

## **Celebrating 25 Years, feat. Spoken Word Artist Tish Jones**

TISH JONES:

When a girl is born, we greet her knowing that our world just got bigger. We see girls and see women creating the kind of environment we couldn't imagine before their arrival. Girls are space shifters. When given the freedom to explore and imagine, girls change the trajectory of humanity. And they do so simply by being themselves. An athlete, a scholar, a doctor, mother, or poet, a girl with the proper support systems in place will discover her passion and potential, ultimately becoming an impactful woman, and impactful women impart their gifts onto others, serving as the architects of our future.

Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Dorothy Vaughan didn't materialize out of nowhere and change the history of space travel. They began as girls that someone believed in. Girls that individuals chose to support and advocate for. Girls that companies and organizations invested in and community members made space for. Every girl deserves to be the first, the best, the brightest, and a part of something. Every girl deserves an opportunity to discover what moves her.

The Ann Bancroft Foundation has been providing girls in Minnesota with those types of opportunities for twenty-five years. Twenty-five years of walking with girls until they become women, encouraging their wonderment and exploration through the gift of financial support and recognition. Because sometimes, a girl just needs to be seen, or seen for herself.

Over two million dollars later, the Ann Bancroft Foundation has touched eighty-nine percent of all counties in Minnesota, creating a network of girls who know that somebody, somewhere, believes in them. Someone has heard their story, be it in Benton, Sherburne, Polk, or Wright County, someone is committed to seeing them thrive. And even more so, they know that they are a part of a sisterhood of possibility, a sisterhood of women who were once girls with a light so bright that someone went out on a limb to uplift their name. Every girl deserves this kind of catalyst toward her future.

The possibilities are endless. Who knows? We might be in the room with the next governor of Minnesota, or the girl whose liter reduction app will become so popular that girls across the world unite and reduce the effects of climate change. We are amongst future choreographers, historians, educators, and the girls who become women who know how important it is to see other girls, girls who were once just like them. Young, curious, and filled to the brim with potential and possibility.

What the Ann Bancroft Foundation does for our community is no small thing. Believing in someone can unlock their belief in themselves. Decades of empowering others to recognize the girls in their lives means decades of charging us to pause for the beauty around us and in others. It means decades of making a positive contribution to the

culture of Minnesota and the culture of the world that these girls will enter into when they become women. Every girl is worth our investment. Every girl deserves to be seen.