



City of Takoma Park
COMMUNITY QUALITY OF LIFE GRANT

FY21 FINAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

The City of Takoma Park's Community Quality of Life Grant Program provides up to **\$10,000** for programs, projects, and events that improve the quality of life for predominantly low-and-moderate-income City residents by providing greater access and opportunities for participation in the **arts and sciences**. In FY21, the City Council awarded \$80,000 to ten non-profit organizations recommended for funding by the City's Grant Review Committee (GRC). The grant programs were completed as of June 30, 2021. The final reports and outcomes of the funded programs are presented herein.

Public Safety - Community Programs in the Age of COVID-19

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the FY21 programs were conducted virtually. Prior to funding recommendations, the GRC requested additional information from each applicant organization to ensure the safety of all participating residents. The GRC then selected programs that were well-positioned to succeed in a virtual environment; respond to the needs of low-and-moderate-income and people of color; continue programming online for as long as needed to ensure public safety; respond to technology barriers facing their beneficiaries; and address any access barriers that might arise as a result of virtual programming.

Workforce Development - Arts & Sciences at Work

In FY21, acknowledging the need for workforce development among low-and-moderate-income Takoma Park residents, the Committee encouraged all grant applicants to highlight elements of their arts and sciences programs that also promoted job-readiness. While this criterion was not a requirement for funding, gathering this information allowed the GRC to see the potential impact of the proposed programs in a new light.

Of the ten FY21 funded programs, two programs had prominent workforce development features and three other programs cultivated STEM skills and training for youth that lead to better employment opportunities in the future.

Equity in Decision-Making

In FY21, all funding recommendation decisions made by the GRC prioritized race equity. The resulting slate of FY21 grantees reflected the Council's race equity priorities and the needs of residents. Now completed, these ten programs improved access to science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) opportunities for people of color, including immigrants and refugees.

Investment: A Multiplying Effect

Every FY21 City grantee met and often exceeded the dollar-for-dollar match requirement of the Community Grant Program. For this reason, the program’s value to the City was much larger than the City’s investment/cost.

Grantees leveraged the **City’s initial investment of \$80,000** to deploy an additional **\$240,534** in funding and resources. This results in a total combined program value to the City of more than **\$320,534**.

Impact: A more livable community for all

FY21 funded programs served a combined **1,550 direct beneficiaries**, reaching every ward in Takoma Park. 75 percent of direct Beneficiaries which were Takoma Park residents, and at least 51 percent were residents from low-to-moderate-income households.

Wards Served	Number of Programs Serving Residents by Ward		
Ward 1	*****	Ward 4	*****
Ward 2	*****	Ward 5	*****
Ward 3	*****	Ward 6	*****

FY21 Impact Numbers

City Investment	\$80,000	Each \$1.00 of City investment yielded \$3.00 in programing value to Takoma Park Residents
Grantee Match	\$240,534	
Total Program Value	\$320,534	
Direct Beneficiaries	1,550	At least 75% Takoma Park residents and at least 51% low-to moderate-income residents
Total Programming Hours	1,724	Sum of all hours of public programming including classes, mentoring, performances, etc.
Indirect Beneficiaries	9,680	Estimated number of residents who engaged with the grant programs or are closely connected to a direct beneficiary
Volunteer Hours Contributed	646	Total of all volunteer hours contributed to the funded programs
Volunteer Time Value	\$18,508	Volunteer hours in FY20 were valued at \$28.65 per hour
Community Partnerships	92	Number of partnerships grantees leveraged to deliver their programs in Takoma Park

What our Grantees Say

“Through the support of the City of Takoma Park, Community Bridges has been able to provide the CB Girls Program with incorporated arts programming to girls in Takoma Park. The support helped to combat the lack of access to the arts for the girls in our program. CB girls have been able to learn their interests through dance and other art forms, explore various career paths in the arts and have a safe space to be themselves.” - Community Bridges

“The City of Takoma Park has been instrumental in getting our Dance On Programming off the ground and in helping us to host our first-ever Dance On Festival. The Funding made it possible for us to offer our classes and festivals for free to ensure our programming is inclusive and accessible for all. Beyond the funding, the City has helped to make connections to partners and participants, to publicize our programming, and to bolster the ways in which we strive towards building a community of care. We are grateful for the support and partnership as we continue to grow our creative aging programming and reach more Takoma Park residents.” - Dance Exchange

“The City's funding made it possible for GBYM to continue to serve our Takoma students residing in MHP properties with online classes, homework help, and free laptops.” - GB Youth Media

“‘The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.’ Socrates (Dan Millman, Way of the Peaceful Warrior). This is a powerful quote to us because almost every program participant had a career and settled life in their home country. They had to start life all over again and sometimes from scratch when they move here. Hence, in our program, ECC focuses on enabling our community members to see what they could achieve here with the opportunities around them, [rather] than sticking with the thoughts of losing what they had.” - Ethiopian Community Center

“The impact of the City's funding of the Healthy Families | Healthy Communities Project is invaluable. We are grateful for the continued support to help disparate groups of residents to get to know one another and lower barriers that maintain otherizing. Providing high quality arts and content programs that residents self-select can be a bridge for new relationships that cross racial, neighborhood, cultural, age, and gender barriers that contribute to our segregation. We work much better together when we know one another, and this Project provides healthy ways of strengthening our community.” - Carpe Diem Arts

Individual Program Reports

Carpe Diem Arts

Executive Director: Busy Graham
 Website: www.carpediemarts.org



Project: Healthy Families|Healthy Communities III

Total Project Budget: \$20,042
 City Grant Amount: \$8,000

Project Summary: Carpe Diem Arts delivered several support and creative arts programs to residents at Essex House, Parkview, and Mapleview Apartments and families in nearby single-family homes. The Grantee originally planned activities for 85 participants to be held primarily at Essex House in Ward 5. Due to the pandemic, Carpe Diem conducted activities via Zoom that enabled Takoma Park residents from Wards 2, 3, and 4 to also participate. The Grantee reported serving 250 direct beneficiaries – nearly triple the projected number. Programming focused on cross-cultural connection and cultural exchange. This expanded program built upon previous City-funded work to deepen and strengthen connections, mutual support, and school and community engagement.

Carpe Diem reported holding 78 grant-related activities and events. These programs included the Parent Support Group; Strong Girls workshops; dance classes for cross-cultural engagement and exercise; Quilting Conversations; Healthy Cooking; House concerts, and the creation of a Friendship Bench. Participants planned the Friendship Bench via Zoom and attended Saturday painting session. All materials for activities were delivered digitally or with safe packing and delivery practices.

Healthy Families: Healthy Communities		Direct Beneficiaries	250
Total Programming Hours	60	Community Partners	9
Indirect Beneficiaries	3,040	Wards Served	Ward 2, Ward 3, Ward 4, Ward 5
Volunteer Hours Contributed	55	Grant-related Events	78

Program Highlight

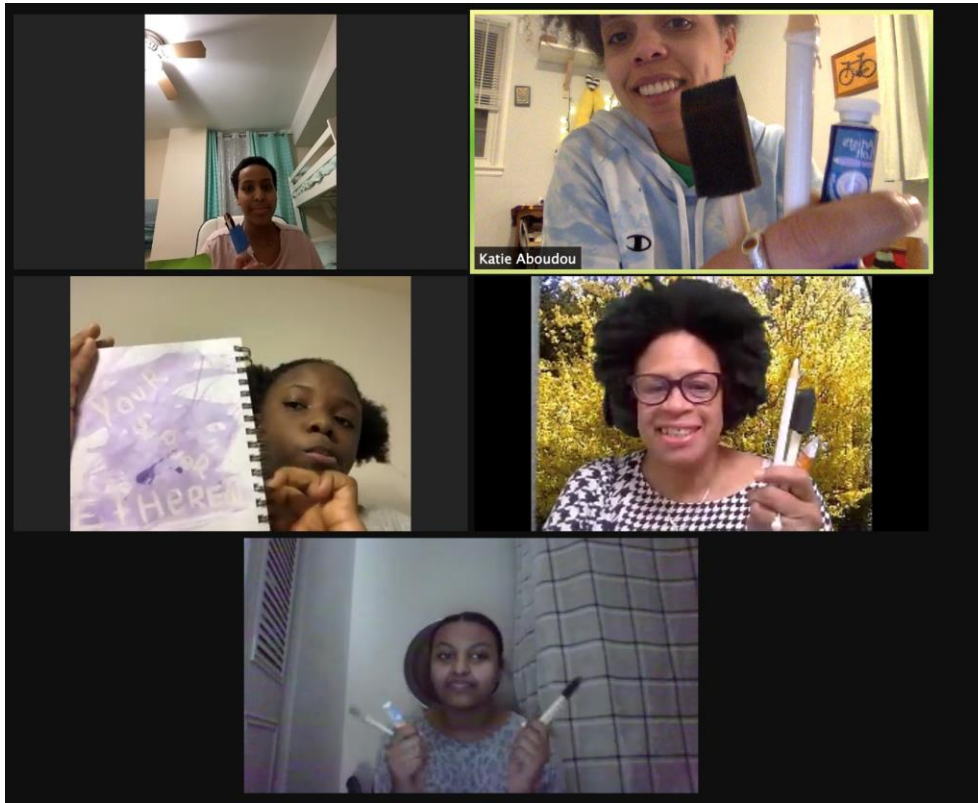
Two middle school students from the Essex House Apartments. participated in a Takoma Radio community program that discussed the police officer killing of Mr. George Floyd. They shared their concerns about police violence and racial inequities. One of the participants planned to attend the Maryland Youth Development Conference 2021 with Project Director, Denise Jones, over zoom. They planned on sharing their arts integration project that examined the social inequities highlighted in the book, "Monday's Not Coming," by Tiffany D. Jackson.



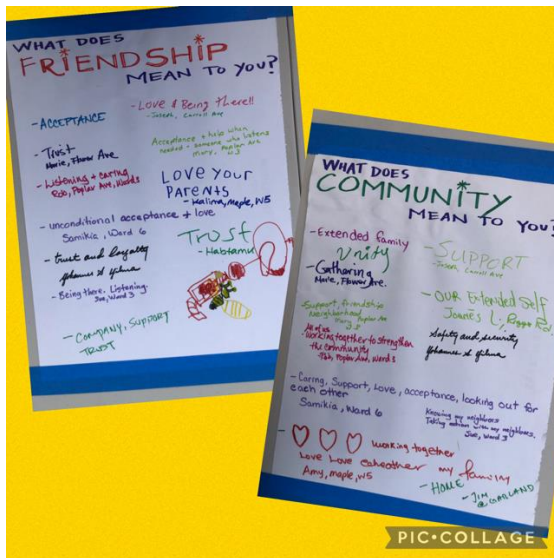
Photo: Parents meet during a workshop discussing positive communication and discipline.

Workforce Development Component

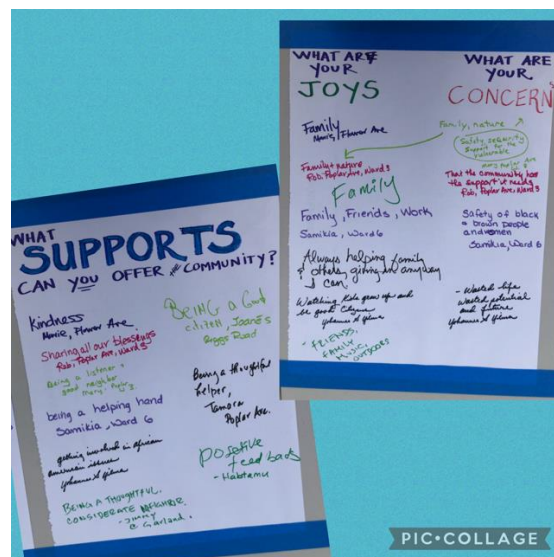
Although Carpe Diem did not explicitly offer a job-readiness program, several activities offered an opportunity to learn and practice workforce soft-skills. These included, but were not limited to, strong communication skills (verbal and written), problem-solving, time management, and the ability to work as part of a team. Both the Parent Engagement and Girls Club curricula integrated these skills. These soft skills support and strengthen community, including workplaces, and deepen shared learning and mutual respect, the underlying goals of this project.



Girls Club meets online to talk about social justice issues of interpersonal treatment and unequal government regulations. This picture was taken at the start of a multi-step project of wax-resistant watercolor. Carpe Diem uses art to deepen learning and sharing.



Community responses to question prompts during the Friendship Bench project?



Outcomes and Outputs Reported by Grantee	
Planned Outcome or Output	Program Results
<i>Through bilingual (English and Amharic) parent engagement workshops, participants will learn and practice tools to strengthen families and student success.</i>	Grantee held five parent workshops via Zoom. Conversations in breakout rooms (Amharic & English), offered participants a chance to share information and to support each other in the midst of the pandemic, especially before vaccines.
<i>Participants in “Quilting Conversations” will create mats out of recycled bags and distribute them at the Shepherd’s Table homeless shelter and food kitchen.</i>	At 12 workshops, participants learned paper patterns of the Underground Railroad and how to sew a pattern for multiple uses. Due to COVID safety measures, Grantee omitted the planned service project. Instead, participants used materials from home (e.g., paper, scissors, sewing cloth, old clothing). Meeting over several months to do a shared activity promoted conversation and helped participants build relationships that cut across race, class, and language.
<i>Offer dance classes for cross-cultural engagement, health and fitness.</i>	Grantee held six sessions of “East Meets West” dance class. Two master dancers who previously worked with Takoma Park adults and youth led the classes. Benefits to participants include social interaction, physical exercise, and exposure to African dance and music.
<i>Engage middle-school girls in a Girls Club to promote life skills and leadership. Girls will develop new skills (e.g., cooking, sewing, writing); go on field trips to plays, concert halls, and museums; build resumes; and learn the importance of civic participation.</i>	Completed nine Girls Club sessions (extended with a COVID Relief grant from the Arts and Humanities Council). The Girls Club focused on self-care skills and art engagement related to social justice. Participants created art projects. Grantee also sponsored six “Healthy Cooking” workshops.
<i>Provide youth, families and neighbors with high-quality arts experiences.</i>	Grantee sponsored four House Concerts and held six sessions for creating the Friendship Bench.
<i>Extend benefits of the arts in addressing community needs and engaging volunteers in a meaningful way, meeting the goal of promoting civic, social and cultural engagement, equity, and inclusion.</i>	Per grantee, “Taken together, these Project programs are working to achieve the outcomes of providing engagement through high quality arts.”

Community Bridges, Inc.

Executive Director: Shannon Babe-Thomas
 Website: www.communitybridges-md.org

Project: Community Bridges Girls Program

Total Project Budget: \$67,152.50
 City Grant Amount: \$5,000



Project Summary: Community Bridges empowers girls from diverse backgrounds to become exceptional students, positive leaders, and healthy young women, by addressing the developmental needs of immigrant and minority girls in their families living at or below the federal poverty level in Montgomery County, Maryland. Their programs support the holistic development of our community's young women by actively engaging girls, families, school, and community.

Program events and activities focused on areas that support academic excellence, positive leadership, personal health, and team building. Due to COVID-19, activities normally held at school were delivered online. The grant supported the development, delivery, and the use of literary, performing, visual and culinary arts within the Community Bridges Girls Program. The Grantee worked with community partners such as Dance Exchange, CREATE Arts, and Gandhi Brigade to expand current lesson plans through art, and enhance their annual end of year showcase, "Our True Colors."

The Grantee used an online platform called *Hello Insight* to conduct pre- and post assessments to track and assess program impact on participants' social and emotional learning. The assessment features scales measuring attributes that include, but are not limited to cultural tolerance, civic responsibility, scholastic competence, and self-esteem.

Community Bridges Girls Program		Direct Beneficiaries	62
Total Programming Hours	206	Community Partners	9
Indirect Beneficiaries	1,338	Wards Served	Ward 1, Ward 2, Ward 4, Ward 5, Ward 6
Volunteer Hours Contributed	202	Grant-related Events	145

Program Highlight

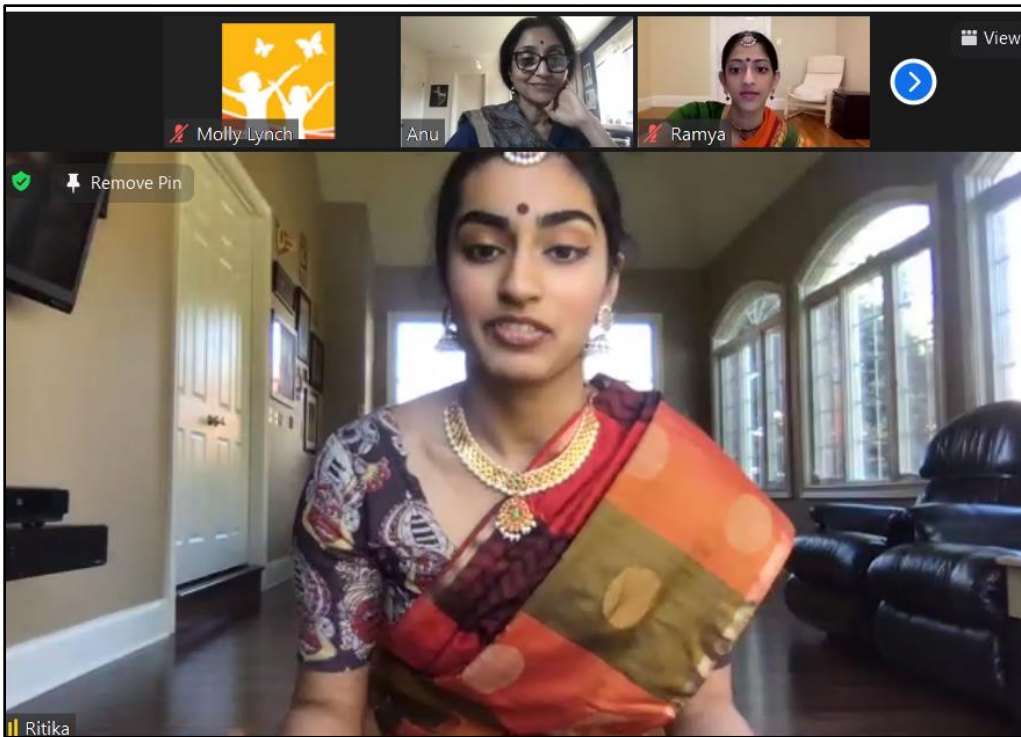
One Takoma Park resident in the Community Bridges (CB) Girls Program has a mentor through the Mentoring Program, volunteers with younger CB girls and has been an ambassador at the Grantee's annual gala, "Girl Legacy." A program participant for six years, this young woman describes how much CB has helped her family, especially during the pandemic. "Before quarantine, I didn't have a desk but CB helped both my sister and I get one. They also took time to talk to my sister, my mother and I about things to help us during this hard time. They helped my family get food and they helped us get anything we needed. I am forever grateful to CB because they have helped me so much throughout the years!" She and her sister participated in multiple art sessions from CB where art supplies were delivered to their home. In photo #2 below, you will find the artwork from her sister.

CBHS PROGRAM
CAREERS IN THEATRE

Thank You!
Jenna Duncan
Associate Artistic Director
Lynreshay "Shay" Johnson
Casting and Artistic Apprentice

OLNEY THEATRE CENTER

Community Bridges collaborates with the Olney Theatre Center to provide a session on careers in theatre. Jenna Duncan and Lynreshay "Shay" Johnson shared their experiences in theatre with CB girls.

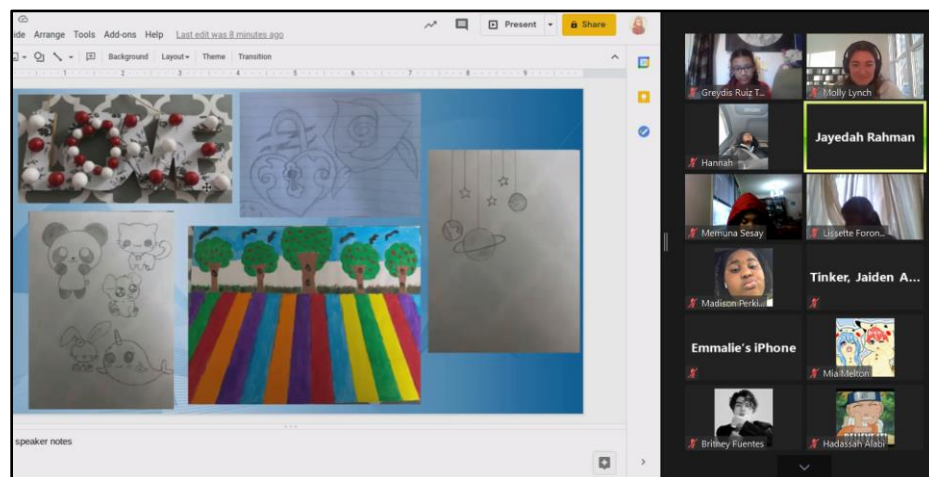


CB Girls participate in dance session hosted by Kalanidhi Dance Salons. This provided girls an opportunity to learn about a different culture and learn cultural dances.

Workforce Development Component

High school girls participated in the Community Bridges College and Career Planning Program (CBCP). The CBCP provides at-risk girls in high school with the resources needed to succeed after high school graduation. Examples include: individualized counseling on college and career prospects, coaching on financial aid and other common application processes, monthly opportunities to visit colleges/universities and other resources to promote success in college and beyond. These include multiple career workshops, such as resume building and the job interview process. Through activities related to theater, dance, and the media; girls learned about different career paths in the arts.

CB girls share art illustrations that they completed during program.



Outcomes and Outputs Reported by Grantee	
Planned Outcome or Output	Program Results
<i>Increase knowledge of different career paths in the arts and connections to nonprofits that offer job-readiness for arts careers.</i>	<p>The Olney Theater Center session focused on CB girls learning about various career paths in the arts. Two CB staff members (Associate Artistic Director Casting and Artistic Apprentice) shared their journeys into theater with the girls. They explained that the development of theater is more than just actors/actresses, but rather a whole crew that works behind the scenes.</p> <p>After the session, one of the girls entered Olney Theater's "New Voices One-Act" program. She participated in the two-week production process that takes original one-act plays from script to stage for public performance. The plays were all written, directed, designed, performed, and technically managed by program participants.</p>
<i>More than 70% of girls will show an increase in cultural tolerance.</i>	<p>Grantee significantly exceeded its goal. To measure program impact, Grantee used <i>Hello Insight</i>, an online platform that assesses a youth development program's impact on participants' social and emotional learning. The post-assessments showed that 94% of CB girls scored 'advanced' in their ability to take others' perspectives into account, and to develop a sense of caring and empathy.</p>
<i>More than 70% of girls will feel more connected to the community, develop civic awareness and civic efficacy</i>	<p>Grantee exceeded its goal. <i>Hello Insight</i> post-assessments showed that 73% of CB girls maintained or grew in their desire to engage with and contribute to family, community, and society.</p>

CREATE Arts Center

Executive Director: Linda Marson

Website: www.createartscenter.org

Project: smARTkids Program
at Takoma Park Elementary School

Total Project Budget: \$20,000

City Grant Amount: \$8,000

The logo for CREATE Arts Center, featuring the word "CREATE" in a large, bold, red sans-serif font above the words "ARTS CENTER" in a smaller, bold, red sans-serif font. The entire logo is enclosed within a thin red rectangular border.

Project Summary: smARTkids helps strengthen language and literacy skills, problem-solving, creativity, and appreciation for the arts, along with increasing self-esteem and positive social skills. With City funding, CREATE Arts Center (CREATE) has worked directly with school counselors at Takoma Park Elementary School (TPES) to identify students that are most likely to benefit from smARTkids' specialized art education programming.

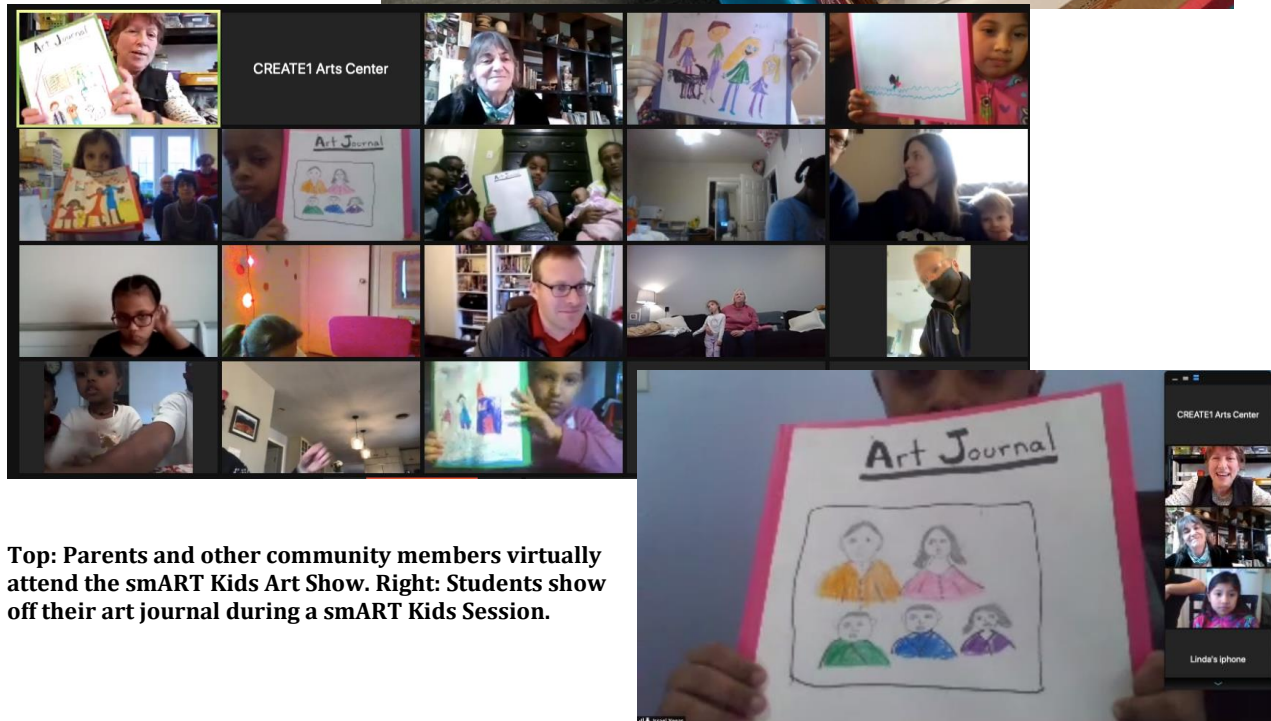
In FY 21, the smARTkids program served 28 TPES students whose families live in wards 1, 3, and 4. Grantee conducted outreach to parents/guardians in English, Spanish, and Amharic and provided other program-related materials to them in these languages. CREATE reported holding 26 art classes and end-of-semester art shows for students and their families. Those who could not attend in person at TPES, were able to fully participate in the show via ZOOM. Throughout the year, teachers mailed each student a semester's worth of art supplies. Classes focused on supporting students as they worked toward improving their language and literacy skills, gaining confidence and finding joy in the artistic process.

TPES smARTkids are from low-income households, often English learners who qualify for Free and Reduced Meals (FARM). smARTkids levels the playing field for these young children who otherwise may not have access to the many benefits of quality arts programs. It eliminates access/cost as a barrier to participation. Early intervention is critical to student success and the visual arts are integrated into projects and tasks that build critical thinking skills, resilience, language and literacy skills, peer-to-peer skills, and confidence. smARTkids teachers are specially trained in art-based education and principles of art therapy to address the needs of students who struggle, particularly, with language, literacy, and social skills.

CREATE teachers used a performance-based assessment - the smARTkids Learning Skills Rubric- to rate the quality of students' work or behavior. The tool uses a simple scoring guide, ranging from "Not yet evident" (0); "Emerging" (1-3); "Expressing" (4-7); and "Excelling" (8-10). The assessment helps teachers track students' cognitive, social and behavioral achievements. The scores reflect individual student success and identify areas where growth is needed. Ongoing assessment supports an individualized approach to help students succeed.

CREATE ARTS		Direct Beneficiaries	36
Total Programming Hours	55	Community Partners	4
Indirect Beneficiaries	336	Wards Served	Ward 1, Ward 3, Ward 4
Volunteer Hours Contributed	-	Grant-related Events	36

Due to the pandemic, CREATE Arts held their FY21 program virtually. Pictured is an entire semester's worth of CREATE art supplies ready to be delivered to smARTkids students.



Top: Parents and other community members virtually attend the smART Kids Art Show. Right: Students show off their art journal during a smART Kids Session.

Program Highlights

On the final day of the semester, CREATE sponsors an art show for students, their families and friends, teachers, and school administrators. The event celebrates participants and their achievements in the smARTkids program. Each student reads from their art journal, presents their artwork, and takes a well-deserved bow. As the art show concludes, CREATE staff provide multilingual evaluation forms for both students and their parents/guardians to complete. Spanish-speaking CREATE staff is available to interpret, if needed. The evaluation asks what they did or did not like about the smARTkids program and how they benefited from it.

CREATE also invites feedback from the TPES counselor, reading specialist, and the Principal and Assistant Principal. CREATE reported they received mostly positive responses. Parents and school staff cited improvements in student performance, attitudes toward school, and less absenteeism.

Workforce Development Component

smARTkids helps elementary school students to succeed academically and socially. Early intervention provides invaluable building blocks for student success. The smARTkids curriculum is designed to strengthen language and literacy skills, empathy, peer-to-peer relations, conflict resolution, and self-confidence. These “soft skills” serve as a solid foundation for each of the smARTkids students as they move forward in school, work, and life.

Outcomes and Outputs Reported by Grantee

Planned Outcome or Output	Program Results
<i>Improve language and literacy skills through projects that include art, writing and reading, such as journaling with drawing and writing; storytelling through cartooning; making puppets and writing puppet shows.</i>	Grantee held 26 classes for smARTkids students at Takoma Park Elementary School. Each student completed at least five art projects. Examples include: making puppets, creating an art journal, and sculpting a clay pot. Classes incorporate literacy, problem-solving, and teamwork.
	Teachers reported improved academic scores, better school attendance, and increased self-confidence among students in smARTkids.
<i>Improve social skills and peer relationships through facilitated discussions of student projects.</i>	Students developed stronger peer relationships and displayed less disruptive behavior.

Outcomes and Outputs Reported by Grantee	
Planned Outcome or Output	Program Results
<i>Enrich students' after-school life through a high-quality enrichment program.</i>	CREATE's TPES smARTkids teachers met regularly with CREATE's Executive Director and Art Therapy Director to assess student progress and program quality. Teachers and CREATE staff considered changes to support improvement in the smARTkids program at TPES. Ongoing calls with the TPES administration discussed the safest way to implement smARTkids under ever-changing COVID conditions.
	<p>Parents of smARTkids students reported noticeable impacts of the program on their child's development. One mother of a first-grade student observed her daughter, generally resistant to change, adapted well to a new experience (different teachers and kids). The parent noted that her daughter "loves art so it was nice to see her transition into a new situation without anxiety."</p> <p>Another parent said that her second-grade daughter loved using her imagination and making different things. "Whether it be a person with the foil or a restaurant with people inside of the shoe box. I'm so happy that she got to attend this class," she said.. She thanked teachers for pushing her daughter "to use her imagination."</p>
<i>Provide additional adult-student engagement in small groups.</i>	Each class has a teacher/student ratio of 2:9. Small class size provides a safe, inclusive space for children after-school and promotes an individualized approach to learning and youth development.
<i>Increase creativity and enjoyment of art.</i>	Grantee reported that students showed an increased appreciation for creative expression.
<i>Engage families/guardians by including them in student art shows where students' display and discuss their project work.</i>	CREATE held two end-of-semester art shows for students and their families. Teachers and school administrators also attend. The event celebrates students' achievements. Grantee reported excellent student attendance and increased parent attendance.

Cyberninjaz Global

Executive Director: Piankhi Zimmerman
 Website: www.cyberninjaz.org

Project: Cyberninjaz STEAM Summer Program

Total Project Budget: \$21,460
 Recommended Amount: \$7,500



Project Summary: Cyberninjaz Global is a STEAM Education nonprofit whose mission is to close the digital divide by providing STEAM education especially to underrepresented youth. They teach 21st-century employment skills and provide the opportunity for youth to be better educated, disciplined, and well-rounded individuals.

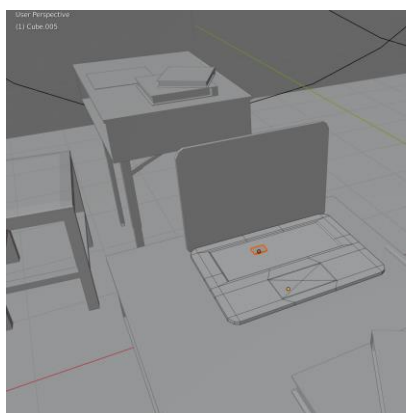
In FY21, the program provided STEAM Summer Camp experiences for under-represented low-and-moderate income Takoma Park students from all wards in the city. In order to close the digital divide, STEAM education is essential as it directly influences job-readiness.

The Grantee taught students from beginners to advanced, to build their own web browser, 3D art, 2D animation, special effects videos, websites, video games, programs, and more. Cyberninjaz helped demystify the skills necessary for entering the tech world, with the goal of turning low-income students into high-income adults who love what they do.

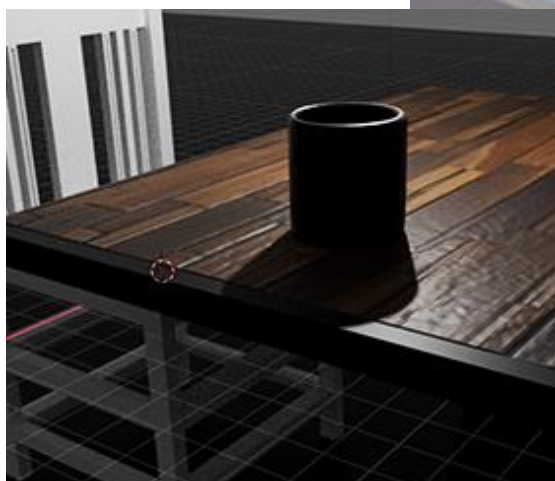
Cyberninjaz Global		Direct Beneficiaries	48
Total Programming Hours	157	Community Partners	-
Indirect Beneficiaries	197	Wards Served	Ward 1, Ward 2, Ward 3, Ward 4, Ward 5, Ward 6
Volunteer Hours Contributed	117	Grant-related Events	157

Program Highlight

In one class, students worked on projects to show their skills in 3D / Game Design. Using a software program called “Blender,” each student created a 3-D Laptop. They used “texturizing” - inserting color and shapes for the keys. The teacher, serving as facilitator, asked each student to share on screen the actual laptop model they worked on. This allowed the teacher and students to provide feedback, questions, and troubleshoot. Class discussion showed that students were highly motivated to complete their projects and grasped basic terminology and concepts. The teacher encouraged students to engage in problem-solving. One student, citing a problem with rotating a particular image, asked the instructor to “fix it.” Instead of fixing the problem, the teacher asked a series of questions that led the student to solve the problem on her own. The student exclaimed, “Oh, that’s how you do it!” This approach reflects Cyberninjaz’s commitment to guiding students through challenges so they can solve problems on their own and build self-confidence.



Above: 3D model being taught for 3D/Game Design class. Right: final student project.



Left: A Cyberninjaz student’s final project for the 3D/Game Design class.

Workforce Development Component

STEAM education directly influences job-readiness because the skills that students learn are the foundation of high-demand jobs in the 21st century. Programming, Game Design, Web Design, Digital Art, 3D animation, and Math all involve computers, problem-solving, and creativity. Cyberninjaz teaches students from beginner to advanced. The goal is to challenge students and show them how to overcome obstacles in order to produce quality fun projects. During the STEAM Summer Camp, students completed a range of projects. These included, but were not limited to: web browsers, special effects videos, websites, and video games. Cyberninjaz teaches students to pursue opportunities that can lead to careers with a pathway to high-wage employment and economic independence.

Outcomes and Outputs Reported by Grantee

Planned Outcome or Output	Program Results
<i>Increase knowledge and proficiency of desired STEAM skills.</i>	Students learned new computer-related skills: Web Design, Physics, Cyber Security, Programming, and 3D modeling & Game Design. Teachers showed work from previous students to encourage participants to create their own ambitious projects.
<i>Increase the problem-solving skills and overall confidence of students.</i>	Teachers guided students through challenges so they learned to solve problems on their own. Most class time was committed to group instruction depending on the size of the class. Teachers provided one-on-one instruction, and also encouraged students to help each other in order to develop communication skills and confidence.
<i>Provide fun, encouraging environments for student learning.</i>	Grantee created a fun space, using multimedia and passion to enhance the learning experience. By providing ample free time, the program encouraged students to play or continue learning. In the fall, the Grantee changed to an afterschool program that still allowed time for students to create, edit, and review their own project.
<i>Each student completes a project that shows skills learned during camp.</i>	Grantee's curriculum included proper planning and monitoring. This ensured that most students finished their work by the end of the session.
<i>Display completed projects on Cyberninjaz STEAM Program website.</i>	After students completed their projects, Grantee staff uploaded them to the Cyberninjaz STEAM Summer Program website. This gave students universal access to their work and encouraged them to come back to learn more.

Dance Exchange

Executive Director: Cassie Meador
 Website: www.danceexchange.org

celebrating 20 years at home in Takoma Park, Maryland!



Project: Dance Exchange Creative Aging and Intergenerational Exchange programming

Total Project Budget: \$67,160
 Recommended Amount: \$7,000

Project Summary: Founded in 1976 by Liz Lerman and under the artistic direction of Cassie Meador since 2011, Dance Exchange harnesses the power of creativity and inquiry through dance to connect communities, to deepen understanding, and foster a more embodied, resilient and just world.

Building on their 44-year history and the FY20 City of Takoma Park-funded pilot year of activities, Dance Exchange partnered with the City of Takoma Park again in FY21 to further develop the Creative Aging Program.

With FY21 funding from the City of Takoma Park, Dance Exchange continued this project providing opportunities for integrating the arts into the fabric of community life. This program strives to build an intergenerational community of care through ongoing movement workshops and a Creative Aging Advisory Committee. The Committee includes leaders from organizations and members of leading service and health organizations for older adults.

The program’s second year was also supported through a National Endowment for the Arts grant and provided free weekly and monthly workshops for older adults that used movement, dancemaking, and storytelling to encourage physical activity and health, individual and community expression, and community building. This newly-virtual program culminated in a Creative Aging Festival that celebrated and highlighted best practices from creative aging work at Dance Exchange and its national and international network of partners and peers in the fields of performing arts and aging sectors.

Dance Exchange		Direct Beneficiaries	820
Total Programming Hours	100	Community Partners	17
Indirect Beneficiaries	500	Wards Served	Ward 1, Ward 2, Ward 3, Ward 4, Ward 5, Ward 6
Volunteer Hours Contributed	18	Grant-related Events	104

Program Highlight

Takoma Park's Community Quality of Life Grant was instrumental in getting "Dance On" Programming off the ground and in helping Dance Exchange to host its first-ever "Dance On" Festival. Funding made it possible to offer dance classes and the Festival for free to ensure programs were inclusive and accessible. In order to find and serve more local Takoma Park older adults, Dance Exchange partnered with the City of Takoma Park, the Village of Takoma Park, Habitat America, Advanced Home Support, and Positive Aging Sourcebook to help recruit older adults from Takoma Park to participate.

Dance Exchange hired local and national dance artists and teachers working in the Creative Aging Sector. They performed in classes and at the Festival, and engaged with participants. Artists distributed postcards throughout Takoma Park for older adults to share experiences that were woven into the Festival performance. These postcards also acted as a tool to increase Dance Exchange's visibility in the Takoma Park community.

Left: Residents from Takoma Park and beyond participate in the virtual Dance On Festival.

Background: Residents enjoy a dance break during a Thursday drop-in class. **Below:** Bethesda Magazine article about Dance On programming in Takoma Park.

Workforce Development Component: *Dance Exchange convened a cohort of dance artists to participate in training, facilitate workshops at partner sites, and create commissioned works related to creative aging. The cohort (below) increased investment in workforce development within the creative aging field. Additionally, Dance Exchange's Organizing with Artists for Change Winter Institute offered a 3-day opportunity for artists and facilitators to convene and train in Creative Aging and community engagement tools and practices.*



Luisa Aviles

Luisa (she/her/hers) is passionate about dancing, movement, creativity, and education. She believes in the power of artmaking as a way to connect, express, and cultivate community. Luisa found all of this when she enrolled in her first program at the Dance Exchange in 2017. Since then, she has participated in movement institutes and classes, as well as supported the CoLab and Still Crossing projects in 2018, which culminated in a performance at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. When Luisa isn't dancing, she trains local teachers on how to deliver experimental learning outdoors.



Becky Hill

Becky Hill (Brentwood, MD) is an accomplished and sought after percussive dancer, Appalachian square dance caller, community organizer, teaching artist and choreographer. Becky has worked with Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble, Rhythm in Shoes, Good Foot Dance Company and studied with an array of percussive dance luminaries. In 2017, she directed her first concert length work inspired by Appalachian traditions, Shift. In 2018 she was selected as a fellow for OneBeat, a U.S. State Department Cultural Diplomacy Program. She has performed at Jacob's Pillow, Newport Folk Festival, Mountain Stage Radio Show, Wheatland Music Festival, Big Ears, Nelsonville Music Festival and many others with the T-Mart Rounders. She is 2021 Strathmore Artist in Residence, is part of Dance Exchange's Creative Aging training program and is currently seeking her MFA at University of Maryland College Park. As an avid organizer and teacher, Becky's work is deeply rooted in the connections between music and community. She believes there is always more to learn and is dedicated to creating innovative choreography rooted in percussive and vernacular dance. She is super excited to be a part of the Dance Exchange Community. www.rebeccahill.org



Devin Hill

Devin Hill graduated from the University of Central Oklahoma with a B.F.A. in Dance Performance. She has studied jazz, ballet, modern, hip hop, tap, African, ballroom, and improvisation. Ms. Hill was a member of the Kaleidoscope Dance Company and has worked with artists: Christopher K. Morgan, Bill Evans, Clarence Brooks, Gregg Russell, and Cat Cogliandro. Also, Devin had the honor of performing at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC with Dance Exchange. She has continued to perform, choreograph, facilitate, and participate in intensives and workshops throughout the DC metro area. Ms. Hill's dancing has spanned over twenty years.



Vinny Mwano

Vinny Mwano (he/him) is a dancer, choreographer, filmmaker and storyteller. Dance has played a big role within his life. At a young age he and his family moved to the States as refugees, during this time Vinny found his voice and community through dancing. Vinny started teaching professionally at the age of 16. He specializes in Hip Hop, Afro-Jazz and Krump. Vinny has collaborated with various studios around the states and in Canada and Jordan.

Vinny believes dance/movement has the power to break down societal barriers that separate us from one another. As an explorer of movement and storytelling, Vinny is excited to collaborate with Dance Exchange.



Bikem Ozturk

Born in Istanbul, Turkey, Bikem Ozturk is a dancer, a writer, a Reiki Master, an Angel Card Reader. She sees herself as a World Citizen who is raising another World Citizen, her beloved teenager, AC, in the suburbs of Maryland. She was a dancer in the first dance theater company, Green Grapes Dance Theater Company in Istanbul, Turkey in 1992. She has seen Dance Exchange as her second home since 1999, starting with Bountiful Bodies dance class. She is also the author of the spiritual memoir "FIRE IN THE DANCING HEART". In dance and life, she loves being outrageous and subtle at the same time and using text and movement together. Her practice is enjoying life to the fullest while being mindful and drinking Zen tea. She found her heart in the Buddha's Dharma. She likes to drink Earl Grey Zen tea with cream and sugar. She sends you blessings on your Journey.

Outcomes and Outputs Reported by Grantee	
Planned Outcome or Output	Program Results
<i>Increase the number of local seniors involved in creative aging and intergenerational exchange in Takoma Park.</i>	During the grant period, more than 300 older adults attended weekly “Dance On” classes online classes. These free “virtual” gatherings typically drew 10-15 individuals from Takoma Park and other communities. Dance Exchange prioritized publicizing these classes to the local community and had many “regulars” attending from Takoma Park (TP) and Silver Spring. In its Festival Registration form, Dance Exchange asked individuals to identify where they lived and worked. More than 50 people who lived and/or worked in TP registered to attend.
<i>Decrease social isolation among participating older adults in creative aging programs.</i>	Many participants reported that weekly classes were a chance to connect with peers and proved a “lifeline” during the pandemic. Dance Exchange reported increased participation in its weekly classes and heightened interest in its “Dance On” program after the Festival. Festival attendees who turned in the post-Festival survey commented on the program’s impact. “The interaction of older and younger dancers (at the Festival) is interesting and heartwarming,” one participant noted. Another reflected on the feelings of inclusion and diversity. “The Festival showed me that no matter how old, young or what stage in life you are, that dance is truly for everyone.”
<i>Increase awareness of best practices in the field of Creative Aging by hosting a first annual Creative Aging Festival in Takoma Park.</i>	Many participants said the Creative Aging Festival was the highlight of the program. One attendee cited the vibrancy and diversity of people engaged with creative aging. After the Festival, Dance Exchange created a “resource room” so that people could continue learning more about Creative Aging at Dance Exchange and beyond: https://www.danceexchange.org/dance-on-festival-resource-room .

Docs In Progress

Executive Director: Barbara Valentino
 Website: www.docsinprogress.org



Project: Documentary Dialogues Takoma

Total Project Budget: \$15,775
 Grant Amount: \$7,500

Project Summary: Docs in Progress (Docs) supports emerging documentary filmmakers by teaching the skills and providing the tools they need to shape their stories. Docs offers an array of educational classes, public programs including screenings and camps, and artist services aimed at aspiring and experienced documentary filmmakers and the broader community. By developing, encouraging, and celebrating new and diverse voices via documentary film, Docs also seeks to lessen the racial divide in storytelling.

FY21 funding from the City of Takoma Park supported “Documentary Dialogues Takoma.” This multi-year program uses video as a vehicle for reflection, self-expression, and empowerment. It engaged people through hands-on video production activities and film screenings. In FY21, the project educated, inspired, and transformed people’s interaction with documentary film. Activities included filmmaking camps for youth and seniors and *The Community Stories* film festival, a free festival which showcased short documentaries about local topics followed by Q&As with the filmmakers. All events took place virtually.

Docs provided young participants with the equipment needed for filming and editing their documentaries. Each teen received a \$100 gift card upon completion of the program and return of the gear. This incentive honored the professional skills that the students developed through the camp and reinforced the concept that there is value in their work as filmmakers.

Docs In Progress		Direct Beneficiaries	51
Total Programming Hours	774	Community Partners	25
Indirect Beneficiaries	1,600	Wards Served	Ward 1, Ward 2, Ward 3, Ward 4, Ward 5, Ward 6
Volunteer Hours Contributed	109	Grant-related Events	129

Program Highlights

Docs changed the teen summer filmmaking workshop course to accommodate the need for virtual learning. They decided it was more important to provide instruction and feedback on how to develop the story line, shoot, and edit a film on “My Life under Covid”. One change was that the stories became much more, but not all, ‘home based’ rather than reporting on other local nonprofits (although this still was an option for participants). Classroom lessons and Docs’s gift card distribution integrated a workforce concept into the program. Specifically, if each student submitted a completed documentary and returned the loaner gear, they received a certificate and a \$100 gift card to reinforce the concept that good work is rewarded with pay.



Docs crew for the Community Stories Film Festival in November 2020. While the festival was virtual, a small team worked in person to keep everything running smoothly.

Workforce Development Component

Docs’ youth camps emphasized team-building and problem-solving—two key skills for workplace success. Meeting over Zoom, e students worked in small break-out groups (i.e., (production teams) to select a story idea. They researched a topic [e.g. Takoma Radio, Crossroads Market], wrote a script, filmed and then edited all elements into a final 2-3-minute video. Participants learned that job choices should be determined by who has the expertise and better skill set and not the most glamorous job [the cinematographer or editor]. Campers learned a hard lesson that even experienced filmmakers face: what do you do in the edit room when initial plans go awry in the field, and how do you solve it. Docs added a session that focused on the “hard” or technical skills that job seekers need to qualify for and obtain jobs in filmmaking, especially at the entry level. For example, younger workers can “get a foot in the door” by starting as a production or a camera assistant.

TEEN FILMMAKING SUMMER WORKSHOPS

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ዕድሜዎች 12-15

ጁላይ 7- ጁላይ 17

ዕድሜዎች 16-18

ጁላይ 27 - ነሐሴ 7

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“የውስጥ ሀሳብ :- ህይወት በኮቪድ-19 (COVID-19)”

ትምህርት 10AM-12PM በኢንተርኔት ዙም (Zoom.com) ይከናወናል። ከሰዓት በኋላ ደግሞ የመጻፍ፣ የመቅረብ እና የፊልም ውጤት ዝግጅት እንዲሆን ተሰጥቶታል፤ በተጨማሪ ለሰልጠኞቹ ከሰዓት በኋላ ፕሮጀክቶችን አጋዥ ረዳት አስተማሪ ይመደብላቸዋል፤

docsinprogress.org/events

Docs’ social media campaigns for teen workshops were shared in English, Spanish and Amharic. Shown left is the Amharic version of the grantee’s promotional materials.

Outcomes and Outputs Reported by Grantee	
Planned Outcome or Output	Program Results
<i>Increase representation of persons 55 years and older from low- and mid-income communities.</i>	Due to COVID-19, Docs redesigned and conducted its workshops remotely. Docs promoted the program via Montgomery County’s channels (e.g., CultureSpotMC), Docs social media, and City of Takoma Park publications. Docs made repeated efforts to contact managers at some of the housing complexes to arrange sending program flyers in English, Spanish and Amharic. Docs connected with non-profits that engaged low- and moderate-income residents. Docs usually had approximately 5-7 participants for its in-person workshops; during the pandemic, there were a final of three participants. A fourth individual dropped out due to Covid-related family issues before the program started. Despite these challenges, participants produced short films that emphasized local stories with a focus on diversity and inclusion.
<i>Increase Youth Camp participation at least 10% from the low-mid income communities.</i>	Out of 9 students, three were from low- to middle-income families. Teen workshops were a heralded success. Even with the pivot to virtual and last-minute reduction of support from Takoma Park’s Recreation Department (due to the pandemic), Docs conducted two workshops for teens 13-18.
<i>Increase awareness of Doc’s programs in the community.</i>	Docs continued to reach residents and expand awareness of its programs by taking advantage of the digital opportunities. They reached 8,000 people through Docs social media and newsletters. Social media for the teen workshops were in English, Spanish, and Amharic.
<i>Add a work-force component to Doc’s youth camps.</i>	Docs introduced local teens to creative and technical jobs and careers in filmmaking and video production. To show that a job done well should be rewarded, Docs promised a \$100 gift card to teens who submitted a final film and returned loaner gear intact. This gift card was especially meaningful to students whose families were hard hit by COVID (the subject of a documentary made by one of the young filmmakers).
<i>Refine program evaluation efforts.</i>	Docs conducted pre- and post-program assessments. Campers stated their goals at the start of the program and did a follow-up survey afterwards to evaluate their experience.

Ethiopian Community Center

Executive Director: Hermela Kebede
 Website: www.ethiopiancommunitydc.org

Project: Bilingual Career and Service Navigator Program

Total Project Budget: \$22,000
 Grant Amount: \$10,000



Project Summary: The Ethiopian Community Center (ECC) equips African immigrant communities in the Washington Metropolitan Area with the tools and resources to become economically self-sufficient and civically engaged citizens in the communities they live.

The Career and Service Navigator Program increased skills and employment outcomes for low-skilled and low-income Takoma Park residents with limited English-language proficiency. While Takoma Park's significantly large African immigrant residents make substantial contributions to the local economy, they are disproportionately concentrated in low-wage jobs, due to cultural and linguistic barriers. ECC's program reduced these barriers by providing individualized career counseling, language arts skills, on-going case management, linkage to social services, and monthly peer support.

ECC used its grant to hire a part-time bilingual Navigator who provided remote individualized counseling and coordinated support for residents. The program primarily targeted English-language learners enrolled in ECC's vocational English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) program. ECC offered the program weekly to all eligible Takoma Park residents virtually.

Ethiopian Community Center		Direct Beneficiaries	188
Total Programming Hours	132	Community Partners	11
Indirect Beneficiaries	1,730	Wards Served	Ward 1, Ward 2, Ward 3, Ward 4
Volunteer Hours Contributed	112	Grant-related Events	41

Program Highlight

Several Takoma Park residents reflected on the impact of ECC's Bilingual Career and Service Navigator Program.

- A 38-year-old woman, who identified as a stay-at-home mother for 8 years, registered to study Phlebotomy at Howard University. She said she registered because she developed self-confidence as a result of ECC's program.
- A 40-year-old man who recently moved to the United States held a degree in Geographic information Systems (GIS) from Ethiopia. Although trained in GIS, he did not know how to find work because he arrived in the middle of a pandemic. He eventually enrolled in a free part-time 21-week program to train as a Junior Web Developer at Generation USA. He credited ECC with helping him "navigate" the workforce training system.
- A 36-year-old woman, away from school for almost 10 years, said she earned certificates after completing two free online courses offered through the Montgomery County Public Library. The two courses included "Teaching Children with Disabilities;" and "Brain Health." The woman now plans to continue training for a career in the special education field.

Workforce Development Component

ECC's Bilingual Career and Service Navigator Program aimed to increase skills and employment outcomes for 180 low-income and low-skilled Takoma Park residents. While Takoma Park's significantly large African immigrant residents contribute to the local economy, they are disproportionately concentrated in low-wage jobs, due to cultural and linguistic barriers. ECC's program focused on eliminating these barriers by providing individualized culturally/linguistically appropriate career counseling, on-going case management, linkage to social services, and monthly peer support.

ECC partnered with several public and private organizations, including nonprofits, to ensure that job seekers could easily access workforce development resources. Takoma Foundation and the Montgomery Housing Department provided additional funding to ECC's program. Partners that connected participants to workforce development services included, but were not limited to Worksource Montgomery, Montgomery College Workforce Development and Continuing Education Program, and Upwardly Global (another FY21 grantee).

Outcomes and Outputs Reported by Grantee	
Planned Outcome or Output	Program Results
<i>Increase employability of 85% of program participants seeking to improve their job skills.</i>	ECC offered workshops on resume writing, job preparedness, and interview skills. In Fall 2020, 21 people registered for an 8-week session; 77% of them were Takoma Park residents. During FY21, ECC emailed flyers to workshop participants about career fairs, job openings, and other resources related to employment. At the request of workshop participants, ECC offered digital literacy classes for 45 people. They also held a session that provided information on apprenticeships and scholarships for 31 African immigrants of Takoma Park residents. Some participants completed short-term training and obtained certifications as a result of these information sessions.
<i>Improve employment outcomes for 50% of participants looking for a job or a better one.</i>	ECC connected participants with employers that offered jobs that aligned with their skills. Due to the pandemic, community members' needs shifted from getting a job to getting short-term training and other pandemic-related assistance. ECC registered 23 people for a second 8-week session in the winter months. Nearly one-third (32%) of the participants identified as jobseekers and 62% said they wanted skills training. ECC staff provided job readiness counseling for people who completed the workshops. Participants reported getting hired for better-paying jobs.
<i>Improve program completion by 65% of participants.</i>	ECC exceeded its goal. Ninety percent (90%) of the participants completed the workshops.
<i>Increase participant's network by 75% to work source development network</i>	ECC invited WorkSource Montgomery consultants and staff from education and workforce development programs, such as Upwardly Global and Montgomery College. Speakers provided information on postsecondary education, employment, skills training, and related opportunities.

GB Youth Media

Executive Director: Anna Danielson
Website: www.gandhibrigade.org



Project: The Promoters Program

Total Project Budget: \$14,000
Grant Amount: \$7,000

Project Summary: Gandhi Brigade Youth Media (GBYM) creates learning labs where young people identify community issues, build confidence to speak up, and use media skills to take action.

The Promoters Program offered an afterschool media production program for two hours each week for 12-14 weeks. In FY21, GBYM delivered this program virtually, accessing previously enrolled students as well as newly enrolled youth. GBYM kept classes small; 10 or fewer participants, including teachers and guest speakers.

GBYM made sure that all interested families had the necessary internet and equipment to participate, which included loaning laptops and cameras. GBYM staff either taught from home or live-streamed classes from their studio in Silver Spring. Their partner organizations were involved in all virtual programs, to ensure that all families enrolled had regular access to essential services.

Spanish-bilingual teachers and teaching assistants participated in all programs. GBYM provided program forms in Spanish and in Mandarin, French, and Amharic, if needed.

The Promoters program was an important opportunity for youth to support other youth, for peer-to-peer collaboration and connect with young people experiencing fear and depression as a result of the pandemic while giving them the skills to speak out and create through filmmaking.

GB Youth Media		Direct Beneficiaries	85
Total Programming Hours	200	Community Partners	4
Indirect Beneficiaries	500	Wards Served	Ward 2, Ward 5
Volunteer Hours Contributed	85	Grant-related Events	196

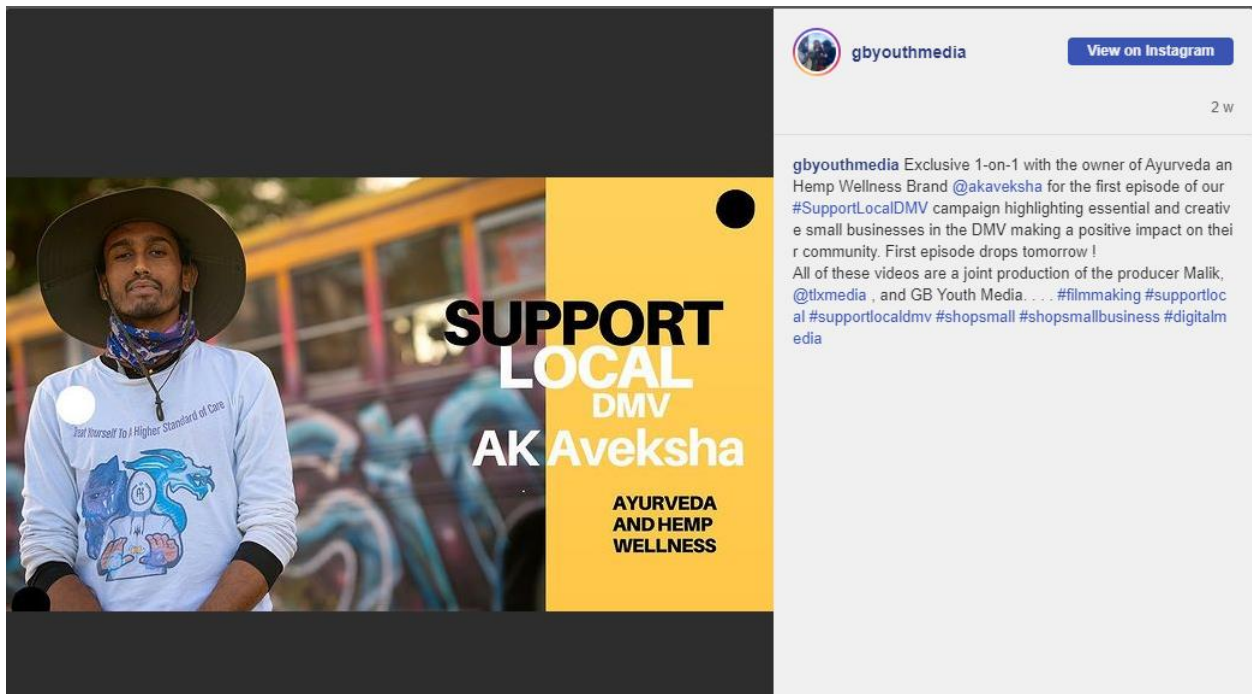


Above: "It's Okay to Not be Okay" - an online mental health and wellness series for high schoolers led by a licensed clinical social worker. Partners: CASA, ACSGW. Above is a snapshot of the Instagram post advertising the series GB Youth Media offered as part of the grant program.

Program Highlight

The Promoters Program offered students in the 6th through 8th grades an opportunity to socialize, be creative, and learn during the pandemic. Through its "Close the Digital Divide" laptop gift program, Gandhi Youth Brigade Media provided 30 families with computers for their homes. This increased the likelihood that families could take advantage of social services, online entertainment and education, and vital information during quarantine and the ongoing public emergency. In addition, the City's funding made it possible for GBYM to continue serving students living in MHP properties with online classes and homework support.

At one GBYM planning meeting, staff and teachers discussed current programming and plans for the next week. A GRC member who sat in on the meeting noted, "This is more than just building the technical skills of making documentaries. It is about bringing out marginalized stories and voices."



Above: 'DMV Spotlight' series explored local small businesses supporting their communities during the pandemic. Produced and filmed by teaching artist Malik Carter and TLXMedia. Above is a snapshot of the Instagram post advertising the video that Malik produced. The video was used as a teaching tool by GB Youth Media.

Workforce Development Component

GBYM promoted job readiness for Takoma Park residents by teaching students practical skills in media. These include videography and video editing. Through its partnership the Montgomery Housing Partnership, GBYM taught these practical media skills to low-and-moderate-income Takoma Park residents at Sligo View Apartments.

Outcomes and Outputs Reported by Grantee	
Planned Outcome or Output	Program Results
<i>Increase racial minority student participation in our Montgomery County Youth Media Festival by 20%.</i>	The entire project served students whose families lived in Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP) and Habitat America residences in Takoma Park, MD. All students were BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color). By providing more programs in neighborhoods of color in Takoma Park, GBYM encouraged more youth to participate in our annual Montgomery County Youth Media Festival. By expanding its Promoters Program to include middle school students and young adults, GBYM served more participants, ages 12 through 25. GBYM received numerous talented BIPOC submissions to its competition and spring exhibition.
<i>Hire at least one teaching artist from the Takoma Park neighborhoods that our programs will be held to teach youth from their own neighborhood.</i>	GBYM reached out to program Alumni and residents from specific neighborhoods for leads on who may be a good fit for a media art teaching position. Our teaching artist GBYM hired an instructor from Takoma Park who is an alumnus. GBYM originally planned for him to join two others to teach at the Sligo View’s class. However, this did not work out; GBYM did not have sufficient need for an additional teacher. GBYM is working toward hiring a teacher from Takoma Park who is bilingual in Spanish and English.
<i>Improve student engagement ratings by 20%.</i>	GBYM began tracking student engagement in the class that started at Sligo View in March 2021. Despite the ongoing pandemic and “Zoom fatigue,” students appeared somewhat responsive during the two-hour sessions. GBYM hopes to improve student engagement when the Promoters Program returns to in-person and hybrid programming. They also plan to follow up on previous program evaluations to identify how to improve curriculum so that students are engaged, having fun, and learning. Examples include short online tutorials on topics such as Mobile Phone Filming and Editing, Camerawork, and Documentary Film. GBYM also offered weekly help via Zoom for middle-schoolers.

Historic Takoma, Inc.

President: Diana Kohn

Website: www.historictakoma.org

Project: Stories from Takoma Park's African American Community

Total Project Budget: \$52,950

Grant Amount: \$10,000



Project Summary: Historic Takoma, Inc. is a volunteer, 501(c)3 non-profit, founded in 1979 to preserve the history and heritage of Takoma Park, Maryland, and the Takoma Park neighborhood of DC through educational activities and the preservation of historic landmarks and artifacts, including documentary archives.

Many Takoma Park residents are unaware of the lives and stories of the black men, women, and children who came from the South beginning in the 1920s, building a close and vibrant African-American community in the face of racial discrimination and limited economic resources during segregation and the decades that followed.

In 2019, with help from the City of Takoma Park, Historic Takoma convened members of the African-American community in Takoma Park to discuss the possibility of conducting oral histories while there were still elders in the community. Historic Takoma then launched an initiative to document the history of the African-American community through oral histories and elevate these stories through film, a publication, an exhibit, and public programs. A grant from the City made it possible to conduct, film, and transcribe 15 interviews with longtime community members.

In FY21, Historic Takoma planned to use its Community Quality of Life Grant to create five, 5-minute thematic films edited from these interviews. Other planned outcomes related to developing curricula for residents, especially students, to access online. The curriculum provided a resource that Takoma Park teachers might use to teach this history. At the end of the project, Historic Takoma envisioned publishing a book (both online and in print) of the edited oral histories that highlights the challenges and resilience of the African-American community in Takoma Park.

Historic Takoma could not complete its “Stories from Takoma Park's African American Community” project in FY21. Due to ongoing COVID restrictions and low vaccination rates, Historic Takoma decided it was not safe to continue in-person interviews with elders in the community. The City of Takoma Park rolled over grant funds to FY22 to give Historic Takoma a chance to finish the project. The FY22 report on Community Quality of Life Grants will include program highlights and results from the oral history project.

Upwardly Global

President & CEO: Jina Krause-Vilmar

Website: www.upwardlyglobal.org

Project: Building a Vibrant Takoma Park Through Immigrant Workforce Integration

Total Project Budget: \$20,000

Grant Amount: \$10,000



Project Summary: Upwardly Global (UpGlo) eliminates employment barriers for skilled immigrants and refugees, and integrates them into the professional United States workforce. UpGlo is the first and longest-serving organization focused on the economic advancement of newcomers, supporting their attainment of gainful, thriving-wage employment. UpGlo helps to build a nation where everyone can fully contribute and thrive socially, culturally, and economically. The people they serve are under-employed foreign-born professionals and skilled immigrants who are rarely the subject of mainstream workforce development or career pathways programs.

With City support, UpGlo helped vulnerable immigrants, refugees, and asylees in Takoma Park transition from unemployment and underemployment to thriving-wage professional roles that pave the way towards self-sufficiency and integration. This work squarely aligns with the City’s commitment to welcoming immigrants and building inclusive communities.

UpGlo, a national nonprofit organization, serves an estimated 280 newcomers throughout DMV annually. In FY21, Takoma Park’s grant enabled UpGlo to reach the City’s community of skilled immigrants through increased outreach and relationship-cultivation with local community-based partners.

This program established an applicant pipeline that served ten Takoma Park-based immigrant job seekers over a 12-month period. More than half (50%+) of job seekers sought work in high-demand STEM fields. Participants gained access to UpGlo’s robust pool of volunteer professionals, reskilling/upskilling training opportunities, and employer partners, supporting their attainment of employment in competitive, 21st-century roles.

Upwardly Global		Direct Beneficiaries	10
Total Programming Hours	40	Community Partners	13
Indirect Beneficiaries	43	Wards Served	Ward 1, Ward 2, Ward 3, Ward 4, Ward 5, Ward 6
Volunteer Hours Contributed	33	Grant-related Events	3



Upwardly Global

11,645 followers

1mo • 🌐



Thank you to [CIBC](#) for this successful virtual networking event!

Using Zoom, we were able to replicate an in-person speed networking event where CIBC employees and job seekers were virtually networking in different breakout rooms. We not only brought our communities together, but we also helped job seekers build a more robust network for their job search.

It was our first time doing a virtual networking event and we're thrilled with its success!



KAMEL MEDANI and 33 others

2 Comments

Above a social media post about a virtual Upwardly Global employer networking event where job seekers meet with employers to learn more about career opportunities.

Program Highlight

One of UpGlo’s job seekers, “G,” is an immigrant from Cameroon. He came to the U.S. with more than a decade of professional experience in computer science and an advanced degree in Physics and Computer Networking. After resettling in Takoma Park, “G” started his professional job search but struggled to find employment aligned with his education and experience. When he first enrolled in UpGlo’s program, “G” was working as a grocery delivery driver – earning an hourly wage and struggling to make ends meet. “G” served as an essential worker throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

With UpGlo’s help, made possible with the City’s grant, “G” began working to upskill and prepare to secure his first professional role in the U.S. He completed UpGlo’s core training, building familiarity with the U.S.-specific job search strategies. “G” joined UpGlo’s Technology Career Community where he connected with fellow job seekers and industry volunteers for tips and support. He received coaching from an UpGlo IT job coach, with whom he mapped out his short- and long-term career aspirations and the required skills and credentials to attain his desired employment outcome. Through UpGlo, “G” completed free training via Coursera and Udemy in subject areas like AWS Solutions Architecture, Networking Engineering, and Network Administration. UpGlo hopes that with continued support of essential partners like the City of Takoma Park, “G” will achieve his dream of serving as an IT professional in his newly-adopted home.

Workforce Development Component

Job seekers, especially in technical, knowledge-intensive STEM professions, often require up-to-date, made-in-America credentials, and reskilling/upskilling to be competitive again in their careers. The disruption in work experience when they are unemployed or working low-skill, low-wage “survival jobs” leaves them out of their professional fields for some years. Many struggle to translate their resumes, foreign-earned degrees, and expertise to the local labor market. To support job seekers in its program, UpGlo partners with third-party institutions like Google, Coursera, and Skillsoft to facilitate reskilling/upskilling opportunities in areas like IT support, data science and AI.

UpGlo coaches work with participants in STEM fields to identify technical training opportunities (e.g. stackable credential programs/certifications) that lead to improve employment outcomes in competitive, 21st century careers, helping employers fill their STEM talent needs and diversify their workforces with global talent.


THE CITY OF TAKOMA PARK & UPWARDLY GLOBAL INFORMATION SESSION

Are you a refugee or immigrant job seeker in the science, tech, engineering or math field?

Learn more about STEM-focused job readiness initiative that supports professional immigrants and refugees residing in Takoma Park!

Please join us for a virtual information session on
 Wednesday, January 13
 5:30 - 7:00pm EST

[SIGN UP HERE](#) OR VISIT WWW.UPWARDLYGLOBAL.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION



Upwardly Global

Left and below: Screenshots of social media posts announcing the Upwardly Global/City of Takoma Park grant partnership

Upwardly Global
 11,645 followers
 1mo • Edited •

We are excited to announce our new partnership with the City of Takoma Park. Our DMV region office will work with the city to implement a STEM-focused initiative that supports professional immigrants and refugees residing in Takoma Park.

This Project was made possible through the support of the City of Takoma Park.

#futureofwork



Nneoma Albert-Benson and 38 others
 1 Comment

Outcomes and Outputs as reported by Grantee	
Planned Outcome or Output	Program Results
<i>At least 15 Takoma Park unemployed and underemployed immigrant, refugee and asylum job seekers gain increased awareness of UpGlo's program and services through two on-the-ground outreach/info sessions</i>	UpGlo engaged representatives from the City of Takoma Park, sharing digital outreach and communications materials to boost awareness among residents and providers about UpGlo's program and target population. This included hosting two virtual information sessions (in November 2020 and January 2021) targeting Takoma Park's immigrant and refugee communities, and building community partnerships to launch additional outreach sessions with their participants and reach a greater audience in Takoma Park. UpGlo worked on individual referrals directly with the City of Takoma Park and other community-based organizations.
<i>At least 15 job seekers are prepared to confidently and successfully launch a US-style professional job search by gaining access to UpGlo's core program: receiving a combination of soft and technical skills training, industry-specific job search coaching, access to networking events with local employers, and English as a Second Language (ESL) training opportunities.</i>	<p>Onboarding staff monitored incoming applications and assessed eligibility. UpGlo diversified outreach strategies, as needed. UpGlo's Onboarding Associate continued to be responsible for meeting with each job seeker individually (and virtually) to understand their background, assess eligibility and communicate next steps.</p> <p>UpGlo's program introduced job seekers to online soft skills training, and an industry-specific advisor who assessed the participant's employment barriers. This advisor provided ongoing guidance throughout the participant's job search until they secured employment. This includes but is not limited to an introduction to national Career Communities in STEM fields, resume/interview/application support, career pathway planning, networking and access to employer partners.</p>
<i>Increase knowledge and awareness of UpGlo's program and services among Takoma Park service providers (community-based organizations, refugee resettlement agencies, and workforce development practitioners).</i>	UpGlo scheduled two events in coordination with the City of Takoma Park. UpGlo's program manager handled communication and administrative grant-related activities with the City of Takoma Park, as needed. Up Glo canceled the second event but planned to host additional events with community partners to recruit enrollees.

Outcomes and Outputs as reported by Grantee	
Planned Outcome or Output	Program Results
<p><i>Increase training and career pathway opportunities for 5-6 participating job seekers in STEM fields through engagement of UpGlo's volunteer and employer networks; and STEM reskilling/upskilling training opportunities like Splunk, Google IT E-Certification, and Agile Scrum.</i></p>	<p>Once Takoma Park job seekers enrolled and engaged in Upwardly Global programming, they had access to monthly virtual networking and skills-building events/opportunities with UpGlo's our community of employer-partners and STEM industry volunteers.</p>

Partners

Special thanks to the City's grantees and their many funders and partners. Below is a partial list of additional funders and partners that supported the work of FY21 grantees:

A Wider Circle	Maryland Traditions
Accenture	Meltzer Employee Giving Fund
Advanced Nursing & Home Support	MentorPrize
Alexandria's Workforce Development Center (WDC)	Montgomery College
American University	Montgomery College Workforce Development and Continuing Education
Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County (AHCMC)	Montgomery County Media
Arts for the Aging	Montgomery County Public Libraries
Arts on the Block	Montgomery County Public Schools
Brass Ring Company	Montgomery Housing Development
Charles W. Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center	Montgomery Housing Partnership
Community Bridges	Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation
Community Foundation of Montgomery County	Piney Branch Elementary School
CREATE Arts Center	Parent Teacher Association - Piney Branch Elementary School
Crossroads Community Food Network	Parent Teacher Association - Takoma Park Elementary School
Dance Exchange	Quicksilver Senior Improv Dance Company
Diversity Dimensions LLC	Round House Theater
Documentary Center at George Washington University	Silver Spring Civic Center
Enterprise Homes	Blair High School - Social Studies Department
Essex House Apartments Tenants Association	Takoma Foundation
Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)	Takoma Radio (WOWD 94.3)
Gandhi Brigade Youth Media	The Foley Hoag Foundation
Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (HIAS)	The Intergenerational School
Housing Opportunities Commission	The Village of Takoma Park
Impact Silver Spring	The University of Maryland
Maryland Humanities Council	Victory Towers
Maryland State Arts Council	Washington Adventist University Faculty
	Weinberg Foundation
	Women in Film and Video

Grants Review Committee

Experts Next Door: Thoughtful Decision-Making by Residents

The Grants Review Committee comprises Takoma Park residents with demonstrated expertise in community development, grants management, public arts, or related areas of interest. Committee members evaluate grant applications based on established program priorities, guidelines, and available funding and forward their funding recommendations to the City Council for consideration.

The FY21 Grant Review Committee selected the programs described in this report. The FY22 Grant Review Committee developed this report based on grantee reporting and site visits. GRC rosters for both FY21 and FY22 are below. Members are listed in alphabetical order, left to right.

FY21 Grants Review Committee

Top row: Nadine Bloch (Ward 3), Rachel Branaman (Ward 6), Nicole Ferraiolo (Ward 1),
Bottom row: Jay Keller (Ward 3), Susan Rosenblum (Ward 3).



FY22 Grants Review Committee

Top row: Nadine Bloch (Ward 3), Keli Cochran (Ward 6), Nicole Ferraiolo (Ward 1),
Middle row: James Sebastian (Ward 3), Michael Schoeneke (Ward 1), Derek Shiau (Ward 5),
Bottom: Susan Rosenblum (Ward 3), Mark Swartz (Ward 1). Not pictured: Lucy Moore (Ward 3).

