

seedling

ISSUE #2 | DEC/JAN 2018-19

DIGITAL DETOX

Reduce stress and
reconnect with
real life

EASY WAYS TO PRODUCE LESS WASTE

SUSTAINABLE CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

FINDING BALANCE

in your plant-based diet



one
person
can make a
difference!

Deborah Bostock-Kelley speaks about her charity showcase, Life Amplified, which celebrates its 6th year and 13th event in 2019

In October 2012, somewhere between my final interview question as a freelance reporter for AOL Patch and exiting the independent movie theatre on North Dale Mabry Highway in Tampa, Florida, a movement was born.

Only I didn't know it at the time.

All I had done was ask why Tampa Pitcher Show didn't present spoken word poetry, and then eagerly volunteer to host a poetry showcase three short months later.

I should have realized that although the venue would be donated, a lack of experience combined with no advertising budget - for a nonpaid, all-volunteer event - would make for a painfully slow registration process.

I probably should have given up, but thankfully, I am extremely stubborn. I knew that eventually "if I build it, they will come." I created a logo, built a website filled with information and a registration form, shared it on social media, waited and prayed.

To match the pay-it-forward bracelet I've worn for 10 years, I wanted to make this event the philanthropic side of my creative services company. I chose to name my charity event Life Amplified because spoken word poets amplify stories, whatever topics they might present.

I wanted to donate my portion of the ticket sales directly to a small local Tampa Bay organization and be a voice for their platform. I knew we wouldn't be raising a ton of money, as our venue was small, but something - even if it only paid for office supplies - was better than nothing at all. And we'd be informing the audience about the organization in question; sometimes, promotion is as valuable as money.

The charity I selected was Redefining Refuge, who fight against human trafficking. They were in the process of opening a home for rescued trafficked women and children, and were the perfect recipient for the show's proceeds.

In early December 2012, through the use of our website, Facebook, other social media and free press-release sites, the event slowly began to build momentum, and other performers - not just spoken word poets - asked to perform.

The inaugural show opened on January 19th 2013, with 2 singers, 9 poets, a comedian/impressionist, and a mind-reader.

At the end of the show, I thanked everyone and was about to leave the stage. An audience member stood up and asked, "So when's the next one?"

I hadn't even considered the possibility.

Fast forward five years, and Life Amplified has become



Life Amplified KIDZHELPINGKIDZ

synonymous with producing quality spoken word and variety showcases that benefit small local grassroots charities. It's grown in leaps and bounds, and I now host a charity showcase each year.

*"in the time
it takes to
make an
excuse, you
could be
starting a
movement."*

I've since opened the showcase to all variety acts, and I no longer have to wait months for performers. The show performance roster fills up in days, if not hours.

Life Amplified has taken on many surnames - StopH8 for bullying prevention, benefiting Teen Edge Be-YOU-ty Camp; SALUTES, for K-9s for Veterans; and METAMORPHOSIS, sexual violence prevention for The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay's Take Back the Night event.

On May 3, 2014, Life Amplified was invited to move to Carrollwood Players Theatre. The theatre donated both the venue and all tickets sales to my selected charity. Life

Amplified KIDZHELPINGKIDZ was especially poignant, as I was recognized as Fox TV's Hometown Hero for my charity work and sold out my first event at the new venue, where it was standing room only.

Life Amplified KIDZHELPINGKIDZ was unique in that it only featured children - a child emcee and performers 6 to 17 years old. The showcase benefitted the Tampa chapter of Bricks for the Brave (formerly Legos for Leukemia), founded three years ago by a 9 year old boy to honor his friends fighting childhood cancer. He collects gift cards for purchasing Legos as well as new boxes of Legos throughout the year for distribution to St. Joseph's Children's Hospital during the holidays.

Life Amplified PAWS UP reached into the community to help Animal Coalition of Tampa (ACT), whose building was severely damaged by arson. EMPOWERS took on Military Sexual Trauma (MST) for EQUUSOLUTIONS, who used equine therapy for survivors of PTSD and MST. Days later, the charity called and excitedly said that a horse had also been donated.

MASQUERADE was for my gracious host, the nonprofit community theatre; SADDLE UP was for Casey's Healing Hooves, a rescue that worked with disabled children and adults, and military facing PTSD and MST; CAFFEINATED was to save a small landmark inclusive coffee shop; COMMENDS was for two veteran organizations, Expunge US Veterans and Circle of Veterans, and was recognized as Bay News 9 TV's Every Day Hero in 2016; and AWAKENINGS returned to our roots with the nonprofit that started the showcase, Redefining Refuge.

On May 22, 2019, we are doing Life Amplified CONNECTIONS, a Broadway-themed showcase for Project No Labels, whose mission is to unite the Tampa Bay LGBTQ+ community for the betterment of all, creating an

atmosphere of positivity and tolerance within the community. This showcase features some of the best dancers and singers in community and professional theatre.

I've gone from not knowing if I'd get one response in 2012 to being overwhelmed with love and support. I'm now fully booked through 2020.

I think what amazed me most throughout this journey was how eager people in my community were to help me help the selected local charity. Though the ages and experience levels of the talent range from beginner to professional, the performers all come together for the same reason - to entertain, educate about an important platform and to help a worthwhile cause.

My fear of having no budget was quickly assuaged by the kindness of strangers. Photographers, videographers, sound/light people, playbill printers, and florists, along with raffle sponsors of national chains and local small businesses, have all donated their products, time and talents to Life Amplified - asking for nothing in return.

I am completely humbled by the number of people who really care and want to be involved in these special events. I hate when I hear someone making the excuse "But I'm just one person, what can I do?"

It only takes one person to make a difference and have an impact. During this process, I've discovered that in the time it takes to make an excuse, you could be starting a movement.

SM

About the writer

Deborah Bostock-Kelley is a journalist, playwright, producer, director, actress, author, Broadway World theatre critic, owner of [The WriteOne Creative Services](#), & founder of [Life Amplified](#) variety showcase for charity. Find the showcase on Facebook [here](#).

