



# girl legacy

COMMUNITY BRIDGES'  
7TH ANNUAL CELEBRATION

NOVEMBER 9, 2023



community®  
bridges Empowering Girls,  
Building Leaders for the Community



## *Dear Community Bridges Family and Friends,*



Welcome to the Community Bridges 25th Anniversary Celebration, Girl Legacy! In the past 25 years we have truly made a significant impact here in Montgomery County. We have helped over 5,500 girls build bridges and make connections. Thanks to amazing supporters like you – we have been able to empower the CB girls and connect them to their futures. We have built a legacy for supporting a girl holistically and we know with your continued support, we can continue to grow and serve more girls in grades 4-12 and beyond. I have the great honor of serving as the current Executive Director for Community Bridges but the girl legacy we have built has come from all of the great leaders before me and will continue in the years to come because of each and every one of you through your support of our mission and our CB girls! Each of you as supporters are part of our legacy!

Tonight you are celebrating creating opportunities, cultivating potential and achieving dreams for over 5,500 diverse girls in Montgomery County through the Community Bridges Girls Program. Tonight is Girl Legacy because we are celebrating the past, the present and looking forward to the future of our CB Girls Program. We say once a CB girl always a CB girl! Our girl legacy is living through all of our past and current CB Girls. Each and everyday we have girls passing the legacy down to the next generation of CB girls.

We celebrate our CB Girls! You will hear from the CB girls who have made connections and built amazing bridges through Community Bridges. They will serve as ambassadors and will share how Community Bridges has shaped who they are today. The stories and the legacy will continue, by the end of the year we plan to serve an additional 500 girls, 45 mentors, and 2,500 family members in Montgomery County.

If you have the ability to give tonight, I ask you to please make a contribution. Every dollar raised tonight will allow us to expand to even more schools in Montgomery County and serve even more diverse girls in grades 4-12. Be part of the amazing group of supporters that helps bring Community Bridges Programming to new schools in Montgomery County! Thank you for your support and for helping to change the lives of girls. CB thanks each and every one of you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shannon Babe-Thomas'.

**Shannon Babe-Thomas**

Executive Director, Community Bridges

# *Community Bridges* **Board of Directors**

## **BOARD CHAIR**

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*Tax Partner, PwC*

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# *Community Bridges* **Staff**

## **Shannon Babe-Thomas**

*Executive Director*

## **Isabel Argoti**

*Deputy Director of Programs*

## **Jane De Angeli**

*College Access and Success Advisor*

## **Michelle Haughton**

*College Access and Success Advisor*

## **Deja Taylor**

*High School Program Manager*

## **Marianne Hope**

*High School Program Specialist*

## **Isha Sarr**

*Middle School Program Manager*

## **Erin Lee**

*Elementary School Program Manager*

## **Cathariya Chanthaboun**

*Development and Operations Consultant*

## **Etsube Yitbarek**

*AmeriCorps Member*

## **Taylor Anaba**

*AmeriCorps Member*



# Program

## **Welcome**

**Allison Seymour**, Anchor, WUSA9, Host and Co-Emcee

**Maria Byrd**, Journalist, Co-Emcee

### ***“Warrior”***

Dance by Community Bridges Girls, Liyanna Merhatsion, Anna Maiga, Keona Johnson, Sionna Tantoh, Talia Campbell and Fikir Yilma from Takoma Park Middle School

**Shannon Babe-Thomas**, Executive Director, Community Bridges

### ***“The Impossible Dream” (Man of La Mancha)***

Sung by Community Bridges Girl Hadassah Alabi

## **Community Bridges 2023 CB Alumna Award**

**Etsube Yitbarek**, 2023 graduate from University of Maryland at The Universities at Shady Grove and CB AmeriCorps Member

### ***“Don’t Worry About a Thing” (Stevie Wonder)***

Sung by Community Bridges Girl Mikeltha Boko

## **Dinner**

### **2023 Girl Legacy Award**

**Danita Johnson**, President of Business Operations, D.C. United

### ***“Warrior”(Chloe and Halle)***

Sung by Community Bridges Alumnae Christy and Jam Ramos and Abigail Ofous

### **Special Guest Speaker**

**Lt. Governor Aruna Miller**

### ***“Girlhood”***

Poem written and performed by Community Bridges Girl Paola Djoko

### **Girl Legacy Video**

### **Appeal for Support**

**Shannon Babe-Thomas**

### **Workplace Matching Gifts**

Does your workplace offer charitable donation matching gifts? If so, please take advantage of this easy way to multiply the impact of your gift. Check with your employer for details.

### ***“Mirror”(Lalah Hathaway)***

Sung by Community Bridges Girl Hannah Germain

### **2023 Building Bridges Award**

**Ryan Rilette**, Artistic Director of Round House Theatre

### ***“Welcome to Ethiopia”***

Dance by Community Bridges Girls, Liyanna Merhatsion and Fikir Yilma from Takoma Park Middle School

### **Closing Remarks**



# Thank You

## TO OUR SPONSORS



### SILVER SPONSORS



### BRONZE SPONSORS



Priscilla Bullock

Jane De Angeli and  
Mark Kindig

Chris Owens

Margo Reid and  
Greg Simon

Julie Statland  
and Sandy

Spring Bank



# Thank You

## TO OUR SPONSORS

### PURPLE SPONSORS



McCartin Insurance

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Wendy Doernberg  
and Aaron Goldstein

Kate Kennedy



Jennifer Creighton

GBCC LLC.

Leslie  
and Erik Heyer

Marina Major

Seneca Community  
Church and Carla Reid

*Thank you to those who donated their time and services to  
Community Bridges and making Girl Legacy a Success!*

ARTS ON THE BLOCK for designing Girl Legacy Awards.

CAPIZZI DESIGNS for designing everything for Girl Legacy.

NOTHING BUNDT CAKES SILVER SPRING for donating the  
Bundtinis on the tables this evening.

PRINT EXHIBIT PARTNERS for printing all of the banners,  
signs and centerpieces for Girl Legacy.

THE FILLMORE SILVER SPRING



### *Host and Co-Emcee*

#### *Allison Seymour, Anchor, WUSA9*

Allison Seymour is an Emmy® award-winning anchor who has been waking up viewers on morning news in her hometown of Washington, D.C. since 1999.



Allison started her career in television at the D.C. bureau of ABC News, behind the scenes, before earning her Master of Mass Communication from the University of South Carolina. She is a proud graduate of Hampton University, where she is enshrined in the Mass Media Hall

of Fame. Allison's on-air career began during the blizzard of 1993 in Upstate New York. She would go on to work in Utica, Binghamton and Albany, New York. During the summer of 1998 Allison took an anchor position in St. Louis, Missouri where, on her first day on the job, she met her future husband, radio host Marc Clarke.

Allison is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and Jack and Jill of America, Inc.

She and her husband Marc share three daughters and two shelter pups. Allison feels extremely grateful to the community for all of the support over the years and is excited about joining the WUSA9 family.

### *Co-Emcee*

#### *Maria Byrd, United States Correspondent, Channels Television*



Maria Byrd is the U.S./Washington Correspondent for an International News Network, Channels Television; which airs in both Nigeria and the United Kingdom. Maria provides media coverage of U.S. - domestic and foreign affairs. Currently, Maria serves as the lead correspondent, covering the United States response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Maria frequently reports from the White House and Congress on topics that impact U.S. foreign relations. Maria led the organization's coverage of the 2016 and 2020 U.S. Presidential elections in collaboration with Voice of America. Maria was one of the first American journalist to have an in-depth interview with the Boko Haram (international terrorist organization) kidnapped Chibok Girls. In March of 2018 Maria covered the historic March for Our Lives Rally in Washington, DC for A&E Networks (History Channel). Maria has moderated media roundtables for United States Congress Africa Caucus, National Association of Black Journalist with BBC, CBS and CNN colleagues, World Bank and U.S. International Peace Institute.

For more than ten years Maria hosted a weekly Show on Radio One “Speak Out with Maria,” interviewing some of our country’s most notable leaders; Jesse Jackson, Congressman Sheila Jackson, Congressman Elijah Cummings, the Honorable Alexis Herman m, Dr. Cornell West and a host of others. She has won several awards for foreign affairs reporting. Maria is often called upon to be a guest on various shows with Voice America, SkyNews and other news outlets.

She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She serves as the National Association of Black Journalist Political Taskforce, Membership Chair. She has also served as a member of several Board of Director’s for neglected and abused women and children.

Additionally, Maria is very active with her children serving on their elementary school PTA Executive Board. She is also a Girl Scout Troop leader and an active member of several other ministries at The People’s Community Baptist Church. Maria resides in Maryland with her husband Keith Byrd, daughter Mariah, son Keith, Jr. and niece Christine.

### *Danita Johnson, President of Business Operations, D.C. United*



Danita Johnson is a seasoned sports and entertainment executive and member of Sports Business Journal’s Forty Under 40 Class of 2023. Over her 17-year career, Johnson has successfully launched a professional franchise, led award-winning teams, delivered record-breaking sales for multiple organizations, and created additional sustainable revenue streams through a unique approach to strategic partnerships and brand development.

Currently, Johnson serves as the President of Business Operations for Major League Soccer’s most decorated club, D.C. United, a role she has held since January 2021. Notably, she is the first Black President of an MLS Club and only the third woman in league history to serve in this role. In her first two full seasons leading the Black-and-Red, Johnson has shepherded a 31% increase in ticket sales, 27% increase in concessions sales, 55% increase in apparel sales, and 27% growth in partnership and sponsorship revenue. Johnson pioneered a landmark local broadcast deal which saw D.C. United become the only team in the league to air all club matches on television and radio in both English and Spanish, as well as provide streaming at no cost for fans within the local market.

Under her leadership, the club has established a sustainable Audi Field events business, which has seen the Washington Spirit (NWSL), DC Defenders (XFL), and the Truth and Service Classic — a home football game for Howard University — become full tenants and staple events in the 20,000-seat downtown DC stadium. Johnson is also responsible for the highest-grossing single match ticket sales and revenue event in club history when D.C. United hosted FC Bayern Munich.



Additionally, under her leadership, the club have achieved two back-to-back record-breaking jersey sales highlighted by the most popular kit in club history – The Cherry Blossom Kit – which saw an increase of nearly 500% in previous years.

Her focus on delivering Audi Field as a premier destination for sports in the United States has also led to the venue hosting the National Women's Soccer League Championship in 2022, which saw record attendance, and the hosting rights for the 2023 MLS All-Star Game where the league's best played English Premier League powerhouse, Arsenal FC. In July of 2022, United hosted European giant, FC Bayern Munich, becoming the highest-grossing event in Audi Field history.

Johnson's mission for D.C. United is clear, Unite Sport. Build Community. Win Championships. Inspired by this, the club has re-introduced the D.C. United Foundation and re-established the club's community relations department. Since 2022, D.C. United and the club's foundation have positively impacted the lives of more than 125,000 individuals and volunteered more than 2,700 hours.

Prior to joining D.C. United, Johnson had 15 years of experience in the sports industry, including several roles in the WNBA, NBA, and NBA G League, specializing in revenue generation, community programs, and digital media and marketing.

During her time with the Los Angeles Sparks, Johnson led the organization to a league-best in corporate sponsorship dollars earned and launched the annual #WeAreWomen campaign, which drew a historic attendance of 19,000 to Staples Center for a WNBA game. Additionally, under her leadership, the organization saw a 50% increase in ticket sales from 2014-2017 and led the WNBA in attendance in 2017 and 2019, including a 17.8% increase in fans per game in the 2017 season.

Before her time in Los Angeles, Johnson developed and led the Ticket Sales and Service department for the Washington Mystics while with Monumental Sports & Entertainment. Johnson also boasts NBA experience with the Los Angeles Clippers and played a pivotal role in launching a professional basketball franchise, the Bakersfield Jam.

A native of Fayetteville, North Carolina and a graduate of Western Carolina University, Johnson sits on the board of DC SCORES, Destination DC, the Share Winter Foundation, is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and previously served as a WISE Within Mentor.



## *Ryan Rilette, Artistic Director, Round House Theatre*



Ryan Rilette is in his eleventh season as Artistic Director of Round House Theatre. During his tenure, he has produced five of the best-selling and highest-attended seasons in the theatre's history. His productions have received 63 Helen Hayes Awards nominations and 14 Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Original New Play or Musical, Outstanding Ensemble, and Outstanding Resident Musical. Ryan created the theatre's Equal Play Commissioning program, Resident Artist program, Fair Play pay scale for artists, and Free Play ticketing program. For Round House, he has directed "We declare you a terrorist..." (co directed with Jared Mezzocchi), Throw Me on the Burnpile and Light Me Up, Homebound, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time (co-directed with Jared Mezzocchi), Oslo, Small Mouth Sounds, "Master Harold"...and the Boys, The Book of Will, Angels in America: Perestroika, The Night Alive, Fool for Love, This, and How to Write a New Book for the Bible. Prior to joining Round House, Ryan served as Producing Director of Marin Theatre Company, Producing Artistic Director of Southern Rep Theatre, and co-founder and Artistic Director of Rude Mechanicals Theatre Company. He is the former Board President of the National New Play Network, and formerly served on the boards of theatreWashington and Maryland Citizens for the Arts. Ryan is a member of SDC, AEA, and SAG-AFTRA. (He/Him/His)

## *Lieutenant Governor of the state of Maryland Aruna Miller*



Aruna Miller is the Lieutenant Governor of the state of Maryland. On Jan. 18, 2023, she was sworn into office as Maryland's 10th lieutenant governor, the second woman to serve in that role, and the first woman of color and immigrant elected to statewide office in Maryland.

Born in India, Lieutenant Governor Miller and her family immigrated to the United States when she was 7 years old. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering from the Missouri University of Science and Technology. Lieutenant Governor Miller has devoted her life to public service and removing systemic barriers to opportunity.

For 25 years, she worked as a transportation engineer for Montgomery County's Department of Transportation, where she worked to improve safety and provide equitable access.

From 2010 to 2018, she served the people of Montgomery County (District 15) in the Maryland House of Delegates.



As Lieutenant Governor, her policy profile includes matters relating to transportation, mental health, and STEM equity.

She serves as chair of the Governor's Work Zone Safety Work Group, dedicated to making highway work zones safer and protecting the lives of workers, motorists, and law enforcement.

The Lieutenant Governor also chairs Maryland's first Council on Interfaith Outreach, which convenes faith leaders from across religions and across the state of Maryland to bridge divides, increase religious tolerance, end hate, and better serve all communities.

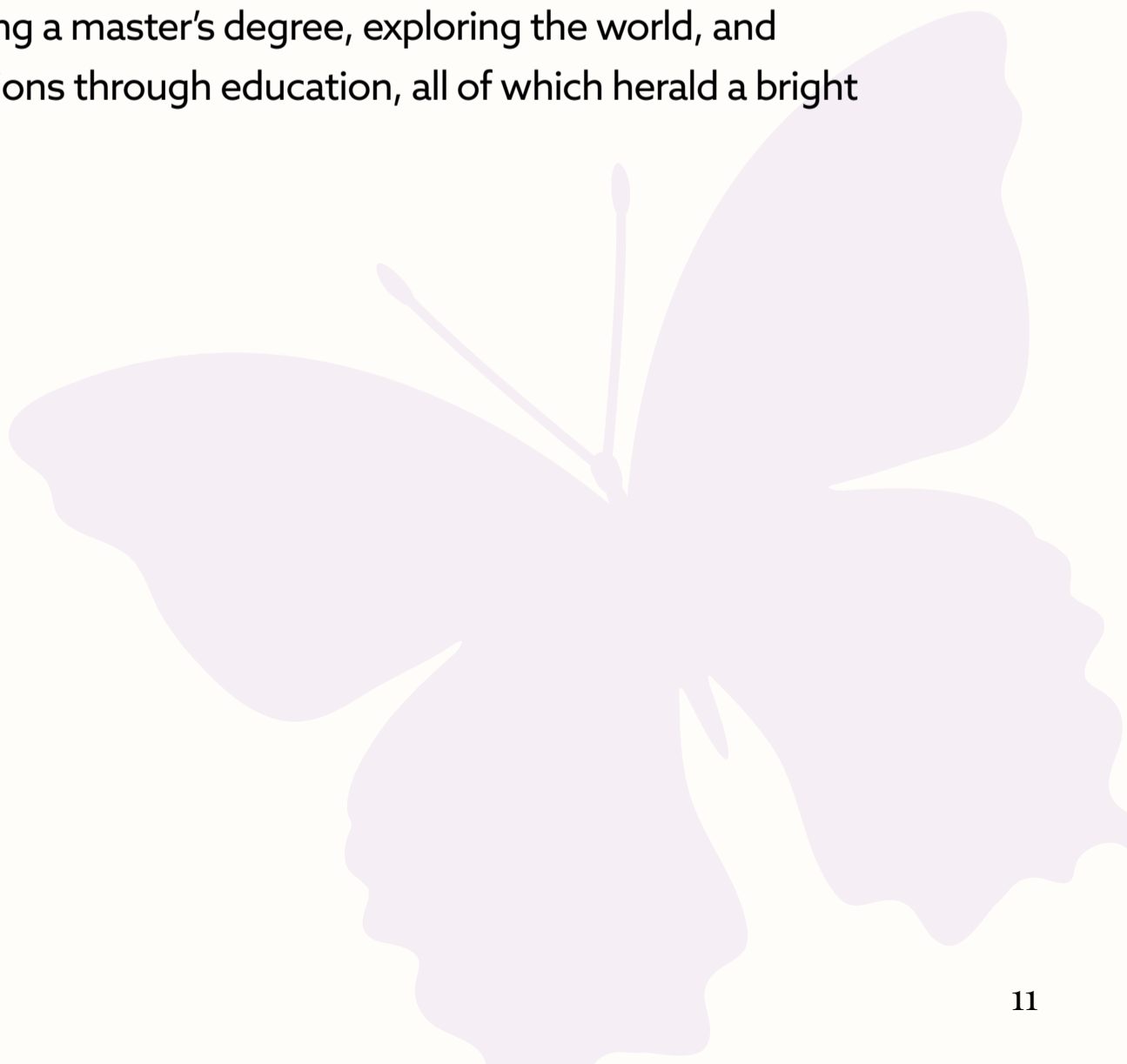
### *Etsube Yitbarek, Community Bridges Alumna and AmeriCorps Member*



Etsube, a recent graduate of the University of Maryland with a bachelor's degree in Communication, hails from Ethiopia and was raised in Montgomery County. She attributes her achievements to the support she received during her school years from Community Bridges and ACES (Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success), which fuelled her determination to give back to the community that aided in shaping her academic success.

Etsube served as a non-voting board member at Community Bridges from 2019 to 2021 to offer perspective from a participant in the organization. In the upcoming 2023-2024 school year, Etsube will closely collaborate with high school students at Community Bridges as an AmeriCorps Member, reflecting her commitment to making a positive impact.

Beyond her dedicated endeavors, she finds delight in traveling and crafting engaging content for her substantial TikTok and Instagram following. With 200k+ TikTok followers and 36k on Instagram, she produces entertaining and educational videos in Amharic, addressing essential social topics. Etsube's aspirations include pursuing a master's degree, exploring the world, and inspiring younger generations through education, all of which herald a bright and promising future.





# *Get Involved*

*Volunteer*

*Become a CB Mentor*

*Donate*

*Host a Friend-raiser*

*Sign up for the CB e-Newsletter*

*Join the Board of Directors*

Contact [Shannon Babe-Thomas](#) for details

[communitybridges-md.org](http://communitybridges-md.org)



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