

# FIRST STEP



Real stories about  
first steps



# HI DEAR READER



**W**elcome to this special book, in which children and famous Dutch people share the moment they decided to *take the first step towards doing what they love*. Because every great journey starts with the first step. In this book, you can read their stories.

You decide which one to read first. Love football? Kick things off with ‘On the field’. Prefer music or theatre? Start with ‘On the stage’. Love drawing, crafting, or graffiti? Then ‘In the studio and on the streets’ is the place to start. Feel free to skip around and read whatever catches your eye.

If you know what makes you happy but aren’t sure how to get started, flip to the last chapter, where we share tips on taking your first step and who to reach out to for help.

Happy reading!

C O N T E N T S

# DEYJAH

Like a jaguar

# SIGNE

Game on wheels

# SORELLA

Dancing across the pitch

# DIEDE

The Rose-Royce of the court

# SHERIDA

Living for the ball

# ROCKY

Hot shot on the block

# NIGEL

Faster than the wind

# CHARLIE

My inner voice

# CARITA

The floating princess

# SÉUN

Dancing letters

# EDSON

The old man with the moustache

# JÖRGEN

The stage cowboy

# LAUREN

Bear-y good art

# JUDITH

Secret superpower

# EDSON

The art of the city

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Take the first step!



## Deyjah's story



# LIKE A JAGUAR

I'm six years old. Okay, five. Mum says I shouldn't fib, but I feel strong. That's because I do Warrior Skillz.

It's more than just a sport. I get to kick, punch, tumble, and roll. I've been doing it since I was three. I wear a white suit with a blue ninja on it. It feels light and comfy but also a little hot.

I'll never forget my first class. We were all sitting in a circle and the trainer said: 'Today we're going to learn about self-defence.' I thought I'd learn how to kick or something, but I didn't. I learned how to protect myself and others. How to keep someone at a distance. How to use fighting to help people, not hurt them. Before we start, the trainer teaches us a mantra. It always ends with: 'Respect.' At the end of class, we say it again. I say it loud and feel like a real warrior.

We practise punching. One fist is up by my cheek and the other one – *bam!* – shoots forward. I feel powerful. I'm a jaguar. Calm and quiet when I want to be. Fierce and fast when I need to be. Sometimes I have trouble with my heart or I have a seizure. But here, on the mat, I forget about all that. Here, I feel everything I *can* do. And that's almost everything.



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Deyjah (5) attends Warrior Skillz, a class that combines self-defence with mental strength. When her mum couldn't afford the fees, the Dutch Youth Fund for Sport and Culture helped make it possible. Heart problems and epilepsy didn't stop Deyjah from earning all of her yellow and red belts. She now has three black belts as well and hopes to earn the other three soon. On the mat, she feels strong and free. She's learning to understand her limits better and move with confidence. Her next goal: learning how to break free when someone pins her down.





## Signe's story



# GAME ON WHEELS

I'm with mum at the International Powerchair Hockey Championships in Switzerland. It's amazing! The teams zoom across the field, blocking, passing, shooting. Everyone is in a wheelchair but no one is sitting still. In the stands, people clap and cheer. I clap and cheer along with them! At the end of the match, I get a stick and a captain's armband. I even get to sit in a powerchair, which feels lighter than air. 'Mum,' I say. 'This is it. This is what I want to do!'

Later that afternoon, I get to try different powerchairs. My own wheelchair only goes six kilometres an hour. These go eighteen. As soon as I push off, I feel it – the speed, the power. My hair blows in the wind and I can't stop laughing. I finally feel like I belong.

I join my very own team. Young and old, men and women, everyone is all mixed together. In a powerchair, we're all fast. We laugh and give each other tips. Sometimes I play against five men in their fifties. I catch myself thinking: 'Help!' But then I make a good shot or pass and I'm so proud of myself. Especially when I block someone and help a teammate score.

My first time at prospect training is nerve-wracking. My friend and I wait around for ages, not knowing if we'll be picked. But then we hear we're both in! We get our official shirts and when I put mine on and look in the mirror, I think: 'Wow.'



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Signe (11) is on the Dutch powerchair hockey team. Her super-fast wheelchair was made possible by Fonds Gehandicaptensport (a Dutch sports foundation for the disabled) and the municipality in which she lives. Signe loves sports, speed, and sparring with friends. Powerchair hockey makes her feel powerful and free. Her dream is to one day break through as a major international player.





## Sorella's story



**M**y little brother stands on the pitch in a muddy shirt, his foot on the ball, staring at me. ‘You bored or something?’ he asks.

I’m on the bench in my ballet outfit – I had class this morning – staring at my ballet slippers. He's right, I am bored.

But then my brother chest-traps the ball, rolls it neatly under his foot, and takes off running. I leap to my feet. The players run, head the ball, slide and pass. The ball races towards the goal at lightning speed. I jump up, cheering, and hear my nan shout: ‘Go! You can do it!’

As I jump up, I feel it. This is what I want to do!

But I don't even have football shoes. I look down at my ballet slippers, disappointed.

On the way home, I’m quiet. Apparently, nan notices, because a few days later she takes me to the shop to buy my very own football shoes.

‘Take your pick,’ she says.

‘Really?’ I can't believe what I’m hearing.

‘Really!’ she says.

My eyes scan the racks. There. Black, mid-top Nikes. I grab pull them down and try them on. They fit perfectly. Not just my feet, but me as a person.

That was the day I traded in my dancing shoes for football shoes. The pitch is my stage now and nan is my biggest fan. And you better believe we can make some noise!



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

When she was 11 years old, Sorella (16) was given a voucher for new football shoes by the Dutch Youth Fund for Sport and Culture. She still plays every week with her club. On the pitch, she battles for every ball, and in the clubhouse, her voice rises above the crowd. Off the pitch, Sorella is learning how to stand up for herself and is making friends more easily. Her nan cheers her on from the sidelines most weekends, relishing every minute of Sorella’s joy on the pitch.





## Diede de Groot's story



## THE ROSE-ROYCE OF THE COURT

**M**y friends zip across the gym, chasing each other. We're at school, playing tag. I have a prosthetic leg. I join in, but they don't really try to tag me; as if they're holding back or something. They mean well, but it makes me feel like an outsider. Like I'm not really part of the game.

That night, I watch wheelchair tennis on TV with my parents. It's just like regular tennis: fast, intense, and no one holds back. They're here to compete. The players race across the court, braking, turning, serving, and smashing. As I watch, I feel my whole body start to buzz. This is what I want to do.

I ask my dad if there's somewhere nearby where I can give it a try. There's a club just down the road. The first lesson is hard. For the first time, surrounded by other kids in wheelchairs. I learn how to steer, how to hit the ball, and how to tip onto my side. It's pretty scary, falling over, but I push myself up and keep going. Here, no one slows down or takes it easy on me.

I start training regularly and after a while I get my own sports wheelchair. It's bright pink with shiny spokes. I feel amazing in it. Dad calls it my 'Rose-Royce'. It's the chair I play my first real match in.

My name booms through the speakers. I wheel myself onto the court, serve, and score! The crowd claps and cheers. Not because I showed up, but because I'm good. That's when it hits me: I'm a tennis player. I'm not here for the show, I'm here to win.



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Diede de Groot (28) is a rising star on the tennis court. Her talent was recognised early on with a private trainer and her own sports wheelchair. She joined the national youth team, trained with top players like Esther Vergeer and Richard Krajicek, and took part in ABN AMRO's Talent of the Future programme. She is now one of the most successful wheelchair tennis players in the world, has won the ABN AMRO Open several times, and wants everyone to see just how spectacular her sport is.





## Sherida Spitse's story



# LIVING FOR THE BALL

**M**ost kids sleep with a plushie. I sleep with a football. There's a row of garages behind our house that make the perfect goals. I can spend hours kicking the ball against the walls, practising my shots and dreaming about making it to the finals.

When I turn five, I finally get to join a real team – VV Sneek. It's an all-boys team and I'm the only girl in the club, but I don't mind. My teammates don't care either and, after a while, neither do the other teams. When they first see me, they think: a girl, easy target. But then I charge at them full force and they quickly changed their minds.

I'm sixteen when my mum rings me with big news: the coach of the national team wants me to play for the Netherlands. I don't say anything. Just swallow hard. What do you say when your dream suddenly comes true?

A few days later, I'm standing on the pitch in my new kit at a packed stadium. I look at my teammates: not boys, not girls, but women. It feels like coming home. Whether I'm playing in the alley behind my house, at my local football club, or in the nationals, it's all the same game. The ball is still my best friend.



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Sherida Spitse (35) is an icon of Dutch women's football, serving as captain for Ajax Women and holding the record for most appearances with the Dutch national team. As the first girl to play for VV Sneek, she impressed everyone with her striking technique and her leadership skills before going on to become European champion in 2017. She is a role model for kids of all ages who dream of a future in football.







## Rocky's Hehakaija story

# HOT SHOT ON THE BLOCK

I'm seven years old and I live in the Monnetflat in Amsterdam. It's ten stories high and hundreds of people live here. There are stairs, doors, lifts, and concrete everywhere. But downstairs, in the little courtyard, is where it all happens. That's where all the boys play football. They call it 'the square'. Everyone knows everyone here. Bilal from the second floor. Mustafa from the fourth. The Tualena brothers from six.

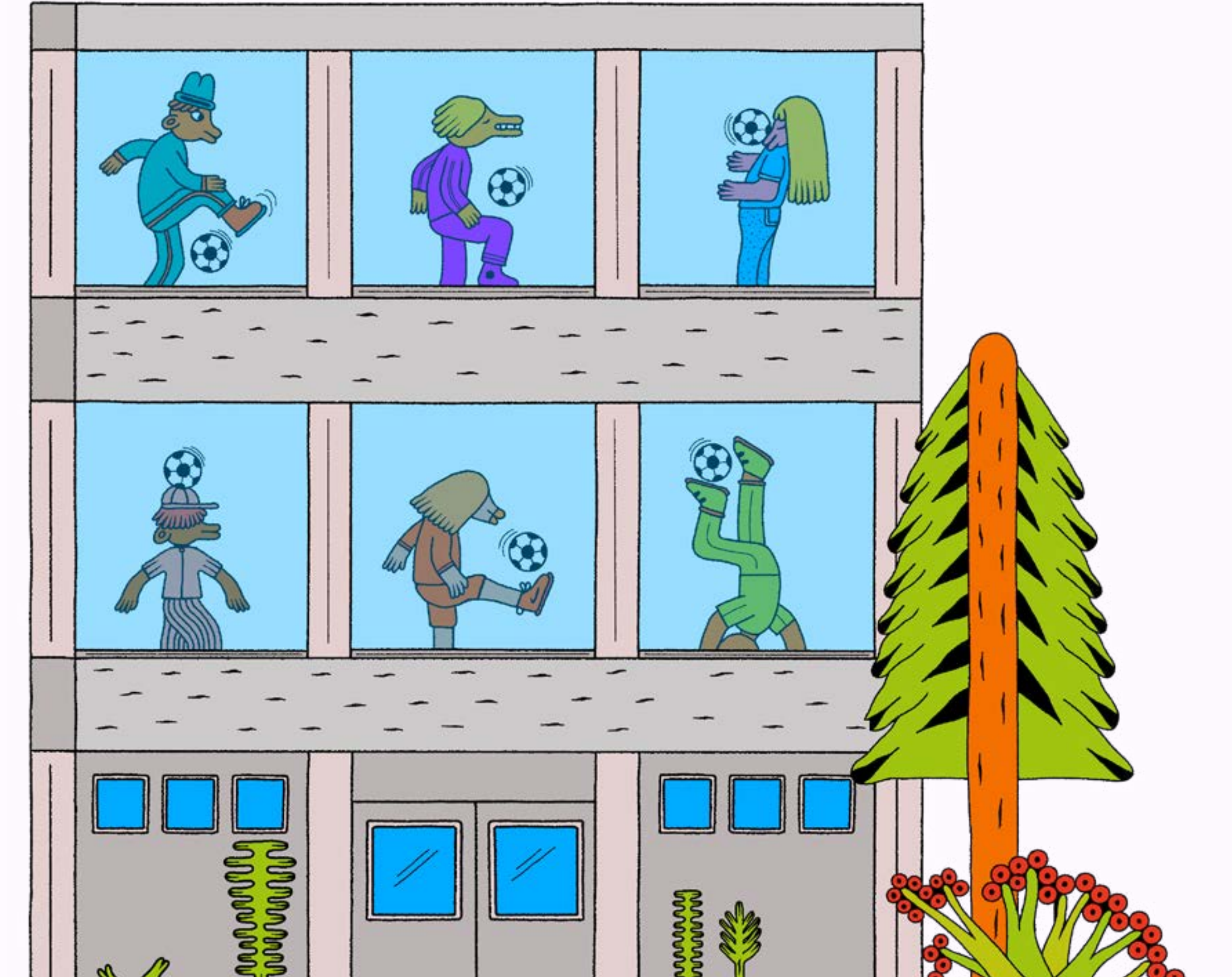
I'm the only new one – and the only girl. I stand on the sidelines, watching, waiting. Maybe the ball will roll my way and I can show off one of my tricks or maybe pass it back. But it doesn't, so I come up with a new plan: I'll buy my own ball and show them what I've got. But where do I get the money? There are some old shopping trolleys downstairs that I can return for cash. I quickly get to work, earning a euro per trolley. As soon as I have enough money, I buy a ball. It's red and black with flames on it. And it bounces beautifully.

One day, the boys show up at my door. 'Hey Rocky, you've got a new ball, right?'

I nod. We head down to the square. I join in. For the first time. My heart is racing, but I pull off a trick. Then another. Then a meg. And then I score.

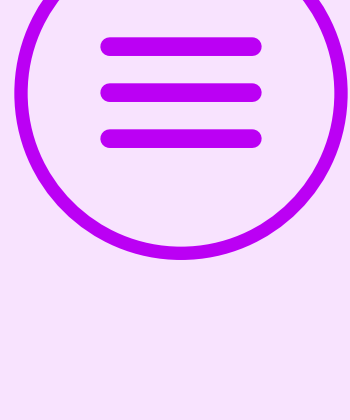
Everyone sees it. Someone shouts: 'Hey Rocky, same place tomorrow!'

I smile from head to toe.



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Rocky Hehakaija (41) used to play for the Dutch national youth team before an ACL tear took her out of the professional game. She founded Favela Street: a project that helps children build strength and confidence through football while giving girls and boys equal opportunities to succeed. She has her own FIFA character and has travelled the world with Edgar Davids. Her dream? That children feel a sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods, just like she did.





## Nigel's story



# FASTER THAN THE WIND

I have two older brothers and a sister. I may have been born last, but I come first in everything else.

At our house, everything is a competition. Who can reach the bikes first? Who can reach the door first? Who can finish dessert first?

I'm fast. Really fast. Faster than all of my classmates, friends, and family. I run every chance I get. I try basketball, but it's too slow. By the time my teammates reach the basket, I'm already on the other side of the court. 'This isn't the sport for you,' the coach says. 'You need to run.' I try track and field: javelin, long jump, shot put, sprints. That's when I feel it. I want to run!

When I'm seven, I compete in my first race. Mum is at the starting line, cheering me on: 'Go Nigel!' Before she can finish her sentence, I'm off. First place. I never stop running. I run races. I run for charity. When I run, I don't feel my body. No pain, no hunger, no stress. Just the wind.

My trainer says I'm just one big muscle. A muscle on legs. I'm not sure what that means, but I like the sound of it. I want to move. Faster. Further. All the way to the Olympics. And when I make it, I'll come first there, too.



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Nigel (14) is a Dutch track champion and attends a special secondary school that focuses on academics and elite sports. With support from the Dutch Youth Fund for Sport and Culture, Nigel was able to buy his first pair of running shoes and pay for his club fees. At the age of nine, he appeared in a commercial alongside his hero, Olympic gold medallist Usain Bolt. His dream? To compete in the 2032 Olympics and break Usain's world record.





## Charlie's story



# MY INNER VOICE

I'm six years old and I want to do it all: horse riding, dancing, drawing, hockey. Mum says: 'Just pick something.' So I start singing. Not because I'm any good at it or because it's my passion, but because it's new and fun.

We practise singing the alphabet song with twenty kids. Everyone gets one line. Mine starts at P. Once we've got it down, we get to perform it. I'm standing in a room full of parents. When I sing my line, something happens. The teacher looks up. The kids fall silent. Even the head of the music school turns to look. After the show, the teacher says: 'Wow, you can really sing.'

I feel myself glowing. And then something happens inside me. Like a voice deep within shouting: sing, sing, sing!

I haven't stopped singing since. I sing in the car, in the shower, on the bike. It's like a voice is calling out to me, saying: follow me. I know the way. And I listen. The more I sing, the happier I feel. The better I get, the more I enjoy it. I sing other people's songs, but also my own. I write lyrics in a notebook and make up melodies in bed.

Singing comes from outside of me and from within. It flows from my heart, my stomach, my toes. Sometimes, people say: 'Only eight years old and already so passionate?' And I nod and sing softly: 'Absolutely, it's my inner voice shining through.'



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Charlie (13) takes singing lessons at Babette Labeij Music Academy and participated in the H'ART Museum's education programme. She auditioned for the Junior Song Festival and performs with the National Youth Musical Theatre. Her dream? To act and sing like her idol, Ariana Grande, and to perform her own songs on the big stage.





## Carita's story



# THE FLOATING PRINCESS

It's my first time at the National Ballet. My uncle, who is a ballet dancer, is sitting next to me. We're all the way in the back, but I can see everything. The dancers float across the stage. I squeeze my uncle's hand. I'm only five years old, but I know in my heart this is what I want to do.

Since that day, all I talk about is dancing. At school, in the car, during dinner. I dream of going to the National Ballet School one day. But first, you have to audition. My uncle helps me. 'Breathe, Carita,' he says. 'Ballet is hard, but if you breathe through your movements, it gets lighter.'

I'm seven when I go to my first audition. I look around. So many girls. So much tension. I feel my throat start to tighten.

Then I hear my uncle's voice: 'Breathe, Carita. Just keep breathing.'

After the audition, my toes feel like lead – I worked them to the bone. But I got it. And I haven't stopped dancing since. Some days I'm tired. Some days I feel like I'm going mad. But I never give up.

Then comes my first big theatre show. Queen Máxima is sitting in the front row. My hands shake. What if I miss a step?

'Carita, breathe,' I tell myself.

I step onto the stage. I feel the lights on my face. Here I go. I float.

When the applause comes, I look out at the audience. Queen Máxima wipes a tear from her eye. She may be the queen, I think, but tonight, I'm the princess.



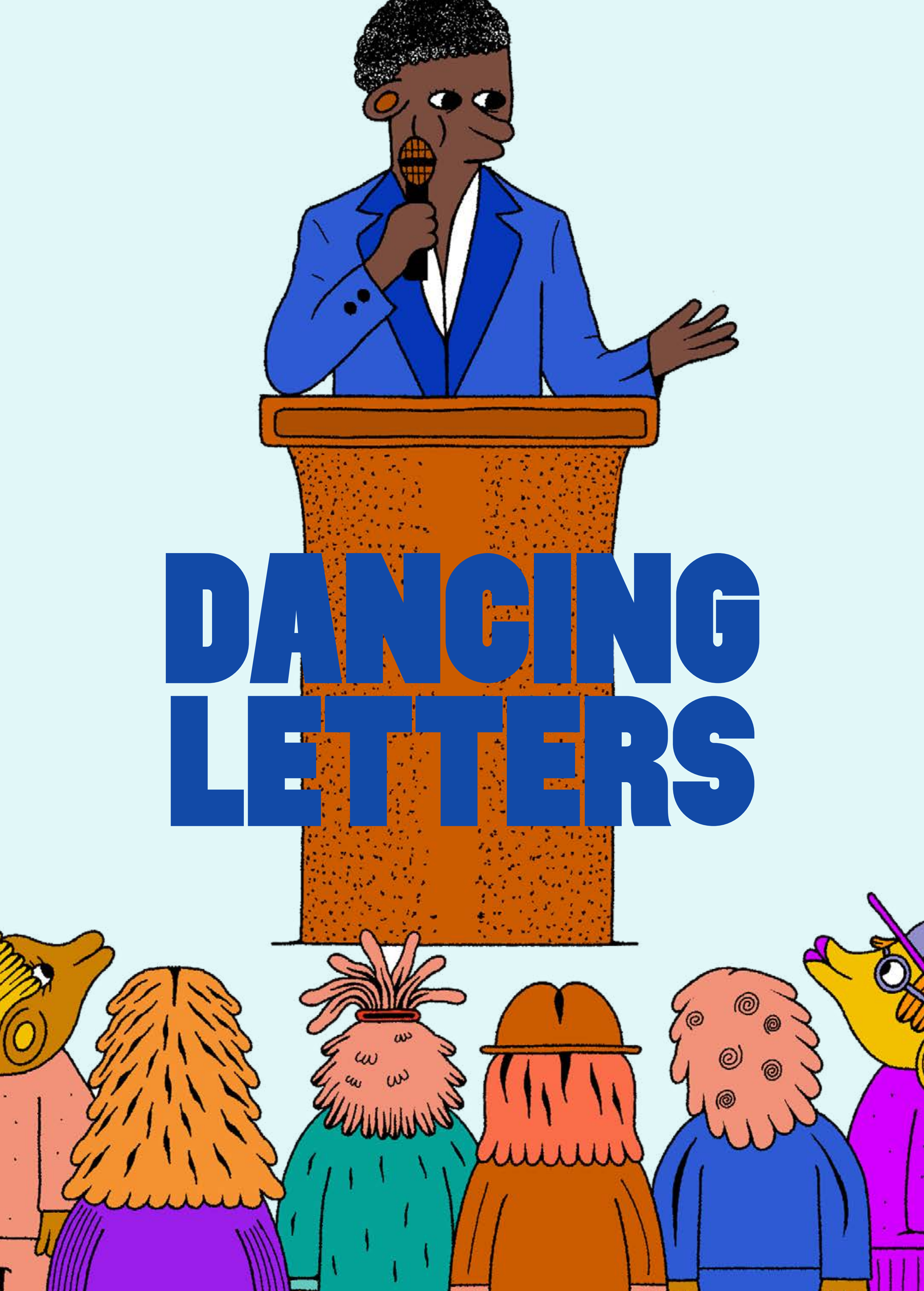
## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Carita (14) is still dancing – these days at Clock5. She never gave up, not even after leaving the National Ballet School. She has since found new stages on which to shine and now teaches ballet to younger children. With support from the Dutch Youth Fund for Sport and Culture, she's been able to keep doing what she loves most. Last Christmas, she performed on national TV during Het Kerst Muziekgala with Paul de Leeuw. Queen Máxima was the guest of honour.





## Séun Steenken's story



**‘W**ho wants to go first?’ the teacher asks as she sits down at the piano. The entire class is gathered around, but no one raises a hand. Except me. But I don’t start singing – oh no. I start rapping. The class burst out laughing.

Entertaining people is kind of my thing. Dictation, on the other hand, definitely isn’t. I forget capitals, misspell words, and miss commas and full stops. With all my failing marks, I’m starting to think I’m rubbish at language.

‘Well, well,’ says my teacher when I finish. ‘It looks like we found the star of our end-of-year show.’

At first, I think she’s joking, but she’s not. So I get to work. I write lyrics on big sheets of paper and practise in front of the mirror. I film myself and send it to my friends. ‘Nice, bro!’ they say. I’m still clueless when it comes to spelling and grammar; the letters seem to dance across the page. The school calls it dyslexia. I call it creativity.

When the day of the big show finally arrives, I’m terrified. This is the real deal. But I push through. When it’s my turn, I grab the mic, look out at the audience, and tell my story. People listen. They laugh. They nod. My teacher nods as well and looks proud. I don’t feel like the class clown anymore, but like someone who can move people with my words. Someone with a story to tell. Someone with a knack for language.



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Séun Steenken (23) is a spoken-word artist and rapper who travels the country performing and sharing his thoughts on inequality, racism, and money struggles. Language isn’t about spelling or grammar – it’s about finding your own voice. His next dream is to create his own show, drawing an audience that comes just for him. Another passion is judo, a sport he was able to continue at a high level, despite his parents struggling to pay the fees, thanks to the Dutch Youth Fund for Sport and Culture. Judo helped shape the person and the artist he is today.





## Edson Da Graça's story



# THE OLD MAN WITH THE MOUSTACHE

I'm seven years old when we do the Christmas musical at school. Everyone wants a lead role: the prince, the king, the hero. At the very bottom of the list is a tiny supporting role: old man with a moustache. That's the one I want. I can picture it: a huge, fake moustache, a deep voice, feet on the table, stomping my boots and making everyone laugh.

At home, I borrow a pair of old sunglasses from my dad, some way-too-big boots, and cut a moustache out of a piece of felt. Then I stand in front of the mirror and practise. During rehearsals at school, everything I hoped for happens: every time I stomp my feet or say something in my deep voice, the class cracks up.

Making people laugh makes me happy. It's what I'm good at. I do it at school, on the street, and at family parties in Cape Verde. That's the first time I see children so poor they live on the streets. I don't know what to say or think. That could have been me. I want to do something, but I'm too young. I take a deep breath and decide then and there: when I grow up, I'm going to make a difference.

At home, I practise even sillier voices, even funnier words and dances. I get better. Not because I want attention, but because I know what a laugh can do. Having fun doesn't cost a thing. Edson da Graça: bringer of joy. Life can be messy and hard and unfair at times. But laughter makes it lighter.



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Edson da Graça (43) is a comedian, presenter, actor, and advocate for children growing up in poverty. He used to teach at a vocational school, but after overcoming poverty in early adulthood, he followed his heart and chose to pursue a life on the stage, supported by his wife. He now performs in theatres around the country and is known for shows like Willem Wever, Heel Holland Bakt Kids, and more. Edson wants every child to know they matter.





# Jörgen Raymann's story



## THE STAGE COWBOY

I'm four years old. There's a fashion show in my neighbourhood. 'Want to be in it?' mum asks. 'Yes,' I say. I don't even care that I'm the only boy. Together we pick out clothes. I love Lucky Luke, so I go as a cowboy: hat, checked shirt, and jeans with swinging fringe. Mum sews a black vest for me, just like Lucky Luke's.

Standing in front of the mirror, my chest swells with pride. I don't just look like him, I *feel* like him. Excited, I come up with some special moves. 'Look, mum!' She laughs as I take a deep bow.

The show is in the cafeteria of our local swimming club, but it feels like a real runway. I step onto the stage and toss my hat in the air like a movie cowboy, then catch it and everyone laughs. I take a bow. Everyone claps. I run off the stage, then come back. Another bow, more cheering. I look at the audience. A warm glow fills my body.

From that moment on, I perform on every stage I can find. At talent shows. At school. I come up with funny sketches, little plays, silly bits. All in the name of entertainment. When I get nervous, I hear mum's voice in my head: 'If it feels scary, it must be important.' I'm never afraid things will go wrong. I'd rather do it scared than not do it at all.



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Jörgen Raymann (59) is a comedian and presenter, known for his roles in TV shows and as a voice actor in animated films like *Kung Fu Panda* and *Cars*. He grew up in a family where money was tight – but this taught him to get creative. His mother still makes his costumes, including for his most famous character, Tante Es. As an ambassador for UNICEF and the Dutch Youth Fund for Sport and Culture, he knows how important it is to give all children the opportunity to discover their talents. Jörgen hopes to become a grandfather one day, so he can introduce his grandchildren to the theatre and share his love of the stage.





## Lauren's story



# BEAR-Y GOOD ART

I'm at the H'ART Museum with my class to see an exhibition about Julius Caesar. He was a Roman emperor. As I walk around the exhibition, I see statues with wreaths, gold coins with his face on them, and masks with horns. Everything shimmers and shines. Everything looks so serious.

Julius' statue stares down at me, as if urging me to keep quiet. But I mostly notice shapes, colours, and funny little details. And my hands itch to make something. Later, in the kids' studio, I grab a sheet of paper, some glue, feathers, and a strip of fabric. I make a mask with gold cheeks that sparkle when you move the page. It has leaves, hair, freckles, and slightly crooked lips.

A few weeks later, mum reads me an e-mail: 'You've been selected,' she says, 'for a special programme at the museum.' I feel something flutter inside me. Butterflies. Nervous and excited all at once.

At the museum, we sculpt with paper and plastic. I picture a bear sitting quietly on a tree stump. Suddenly, the tree stump turns into a skateboard and the bear zooms off into the distance. I decide to make the image I see in my mind.

After class, I'm not allowed to take my bear home. It has to stay in the museum because they think it's beautiful and they want other people to see it. So there he is, among the other works of art. Sometimes I think he's waiting for me – my bear on a skateboard – to come back and visit him.



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Lauren (11) is part of the education programme at the H'ART Museum. She loves drawing, crafting, and making things that exist only in her imagination. She dreams of becoming an explorer one day, travelling to different countries and creating art from everything she finds.





# Judith de Leeuw's story



## SECRET SUPER POWER

I'm four years old. It's raining so we're not allowed to play outside. 'Why don't we draw?' says the teacher. So we do. I like pencils more than rain anyway.

There's a stack of paper on the table. I grab a sheet and a pencil. My hair falls over my face like a little curtain. I like it that way. I get to hide behind it. Poof, gone. It comes in handy, because the world can be too loud sometimes. Teachers talking, kids fiddling, chairs creaking, lunchboxes clattering.

But not now. Behind my curtain, there's only my paper and my pencil. I draw a line. And another one. Then I'm gone. Well, not exactly, because my hand is still drawing.

But my head is empty and quiet. Something starts to happen on the paper. I see a line, a shape – a dragon, maybe. Or an ice cream cone with legs. That's a good idea. It's coming from me.

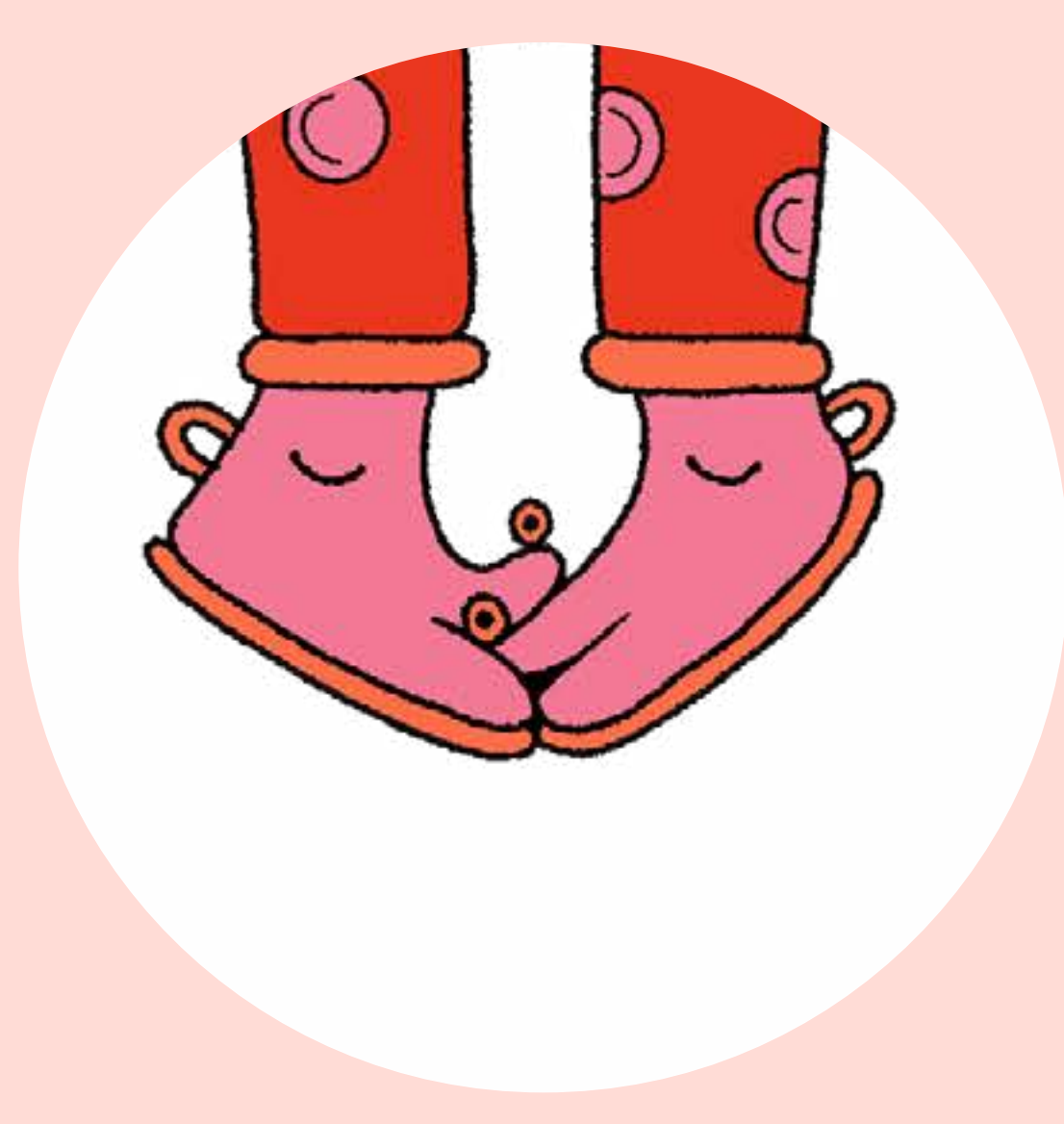
'What do you want to be when you grow up?' my teacher suddenly asks.

I don't stop to think. 'An artist!' I blurt.

The teacher laughs a little. The kids giggle.

But I mean it.

Drawing is my secret superpower. When I'm happy, I draw. When I'm angry, I draw. When I feel like crying, I draw. Drawing is like talking without words. When the world feels hard, I close my little curtains and draw my feelings. Then I open them up again and show the world.



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Judith de Leeuw (30) is famous visual artist who works with STRAAT Museum in Amsterdam. She started with a pencil and now uses spray paint to create works of art as big as houses and apartment blocks. People used to say: 'You'll never make a living as an artist.' But Judith didn't listen. She kept going and now dreams of making art on the moon.





## Edson Sabajo's story



# THE ART OF THE CITY

I'm twelve years old. Every morning I take the tram from the west side of Amsterdam to the east. My school is on the other side of the city. I travel alone. It's a long ride, but I sit by the window, so it doesn't bother me.

Outside, there's a whole world unfolding. Graffiti is everywhere: on electricity boxes, on bridges, on walls. Words. Stripes. Images. Letters. Some neat, some wild, all filled with colour and courage. They explode around the city like fireworks. I'm mesmerised. This making of something out of nothing. I want to do it too.

I start by drawing letters at school. I fill my notebook, my arm, the edge of my table. First in pen, then in paint. I experiment with shapes, colours, and shadows, inspired by what I see outside. Not to show off, but to leave a piece of me behind. Edson was here.

At home, I don't need much – just a can of spray paint and some markers. And music. Hip hop, rap, something with a beat. I create something from nothing. Do it my way. It suits me. What I make is who I am. I grab my stuff and head outside. The city is one big canvas. I'm the artist and I'm painting my own future.



## HOW IT'S GOING NOW

Edson Sabajo (53) co-founded the famous Amsterdam streetwear and sneaker brand Patta with one of his best friends. The bold lettering was inspired by the styles he practised as a kid. He's also a well-known DJ and sneaker enthusiast. Through the Patta Foundation, he's opening doors for kids who wouldn't get the chance to shine otherwise.





# I'M READY TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP! DUTCH

**All of the stories you read in this book are true and nearly all of the storytellers had a helping hand when they set out to do what they love. What about you? Have you figured out what makes you happy? If so, you can take the first step to turning your dream into reality.**

## **The first step is the biggest**

We know getting started can be hard. Some things that can stand in the way:

- ➔ Your parents can't afford the lessons or the gear;
- ➔ Your sport or activity is too far away and travelling there is too expensive;
- ➔ Your favourite sport requires a parent to pitch in (help run the clubhouse or drive kids to matches) and they don't have the time or a car;
- ➔ Your parents don't speak Dutch and you can't explain it all to them;
- ➔ You have a disability that makes it hard to join a sport or an activity;
- ➔ Your favourite sport, theatre, music, or art activity doesn't fit with your culture or there's another reason you feel like you don't belong.

These are difficult situations that you can't fix on your own. The good news is: you don't have to! There are plenty of people that would be happy to help you. People who believe that all children, including you, deserve to do things that make them happy. So don't be afraid to ask for help.

## **Who can help you take the first step**

Find an adult you trust: a parent, a carer, a grandparent, an aunt or uncle, an older brother or sister, a teacher, a youth worker, or a coach. Someone who can help you figure out where to start and connect you with the right people.



# DUTCH YOUTH FUND FOR SPORT AND CULTURE

## Your first step towards sport and culture

This fund makes it possible for all children to enjoy sports, music, dance, and theatre, even if they don't have the money. They pay for your club fees and can also arrange things like shoes and musical instruments. You can also sign up for try-outs with other kids from your neighbourhood to figure out what you like.

Interested? Your parents or a trusted adult can sign you up at [kieseenclub.nl](https://kieseenclub.nl).





# ESTHER VERGEER FOUNDATION

**Do you want to join a sport with other kids?**

The Esther Vergeer Foundation helps children who need extra support due to a chronic illness or physical disability. You can make friends, discover your talents, and feel more confident. There are more than 50 sports to choose from, including (wheelchair) tennis, swimming, basketball, and athletics. They also have fun activities like sports camps and sports festivals.

Interested? For more information and to sign up, send an e-mail to [fo@esthervergeerfoundation.nl](mailto:fo@esthervergeerfoundation.nl).

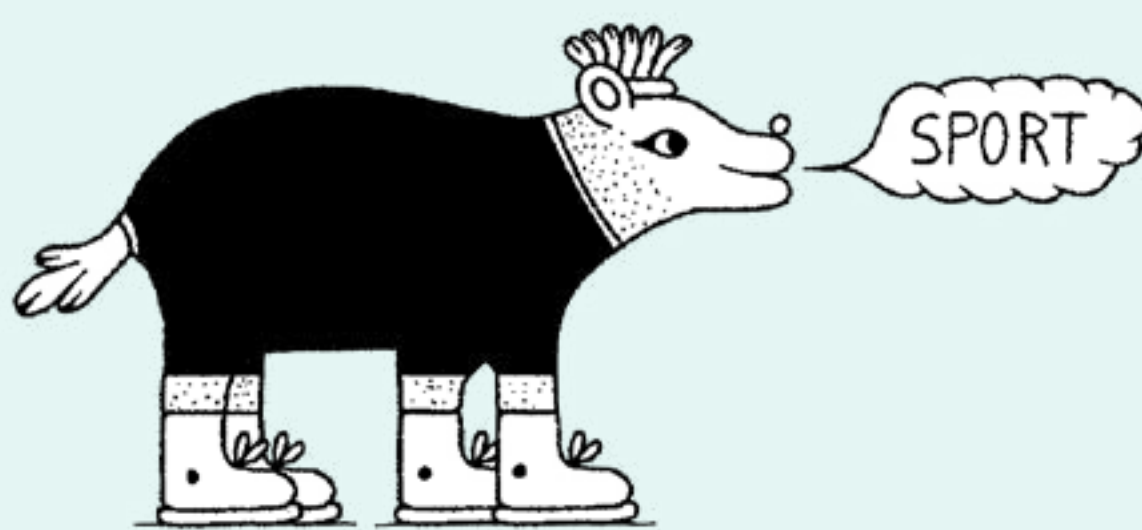


# FONDS GEHANDICAPTENSPOORT

## The first step for athletes with an illness or disability

At Fonds Gehandicaptensport, everyone can join a sport, even those with an illness or a disability. They organise fun activities like (S)Cool on Wheels, where someone comes to your class to explain what it's like to play sports with a disability. You can try out a wheelchair, play together, and find out how fun sports can be. They can also help with practical things, like special sports gear, and help you find the right club.

Want to learn more about it? Ask your school to request a clinic at [fondsgehandicaptensport.nl](https://fondsgehandicaptensport.nl).







## Your first step towards playing football and making new friends

The Ajax Foundation wants to inspire young people in Amsterdam to discover and develop their talents. During their projects, you'll learn the importance of teamwork based on Ajax's core values and why Ajax is so successful. You'll also discover their 'recipe to win' and how you can apply it in your own life. The Ajax Foundation helps you set clear goals and understand what you need to achieve them.

Interested? Ask your school if you can take part in an Ajax Foundation project.

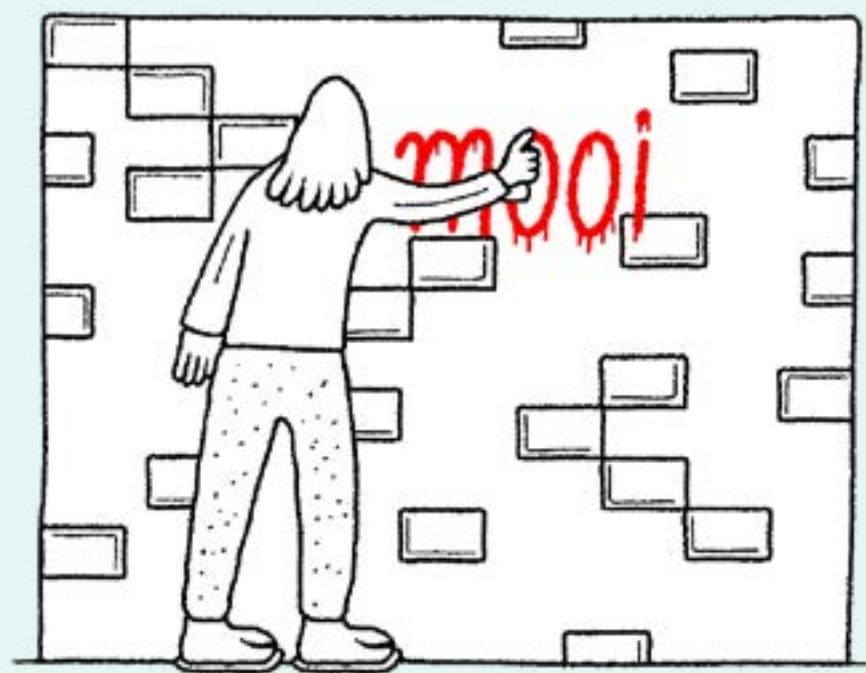


# STRAAT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

## Your first step towards becoming a creative maker

This programme could give you your first big break as an artist and maker. The STRAAT Museum is all about street art. Discover the stories behind the artworks and get creative yourself. Together with your classmates, you'll learn how art can both inspire and activate.

Interested? Your school can contact the education team to request a tour of the STRAAT Museum.





# **H'ART MUSEUM EDUCATION IN AMSTERDAM**

## **Your first step towards becoming an artist**

Join your class at the H'ART Museum in Amsterdam. Explore the exhibition, then head to the Studio to create your own work of art. Some kids are selected to participate in Talent@H'ART Museum, a programme designed to help you develop your creativity even further. Everyone can join and discover what art means to them.

If you're interested and you go to school in the Amsterdam area, ask your teacher to sign your class up with H'ART Museum Education.



# STEDELIIJK MUSEUM AMSTERDAM

## Your first step towards discovering modern art

At the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, not all art has to be ‘pretty’ or complex. In fact, anything can be considered art! Every Sunday morning, you and your family can join a free WhatsApp treasure hunt. The museum also offers several free workshops during the school holidays. When it comes to crafting, the museum takes a rather unique approach!

Bonus: free entrance for kids aged 18 and under.





# CITY PASS AND MUNICIPAL ASSISTANCE

## Help is closer than you think

Many cities in the Netherlands have a special city pass that gives low-income families access to free or discounted activities. Ask an adult to help you request a pass. Lots of municipalities also have other ways to make sport and cultural activities available to everyone – for example, by helping to pay for sports wheelchairs or travel costs. There are also community centres that you can turn to for help. Be sure to bring an adult along with you!





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24



# COLOPHON

## FIRST STEP

*Real stories about first steps*

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# ABN AMRO



*First step* is a free book by ABN AMRO filled with real stories from children and famous Dutch people about taking the first step towards doing what makes you happy. Deyjah, Signe, Sorella, Nigel, Charlie, Carita, Lauren en Diede de Groot, Sherida Spitse, Rocky Hehakaija, Séun Steenken, Jörgen Raymann, Judith de Leeuw, Edson Sabajo, and Edson da Graça share their experiences to help inspire you with new ideas. This may help you take the first step towards doing what you love – whether it's sports, art, or another activity that makes you happy and gives you butterflies.



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to you by ABN AMRO