



## Amplify US! Initiative

**Amplify US!** is an innovative initiative that provides workshops that guide youth and adults to find their voices and effectively advocate for themselves and their communities. Each workshop is lead by a trained facilitator and teaching artist who work together to create a safe, non-judgmental environment in which participants are comfortable to share their experiences, perspectives and feelings. The facilitator and teaching artist give children and adults tools to appropriately handle conflicts, advocate for their needs and become more compassionate listeners. Art breaks down barriers and creates safe spaces to express emotions in ways that other strategies do not. Through Amplify US!, art is a part of the solution to the social-emotional problems schools and communities are facing.

### Amplify US! Programs

**Community Workshops** Series of 5 free workshops open to the entire community held at an accessible, public location. A professional performing artist kicks off the event followed by activities that encourage participants to share their personal stories and perspectives. The artist then guides participants to hone and polish their story to increase the impact of their delivery. At the conclusion, participants are given the opportunity to perform their stories alongside professional artists in a public venue.


**Community Performances** Following workshops all participants are invited to present their stories alongside professional artists in Amplify US! performances throughout the region. Past Amplify US! performance locations include Strathmore Mansion, Wheaton Arts Parade & Festival, Silver Spring Town Center and Montgomery College. Closed captioning and other accessibility services are provided whenever possible

### **Benefits to participants include improvements in:**

- self confidence and presentation skills
- ability to express emotions and thoughts appropriately and productively
- emotional literacy, conflict resolution and interpersonal skills
- deeper understanding of the wide range of perspectives people have

### **Program Impact**

Karina, a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student at a Montgomery County middle school, was shy, quiet and intimidated as she began attending the after school program offered at her school. As she went through the program, she discovered a passion for writing and an understanding of the power of her words. She has since become an avid writer and



performer, and has performed with Amplify US! at Strathmore, Wheaton Arts Parade & Festival and Montgomery College. Karina’s mother reported she had no idea what a difficult time Karina was going through until she heard Karina perform and share her writing. The Amplify US! experience has impacted Karina’s performance in school, her relationships with her family and community, as well as her goals for her future.

Other participants expressed -

“The mixture of art disciplines and performers speaking of identity, home, and race was unprecedented to anything I have ever witnessed in the last decade I’ve been living in the DC area. To have professional artists perform alongside middle school and high school artists and young poets with Civil Rights activists gave me hope.”

“In some ways, the program broke barriers by providing a space to share personal perspectives and brought shared experiences to the forefront that encouraged an analytical discussion on racial equity, building community, and social justice.”

