

# TEDxYouth@TampaBay Showcases Young People with a Passion

**By: Deborah Bostock-Kelley**

When activist and founder of Seraph Foundation, Cesar Hernandez, an articulate, handsome young man dressed in a grey three-piece suit initiated the challenge – “if you love it, do it,” the once-silent, riveted audience erupted into thunderous applause.

The venue was St. Petersburg College Seminole campus and the scene repeated itself as dynamic young speakers and musicians took to the stage to share their passions during its six-hour event. The challenge was to give the talk of their lives that provoked thought, conversation and action.

This was the second ever

TedxYouth@TampaBay created by Teri Willingham whose mission gave youth a venue for sharing voice and vision.

Teri founded the event after being inspired in 2009 by another independent Tedx event hosted by TedxYouth@TampaBay team member, Gina Clifford.

“I’ve always been a big TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) fan,” Teri explained to Positive Impact Magazine. “Sitting in a room with like-minded people who enjoy listening to fascinating ideas, I wondered what it would be like to do this event with young people. Right around the same time, TED came out with a TEDx

Youth program. We hosted the first one last year and it was only one of two in the southeast.”

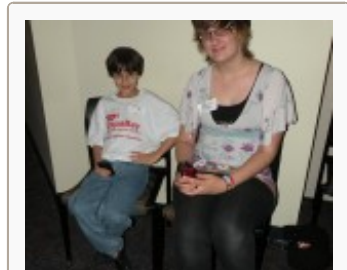
This year, Teri’s event is one of nearly a dozen individually-organized Tedx events across Florida.

Adhering to the strict template created by parent non-profit TED, an organization that brings together the world’s most fascinating thinkers and doers, Teri reached out to her team of Clifford, Ann Adair, Jon Adair, Deb Kelley, Ghelder Ariaga, and Olga Bof to come up with a theme for the 2011 showcase.

On November 19, TEDxYouth@TampaBay brought together nine inspirational young speakers and performers under the theme “Love It? Do It!” for a free six-hour event.



Left to Right: speaker SPC student Teddy, speaker Megan Winkelman, speaker Matthew Temmer, speaker Cesar Hernandez, speaker Jacob Rice, speaker Lyndsey Collins, speaker Blake O’Connor, emcee Kellie Lightbourn, speaker Devante Robinson, TedxYouth@TampaBay partner Deb Kelley; Front: musician Rachel Hatcherian, musician Elizabeth Baker, TedxYouthTampaBay founder Teri Willingham



Willingham and her team reached out to the community to gather these likeminded, innovative and creative individuals who parlayed their love of life, art, music, literature, and community service into their life's purpose and work. The only requirement was to love what they do, and in the process, leave the world a better place.



Reporters Will Clifford and Meghan Kelley share their insights on Facebook and Twitter.

“What do I love and do? I love doing this– this is a living performance art type of thing. It's like putting on a show for myself. I want to hear this, learn about this,” said Willingham.

*“It is so magnificent to have a forum for these amazing people with these incredible ideas who wouldn't have an audience or venue otherwise.”*

TedxYouth@TampaBay was emceed by Kellie Lightbourn, multi-talented television celebrity and philanthropist: ABC Action News “Consumer Update” and Lifetime TV “Designing Spaces” host, 2011 Mrs. North America and Mrs. Galaxy International 2012, and founder of Teen Edge, a non-profit that provides life-defining success strategies for youth.



Teri Willingham introduces emcee Kellie Lightbourn.

““What was really fascinating for me was to see the different perspectives, to hear the different passions. I came here thinking I had a job to do, and really the job was really done to me.

Though we all serve our purpose in the world, there's room to grow for everybody and that's what's really cool about this event. Everybody's different, but we're all the same.”

Will Clifford, 9, and 17-year-old Meghan Kelley served as youth reporters, sharing Tweets, posts, and photos on Facebook of their experiences at the event.

Speakers included Hernandez, Chief Operating Officer for Trendsetter Clothing Company, a student-created clothing line promoting global relief with social commentary tee shirts to fund the Seraph Foundation. Hernandez spoke of “The Power of Selfless Being” and of “love, compassion and hope.”

“We have a mentality that's it's all about us. By shifting global consciousness from selfish to selfless, you can achieve everything you want and even more so.” Hernandez said.

*“If you want to change the world, congratulations – you are already doing it.”*

Fifteen-year-old Jacob Rice, Shoegiver of Tampa discussed how at 10 he was inspired to form an organization that provided shoes for the children in need.



Jose Almanaz and Jason Roman display socially-conscious tee shirts and support of friend and TedxYouthTampaBay speaker Cesar Hernandez.

“People often overlook how important a good pair of sturdy shoes is. Every child deserves a new pair of shoes,” said Jacob. His message was a simple one: “It takes so little to make such a big difference in the community and in life.”

Matthew Temmer, 14, a freshman at Land O' Lakes High School told how he found his voice in art and shared his idea with Hillel School of Tampa classmates to shine light upon serious environmental, social and political issues. A portion of his student art film created for the Art Not Hate project (displayed at Florida

Holocaust Museum in March) was showcased.

“Tedx is a great opportunity to share ideas and be heard,” said Temmer.

Devante Robinson, a freshman at HCC studying to be a doctor, discussed his passion for giving back and his three steps: know ourselves – accept others; be proactive versus reactive, and work to motivate one another.

Devante said to the audience, “You are drop-dead amazing in your own way. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.”

Other speakers included four pre-recorded TED Talks, a video from St. Petersburg College, and a video from the students and teachers at Lee Academy for Gifted Education. On stage, Megan Winkelman asked “what type of world do you want to live in?”, while Lyndsey Collins’ looked at gender bias, and Blake O’ Connor discussed founding “I Feel The Need to Read” for underprivileged second-graders.

Music was provided by Rachel Hatcherian, an acoustic guitarist who performed original songs; a music video by Sarasota Royal Theater Boys & Girls Club, “Let’s Get Together” to honor two St. Petersburg police officers killed on duty, and Elizabeth Baker who provided one-of-a-kind electronic compositions to close the event.

*“It’s a fantastic experience and I think everybody who comes feels the same way when they leave, very energized and hopeful,” Willingham said, “I’m really looking forward to next year and it growing even more.”*



Matthew Tremmer talks about how art gave him and other students a voice.



Devante Robinson shares his 3 three steps.



Rachel Hatcherian performs original music on her acoustic guitar.