

# YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

**Suicide Prevention, Mental Health, and  
Substance Use Education  
Through Art & Storytelling**



YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

## Nonprofit's film contest highlights youth perspectives on mental health, suicide prevention

By [Phillip Palmer](#)  
Friday, June 7, 2024



The nonprofit Youth Creating Change's film contest raises awareness of mental health and suicide prevention through the lens of the young generation.

LOS ANGELES (KABC) -- The prevalence of mental health issues in young people is hard to measure, but research has shown nearly half of high schoolers feel persistently sad or hopeless.

[Youth Creating Change](#) believes young people sharing stories about mental health is a way to offer encouragement and connection. The group's signature program, the [Directing Change Film contest](#), recently honored student-created films expressing the filmmakers'



[Read the article from ABC7](#)

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# YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

Youth Creating Change is a non-profit organization (501(c3)) dedicated to placing young people's voices and creativity at the center of suicide prevention, mental health, and substance use prevention programming.

## Core Initiatives:

- **Suicide Prevention, Mental Health & Substance Use Curriculum delivered through film and art contests**
- Mental Health Thrival Kits
- Awareness & Education
- Youth Development
- District, School & CBO Trainings
- Support After Youth Suicide Death
- Parent Engagement

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**Directing Change**  
Program & Film Contest





# LEARNING OBJECTIVES EMBEDDED INTO SUBMISSION CATEGORIES

(30-second and 60-second PSAs accepted; Deadline March 1, 2026)



**Suicide  
Prevention**



**Mental  
Health**



**Through the  
Lens of Culture**



**Walk in Our  
Shoes**



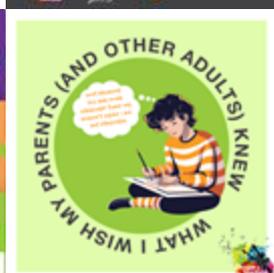
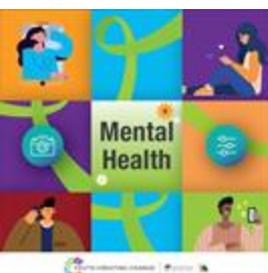
**Substance  
Use**

## Learning Objectives for Films:

- ✓ Learn the warning signs for suicide
- ✓ Don't keep it a secret if a friend is thinking about suicide
  - ✓ Talk to a trusted adult
- ✓ Ask a friend directly if they are thinking about suicide
  - ✓ Understand mental health
  - ✓ Learn facts about substance use
- ✓ Be aware of resources to help a friend or yourself
  - ✓ Explore critical health and social justice topics
  - ✓ Identify healthy coping techniques



Learning Objectives



# HOPE & JUSTICE FILM & ART CONTEST

The Hope & Justice Art and Film Contest centers topics youth are grappling with in their day to day lives – mental health, racism, economic uncertainty, climate change, health disparities – with prompts that ask them to process their feelings and build healthy coping skills through creative expression.

- Open to young people 12-25 in California
- Offered throughout the school year
- All art forms accepted (including visual art, poetry, narrative works, short films/PSAs, original music, dance, TikToks, and more!)
- Win up to \$300 in Amazon gift cards



## ART FROM LOS ANGELES COUNTY YOUTH



### “MUSICAL CONNECTION”

from Claremont High School (SPA 3) won First Place in the Hope and Justice Monthly Prompt for November 2023. The student shared: “Music can connect people or make us feel connected to others. Music can lift spirits, give us energy, and touch our souls, which in turn improves our mental health. My dad often sings a specific Chinese song from his childhood, whose title translates to “Spring in the North.” [...] The song essentially talks about how spring is fleeting, arriving and then leaving quickly. [...] This prompt immediately reminded me of my dad, and I have always connected with him through music because he loves to sing.”



### “HAPPIER”

from Twin Lakes Middle School (SPA 3) won First Place in the Hope and Justice Monthly Prompt for April 2024: “The drawing is about how I cope with stress and life’s dilemmas – by listening to music, drawing, and seeing the beauty of nature. With all of these combined, the world seems to be more colorful. Without them, my world always seems to be in black and white.”



### “MY MADRE”

from Dorothy Kirby (SPA 7) received an Honorable Mention for the September 2023 Hope and Justice Monthly Prompt contest. The student artist shared: “An anchor to me is someone that provides stability in the tides of life. I chose my grandmother as my anchor because she motivated me to grow into the person I am today. [...] I really want my grandma to be proud of me.”



Saugus High School (SPA 2) students at their film screening



Maywood Center for Enriched Studies (SPA 7) with a proclamation from the city to designate May as Mental Health Awareness Month



Saugus High School (SPA 2) students working on films



## “Blossoming Identity”

“As a young closeted queer person, I often felt alone. However, once I finally got to high school, I saw all of these wonderful openly LGBTQ+ people who were happy to reach out their hand to me. They supported me as I came into my own identity and helped me gain the confidence to be out myself. Seeing them out and proud gave me such hope for the future.”



# MENTAL HEALTH THRIVAL KITS

The Mental Health Thrival Kit can be used to celebrate wellness and promote positive coping skills for youth with easy-to-follow activities to enhance skills for social-emotional wellness.

The digital kit includes journaling prompts to promote reflection and self-expression, breathing and grounding techniques, coloring pages, as well as mental health and crisis resources.

Kits are currently available in English and Spanish, as well as for Korean American youth and Filipino American youth.

To download Mental Health Thrival Kits or to be added to the waitlist for printed journals please visit [youthcreatingchange.org/mental-health-thrival-kits/](https://youthcreatingchange.org/mental-health-thrival-kits/)



# MENTAL HEALTH THRIVAL KITS

“We handed these out during our Suicide Prevention Week. Each of our elementary schools (5) conducted a "wall of hope/inspiration" activity. We did this activity with our upper elementary students, 5th and 6th. We divided the kits evenly among each school site and since we did not have enough to give each participant- we handed them out as a first come first serve, thanking students for participating in our activity.”

Cynthia Casebere  
South Whittier School District  
Wellness Services Program  
Los Angeles County - SPA 7

“The journal is used once a week when the Mental Health Advocacy Club meets. They take five minutes to write, doodle, or decorate in the journal. They also use it when stressed out at home and in classrooms. I hear the students inviting their friends to sit down and do reflections on their day. I am hopeful it will continue having a snowball effect.”

Rosa Escobar, PSW  
Venice High School Mental Health  
Los Angeles Unified School District - SPA 5



YOUTH CREATING CHANGE



**May is Mental Health Matters Month**



# DOWNLOAD AND USE MATERIALS

A variety of digital toolkits include turn-key resources such as social media sharables, email templates outreach materials, and videos to celebrate Mental Health Matters Month in May, Suicide Prevention Week in September, and more.

[YouthCreatingChange.org/awareness-education](https://YouthCreatingChange.org/awareness-education)



Mental Health Matters Month Toolkits

Suicide Prevention Week Toolkits

Youth Led Activity Tip Sheet

Hundreds of Youth Created PSAs

Parent Education Resources

Lesson Plans and Educational Resources

Mental Health Thrival Kits

## MACHO

Highland Park High School | (SPA 4)



[View](#)



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# ABBREVIATED SOLILIQUIES

Ghetto Film School



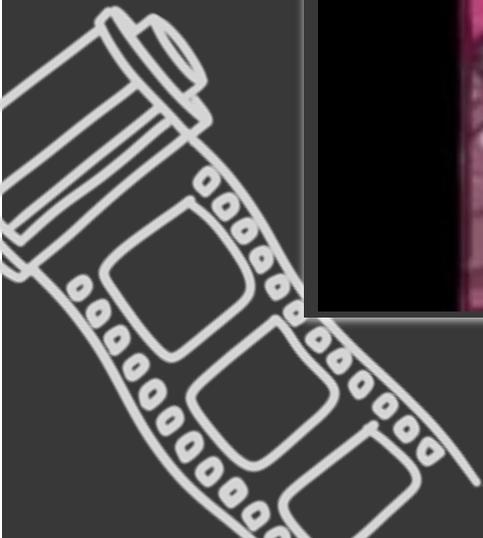
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# SEAMS

Claremont High School | (SPA 3)



[View](#)



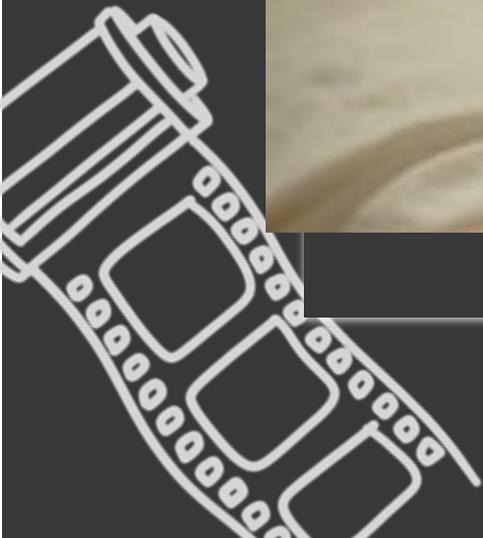
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## TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Los Alamitos High School | (SPA 3)



[View](#)



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# LOS ANGELES COUNTY QUOTES

"I really appreciate you and the program. It is such a great opportunity for the kids. What's interesting is that many of these kids have had a difficult time with academics and/or behavior in the past, so this is really a big boost for their feelings of self-esteem and gives them a chance to shine. So, **while they are helping others with mental health and hope and justice, it turns out they are at the same time really improving their own personal sense of hope, justice, and mental health!** Your program does so much for these kids! It shows how important electives are for the kids. This special recognition that the kids get makes teaching all worthwhile!"

- Teacher at Palms Middle School (SPA 5)

"Participating in the Directing Change Film Competition over the past 7 years has not only impacted my students in a positive way, **it has inspired me to take better care of my own mental health.**"

- Teacher at Claremont High School (SPA 3)

"This supportive environment has provided opportunities for open collaboration with students on areas of change and allowed me to share my personal experiences. **These past two years have been a life-changing experience** that deeply influenced my decision to advocate for mental health through filmmaking."

- Youth filmmaker (SPA 3)

"**The Directing Change Film Contest is both a work of art and a work of heart.** Seeing all the students at the awards ceremony, it is clearly evident how valuable and impactful the program is for those that took part. Our youth need creative outlets through which to be heard, seen and respected. Your program (and the ceremony) covered all of those needs. You have made your mark and helped students leave theirs. Never stop doing what you're doing."

- School Social Worker at Loyde High School (SPA 8)

## GET INVOLVED:

I am looking for [youth-created PSAs](#) to share on social media, TV, at a movie theater or during a presentation.

I am interested in getting [involved as a judge](#) to review youth-created film and art projects.

I want to [download](#) Mental Health Thrival Kits

I would like to [sign up](#) for the monthly newsletter.



# REFER US ON ONE DEGREE

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## Youth Creating Change

Los Angeles County, California ✓ Verified Information [Save](#)

Youth Creating Change places young people's voices and creativity at the center of suicide prevention and mental health programming. They provide mental health support, parent education, crisis response, film and art contests, and mental health survival toolkits. They provide services across all LA County SPAs.

### Opportunities

? [+ Add opportunity](#)

-  [Enter a film contest for youth](#) 
-  [Get a mental health kit for youth](#) 
-  [Get parent education on youth mental health](#) 
-  [Get suicide prevention training and crisis support](#) 
-  [Join a youth council](#) 

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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

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[DirectingChangeCA.org](http://DirectingChangeCA.org)



[HopeandJustice.art](http://HopeandJustice.art)



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