

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CLEVELAND STUDENTS BRING STORIES TO LIFE THROUGH POETRY AT AMERICA SCORES CLEVELAND POETRY SLAM!

From the Soccer Field to the Stage, Poet-Athletes Use Slam Poetry to Express Themselves

CLEVELAND, OH - More than 250 elementary-age students, from nine Cleveland Metropolitan Schools, will perform original works of poetry at the seventh annual America SCORES Cleveland *Poetry Slam* on Friday, November 18, 2011 at Cleveland State University's Waetjen Auditorium. The *Poetry Slam* is the showcase event of the fall poetry and soccer season for America SCORES Cleveland, the only local non-profit that provides soccer, creative writing and service-learning programming after school to Cleveland Metropolitan school students, called Poet-Athletes.



Tamia Bonilla, age 10, and her 15 America SCORES teammates, grades 3-5, believe in the power of their words. As a student at Buhner Dual-Language school in Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood, Tamia sees first hand where fluency in English and Spanish can take her and adding poetry to the mix has empowered Tamia to share her voice. She writes poems at home, during reading classes, and of course during America SCORES' after-school programming.

"Poetry helps our participants to organize and express their feelings," said Debra Pence-Meyenberg, Executive Director of America SCORES Cleveland. "The *Poetry SLAM* stage is the perfect place for Cleveland youth to share everything from their thoughts on school to their love of soccer."

Tamia and her teammates have been preparing for their *Poetry SLAM* performance for weeks. Their poem titled "A School Day," is about an average school day with a twist. The poem has an unlikely cast of characters including a dog, a pig, and a duck spending the day learning and playing together. The girls wrote the poem as a team in September and have been working to add gestures and sounds to captivate the audience.

When asked if she was nervous about performing onstage, Tamia said, "No. My mom said that I shouldn't be nervous because I should just pretend that she's the only one there and just perform it the way that I usually do when I practice in front of her."

The America SCORES Cleveland *Poetry SLAM* is free and open to the public. Over 500 parents, Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) staff, and community leaders are expected to attend the event starting at 6:00 p.m. Eric Gordon, CMSD CEO, and Monyka Price, City of Cleveland Chief of Education, will be featured as speakers.

In addition to 18 boys' and girls' team performances, 18 team representatives will perform original poems – solo. Tamia was chosen by her teammates to represent Buhner Dual-Language School with her original poem, "Listen to Me." Two team representatives will be selected by judges to travel to New York City for the America SCORES National *Poetry SLAM*, all expenses paid. On April 16, 2012, America SCORES participants from across the country will celebrate National Poetry Month by performing their original poetry on the historic Apollo Theater stage.

WHERE: Waetjen Auditorium, Cleveland State University

Music & Communications Building
2001 Euclid Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44115

WHEN: Friday, November 18, 2011, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

ABOUT AMERICA SCORES CLEVELAND

America SCORES Cleveland is an affiliate of America SCORES, a national model for sports-based youth development targeting girls and boys in urban neighborhoods. This five-day per week after-school program works to enrich the lives of Cleveland Metropolitan School students ages 8-12 from the Clark Fulton, Glenville, Hough, North Broadway/Slavic Village, and Puritas-Longmead neighborhoods through regular participation and skill building in soccer, creative writing, and service-learning. America SCORES Cleveland inspires urban youth to lead healthy lives, be engaged students, and have the confidence and character to make a difference in the world. For more information, visit www.AmericaSCORESCleveland.org.

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