

**Ronn Richard Remarks**  
**Fred Talks – Arts + Kids: Growing Up Great**  
**Tuesday, March 10, 2015**

Good evening. Welcome to our first Fred Talk of 2015. We're happy to be here at the Rainey Institute, an organization we at the Cleveland Foundation have been proud to support. What a perfect place to gather tonight, as we explore the many ways in which the arts change lives.

Tonight's talk, "Arts plus Kids: Growing Up Great" is the latest in a series we kicked off last year to honor our Centennial and our founder Frederick H. Goff, an innovative leader and champion for the people of Cleveland.

Much like TED talks, our Fred Talks are meant to be "idea incubators." We challenge ourselves and this community to think, share, listen, and like Fred, to become champions for change.

As we begin our second century of service to Cleveland, we at the Cleveland Foundation want Fred Talks to be a forum to develop and discuss ideas that will impact our community and our lives. Your participation here tonight will truly drive your community foundation forward.

This evening we embark on a critically important topic, which the Cleveland Foundation is putting a lot of thought into: mastery-based arts programs and their potential to positively transform the lives of Cleveland's young people.

'If I may paraphrase the writer, Tobias Wolff, "the act of [making art] assumes that someone cares to hear what you have to say. It assumes that people share, that people can be reached, that people can be touched and even in some cases changed."

Wolff also said that "the final symptom of despair is silence." To us at the Cleveland Foundation, arts education can shatter that silence by helping a young person find their voice. That voice can echo across cultures, classes and generations. It reminds us of the simple truth that we are all connected, that what moves me to tears might move you to tears also, or that which brings me joy might bring you joy.

The Cleveland Foundation has a long history of supporting this simple truth that can only be expressed through the arts. You'll see behind me a timeline of the foundation's support ranging from early investment in Cleveland's cultural sector, revitalizing Playhouse Square's theaters, and making the case for public support so all our arts organizations—large and small—can thrive.

Although we have a strong history of generating and preserving the city's arts for all residents, we know that Greater Cleveland is not yet an even playing field.

The foundation has worked for decades to make sure that every Clevelander – especially our least-advantaged young people – gets the opportunities and experiences they need to thrive. After all, it is their voices we need to hear the most.

We believe arts education programs, particularly those that provide in-depth engagement, create those experiences and nurture those voices.

And that's what we want your help exploring. We want to figure out how to give our least-advantaged young people an extended opportunity to practice and master an art form under close mentorship.

We are convinced that access to more high quality, immersive arts experiences, like those you find here at Rainey Institute, will better prepare our kids to grow up great, with the qualities they need for adulthood—curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, and compassion.

I personally believe in this very much. Growing up in DC, I didn't have much exposure to the arts in school, but I spent countless hours on the National Mall, escaping summer heat at the free Smithsonian museums. It is there that I developed a lifelong appreciation for the arts. And, of course, marrying an artist took my appreciation of the arts to a whole new level.

So, if you are a parent: we hope you leave here with good questions to ask about arts education opportunities for your child, in your neighborhood.

If you work in human services, we hope you leave with new ideas about the programs you may offer.

If you are a community member—at a church or a local community development organization—we hope you leave inspired to do what it takes to support these kinds of programs.

If you are a person of means, we hope you will leave here wanting to work with us as a vehicle for your philanthropy in this area.

And for all of us—let’s continue to define quality arts education in Cleveland, and let’s make sure that we have access to such programs in every neighborhood in our city.

We will start with our Fred Talk by Eric Booth, a national expert on arts education, followed by a panelist discussion and audience Q&A. Then we’ll move into our Fred Talks by splitting into small groups for roundtable brainstorming.

The Cleveland Foundation will take meaningful action based on what we hear and learn tonight. We are here to listen to all of you—and so you have an opportunity to inform the Cleveland Foundation’s agenda in our second century.

Thank you again for being here, and especially to PNC and their Grow Up Great program, the proud supporter of our Fred Talks. We also thank the City Club of Cleveland and Freshwater Cleveland. Now, please join me in welcoming Eric Booth.