



February, 2023 Newsletter



Hamilton Wings
giving our children the wings to soar

On the Horizon

Check out our updated website!

www.HamiltonWings.org

CREATE! Free Arts-Based Workshops

*4-Workshop Series starting, Saturday, Feb. 18th
Bethlehem Lutheran Church from 12pm-2pm*

Development by Design: Families expand their imagination through brooks & art (grades K-3)

Art SPACE: Students gets creative through arts exploration (grades 4-6)

Art & Wellness: Parents learn coping & self care strategies using art (for parents and all adults)

Register here: <https://qrco.de/bdePUa>

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2022 Reflection

With each new year, we tend to reflect on the past year and make plans for what we will attend to moving forward. I intentionally chose the words “attend to” versus “focus on” because for me, within the concept of “attention” are ideas of tending, nurturing, and caring for. Most recently, this concept of “attention” has presented itself to me time and time again.

In one of Hamilton Wings’ workshop literary favorites, *Happy Dreamer*, the author Peter Reynolds recognizes the threats posed to his protagonists’ happy, big, and creative dreams, too frequently shuttered by the outside world. “Sometimes the world tells me...Sit still. Be quiet...Focus.” In nurturing all of Hamilton Wings’ young, happy dreamers, perhaps “attention” offers more possibilities for growth than the often-stinging reprimands to just go to one’s corner and “Focus!”

In November 2021, I had the honor of being cast in Elgin Community College’s production of *Baltimore* (by Kirsten Greenidge; directed by Prof. Susan Robinson). The play drew inspiration from Countee Cullen’s (a Harlem Renaissance poet) work entitled “The Incident” and centers on a resident advisor’s dilemma as to whether to involve herself in helping to address a racial incident that has occurred on campus. The Dean, who I had the good fortune of playing, suggests to this young person that it is better to “attend” to something of concern rather than ignore it simply because we don’t have all of the answers or know exactly what to do or what will work. Rather, the Dean offers that “getting our hands dirty” and drawing from lessons from our personal and collective histories are part of our commitment to our social contract as individuals living in community.

Related to this young character, in educational presentations, I have often referred to my “ugly car cries” – those times when I’m in my car about to implement a program or workshop and all of my uncertainties and insecurities about what I am doing or how I am doing it come flooding in at the most inopportune time. And it is often at these same times that I am reminded of all that is beautiful about the work we are privileged to do. My attention is drawn to the beautiful moments and memories that are created when voices are validated, souls are stirred, hearts are championed, minds are challenged, ideas are celebrated and when we immerse ourselves in the “muck and mess” of arts supplies to see what emerges that we often find our radiant, shining selves.



Risé D. Jones, Ph.D.

Executive Director, Hamilton Wings

Photo Credit: Marina Makropoulos

I have been wrestling with this concept of “attention” for some time. In a recent conversation with Prof. Chasity Gunn, 2021 American Academy Poet Laureate Fellow, she spoke of her own “creative stewardship” work and reminded me that one has to “pay attention” in order to feel and ultimately express gratitude. Gratitude provides a pathway for connection – towards inner growth and towards attending towards others’ needs and struggles with renewed and deep understanding and empathy.

Attention is so much at the heart of what we seek to do through Hamilton Wings. We seek to attend to young people’s hopes and inner creative beings, we seek to attend to situations, even if challenging and uncomfortable that get in the way of our young people being the full expressions of themselves, we seek to attend to all that we are grateful for and use this gratitude as fuel for our endurance and celebrations of joy. And in our attention, we hope that our care and tending embodies love and emboldens creativity spirits and that our work will never waiver from giving our children the wings to soar.



Featured Board Member: Mrs. Donna Anderson

As you may know, Mrs. Donna Anderson is Hamilton Wings' Board President and brings an unmatched, passion and commitment to serving others as well as a daily brightness to the community and to her family. Donna has been blessed with her loving husband Dale, two children, Aimee and Vincent and three grandchildren, Alex, Duke and Hazel; and has been an Elgin resident for over 50 years.

Committed to her community, Donna has worked daily to serve and better the city of Elgin. Her list of accomplishments is vast and starts with her devotion to her church; Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Elgin. Here Donna has served as the Church Treasurer, Council Member, Executive Committee, Chair of Vacation Bible School, and as a Sunday School Teacher. Additionally, Donna was a part of the BLCW, (Bethlehem Lutheran Church Women) a group that coordinates and provides luncheons for funeral, helps with the Strawberry Festival and coordinates the Sancta Lucia Pageant.

Additionally, Donna has partnered as the PTA Treasurer and President at Washington School, and was a member of the Larkin High School Parent Group. Donna served as a YWCA Board Member for seven years, was president for three years, and continues to serve on the Leader Lunch Committee. Donna was part of the creation of and chairs *Queen for a Day, A Victorian Tea* annual event.

Most recently, in November, 2022, Donna was recognized by the Elgin Chamber of Commerce as a Volunteer for Greater Family. She was a part of the core start up group for Greater Family Care Center and has been given the name of "*Mother of Greater Family*". Donna served as the President and Chair for Greater Family Care center from 1998-2006; and currently serves on the Development Committee.



Risé D. Jones, Ph.D. & Donna Anderson
Hamilton Wings

In addition to Donna's current work with the YWCA and Greater Family Care Center, she was a Committee Member for All America City and Treasurer for the Douglas L. Hoeft Scholarship Foundation; bringing her multitude of dedication, passion and knowledge to these organizations.

The grace and commitment Donna has brought to the community is notably evident as she has been the recipient of several awards throughout her service. Donna has been named a recipient of the following awards; *Women of the Year* from Elgin Jr. Woman's Club, the *Elgin Image Award*, from the City of Elgin, the *Leader Luncheon Award* from the Elgin YWCA and the *D. Ray Wilson Award* from Judson University. Despite having several noted accomplishments, Donna is unmistakably humble and gracious for the opportunity to provide.

Mrs. Anderson's knowledge, compassion and dedication is inspiring and remarkable. To say we are grateful for her would be an understatement. Donna leads our Hamilton Wings' board by putting the community and our children's needs first. Her understanding, devotion and humility is unmatched and we are truly thankful every day to have her as part of the Hamilton Wings family. Thank you for all you do Donna!

Featured Funder: Grand Victoria Foundation



Steve Moon, Director of Elgin Programs
Grand Victoria Foundation

The Grand Victoria Foundation was established in 1996 as a way to continue the commitment of the Grand Victoria Casino which donates a portion of its annual income to fund initiatives that help local communities. This commitment has helped fund community driven programs across Illinois since its conception.

The Grand Victoria Foundation's (GVF's) mission focuses on empowering communities across the state through encouragement and the provision of aid to organizations with a voice that is both strong and equitable. This commitment from the GVF has helped many across Illinois, including right here in Elgin. We are honored and grateful at Hamilton Wings to benefit from this foundation.

In speaking with Steven Moon, the Director of Elgin Programs for GVF, the foundation is currently looking to the future as they begin a transition within the organization. They felt prompted to look at their values, mission and to find new ways to connect with their community partners. They seek to embrace the wisdom, skills and lived experiences of the people in effected areas to bring a renewed focus on racial injustices.

GVF's transition directly involves the residents of historically neglected communities with grant funding opportunities and puts decision making about grant allocation in their hands. GVF plans to unveil more of this strategy in the second half of 2023 and is excited for the future of the foundation.

The Grand Victoria Foundation's most recent initiative has been the Elevating Equity grant program. Elevating Equity was founded by GVF as a unique grant opportunity in support of grassroots-led projects and focuses on a grant-making structure that centers and amplifies the under heard and overlooked voices of Elgin. This initiative supports residents with the opportunities and resources to nurture their creativity and realize their vision. The vision for Elevating Equity, like future initiatives from GVF, is to give a voice to the residents within these communities and allow residential catalysts to decide what is needed most.

At Hamilton Wings, we are so grateful to have the Grand Victoria Foundation in our community and to serve as the current steward for Elevating Equity. We are looking forward to see how the foundation evolves and how they will continue to positively impact Elgin.

GRAND VICTORIA FOUNDATION

CREATE-ing Joy-Filled, Soul-Replenishing, Art-Infused Spaces

The overall goal of CREATE is to support the 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.

Check out some of the photos from the CREATE! program, parent mentor development and training. Thank you to Elgin Padres con Poder for your facilitation.



SEIGLE
FOUNDATION

CREATE! is made possible in part from an Arts Grant through the Seigle Foundation



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

Risé D. Jones, Ph.D. at 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