to see people and in the process that looks like them, because a lot of times when you use that I worked with are from the inner city. A lot of the professionals are from other parts of the city. You know, you can't really relate to them. So having you that looks like them is they tell me is the biggest impact because they can look at me and say, oh, yeah, I could be like her when

CG: I mean representation is so important. So thank you for all that you do for the teens.

AJ: Thank you for having me

CG: anytime. Thank you. Okay, that was nice.

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.