

YOUTH CREATING CHANGE FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 IMPACT REPORT

Prevention, Early Intervention & Crisis Response
in Schools and Communities



OUR MISSION:

Youth Creating Change is a non-profit organization 501(c)(3) dedicated to placing young people's voices and creativity at the center of suicide prevention and mental health programming. Our mission is to educate young people about mental health, suicide prevention and other critical health and social justice issues through the creation of art and film projects; to facilitate healing and belonging through creative expression; and to support schools and communities through curriculums, trainings, and awareness activities in creating safe spaces where young people feel seen, heard, and supported in reaching out for help.

youthcreatingchange.org



YOUTH CREATING CHANGE



CREATING STORIES TO SAVE LIVES

Directing Change and the **Hope & Justice Initiative** are about helping young people work through personal stories of loss, creating stories of hope, and changing the stories of young people who are thinking about suicide.

Imagine you just listened to a presentation about suicide prevention or mental health. How prepared do you feel? Now imagine you take the information and discuss it with a group of friends. You apply what you learned to write a script, develop a storyboard, and work with actors to play roles showing young people standing up for others or talking to a friend about suicide. Maybe youth participate to win cash, maybe to make a difference or share their own personal story with others. Whatever the reason was for starting out, by the end of their participation in the **Directing Change Film Contest**, they are **prepared to recognize warning signs of suicide and know how to connect a friend, or themselves, with help.**

Now imagine you have so many thoughts about mental health and suicide prevention, but also about social justice and activism; and perhaps filmmaking isn't the only medium you choose to express yourself through. Our **Hope and Justice Initiative** is the place where youth can explore how they are coping through tough times and submit entries related to the themes of "Hope," and "Justice," or to monthly prompts centered on mental health. All art forms are accepted – visual art, short films, poetry, original music, TikToks, dance, and more.

LEARN

APPLY

SHARE

“ We spent a lot of time in my class going over the curriculum and talking about mental illness and suicide prevention as we prepared our submissions for the Directing Change Film Contest curriculum. I later learned that one student participant noticed warning signs in a friend and talked to a trusted adult. The student said that everything they had learned in their project came rushing back to them and they knew what to do when something didn't feel right with her friend. The friend ended up being rushed to the hospital and received help. I can honestly say that Directing Change was the most important and valuable curriculum we studied all year. ”

- Teacher



STATEWIDE IMPACT & LOCAL INTEGRATION



Statewide Awards Ceremony
May 22, 2025



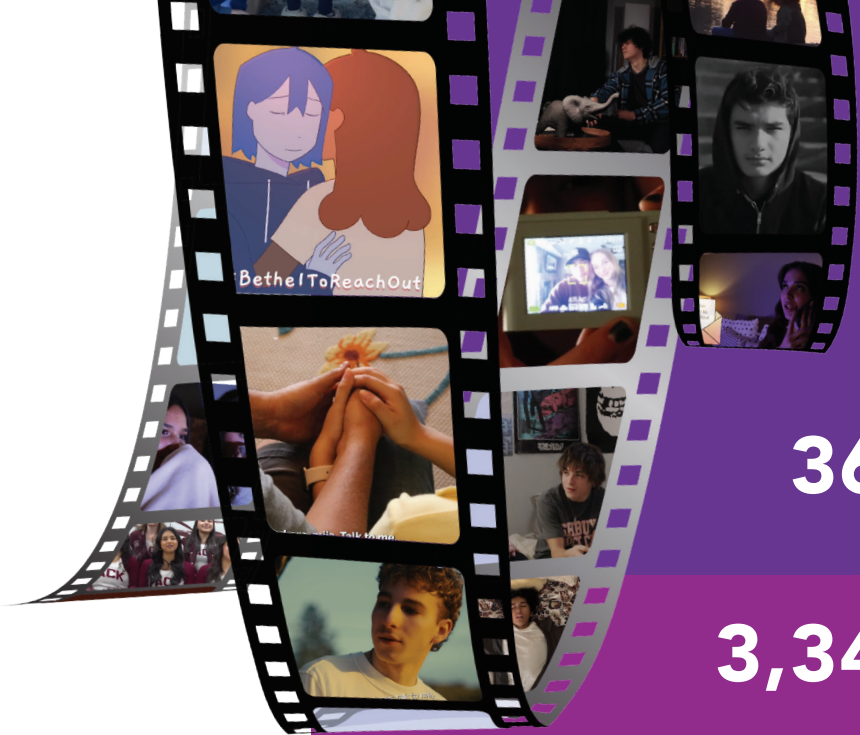
Orange County Awards Ceremony
May 7, 2025



San Bernardino County Awards
Ceremony | May 17, 2025



Riverside County Screening &
Recognition Ceremony | May 15, 2025



365

professionals representing schools, districts and community-based organizations were trained in suicide prevention, intervention, and crisis response after a suicide loss.

3,349

youth participated in the program and 216 schools and organizations implemented the program.

1,791

films, art and other media projects about mental health, suicide prevention and other health and social justice issues were created by youth for youth.

31,088

youth, parents, and community members reached through awareness activities created by youth and educators through mini grant funding to 59 schools and organizations.

331

people were trained in suicide prevention and mental health messaging and applied training to judge films.

1,273

people attended events, including the the awards ceremony, which also received over 2,199 views on Facebook Live.

336,837

Mental Health Thrival Kits have been distributed in 46 counties in California since 2022.

911,345

online views of our films.



WHEN YOUTH ARE AT THE CENTER OF THEIR OWN WELL-BEING, CHANGE CAN HAPPEN.

And when schools and community-based organizations have the training, tools, and procedures they need to promote mental health and facilitate healing, belonging, and help-seeking, then more young people feel seen, heard, and safe to reach out for help.



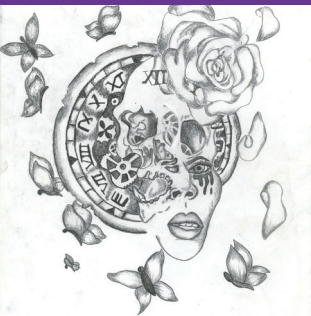
PROMOTING HEALTHY COPING, SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND THRIVING

The Mental Health Thrival Kit (available in English, Spanish, Korean and Tagalog) is a journal for youth that promotes positive coping skills and enhances social emotional wellness.

“I am currently working with a teen who is in foster care. This teen has experienced significant trauma in their life. In speaking with their assigned clinician, I asked if it was okay to provide the teen with the Mental Health Thrival Kit and the clinician gave his approval after reviewing its contents. He expressed that this kit offers teens the opportunity to truly identify emotions and express how those emotions make them feel. It has been an awesome tool and I hope to obtain additional kits in the near future.” - School Social Worker

FOSTERING HOPE

Incarcerated Youth from Dorothy Kirby/Los Angeles County Office of Education



“I chose this illustration because I believe it reflects my current life. I am serving time, and I am losing precious time with my family, friends, and loved ones.”



“I chose my painting of butterflies because I believe it represents my growth and hopes for a better future.”

RECOGNIZING CREATIVITY, COURAGE, AND CHANGE



Youth Creating Change held its 13th annual Directing Change Film Contest Awards Ceremony at the historic United Theater on Broadway in Downtown Los Angeles on Thursday, May 22nd. The event included screenings of youth-created films, a youth musical performance, announcement of statewide contest winners, and a range of esteemed guest speakers and presenters and was attended by over 700 middle and high school students (as well as parents, contest judges, mental health providers, entertainment professionals, and others working to advance the wellbeing of young people across the state). The event celebrated excellence in mental health storytelling, youth creativity, and the true power of young people to shape important narratives, support one another, and advance change.

CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR INCLUSION AND BELONGING

“The Directing Change program ignited a flame in my Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) club that I have not seen in my students in years. There is no greater feeling than seeing pure joy on the faces of youth because of what we were able to accomplish by creating projects that promoted mental health, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. For weeks on end, I have had students sitting by my door when I arrived at school, showing up at break and at lunch, and asking for check-ins after school, all because they found a safe space on our campus. I have no doubt that we have saved lives, and we will continue to do so.” - Advisor



A Weathered History

Claremont High School, 12th grade, Tri-City (Los Angeles County)

“The scars below the chest signify a trans individual who was able to pursue their transition, despite the many hardships they undoubtedly faced. The eyes on the chest signify defiance in the face of adversity, staring back at those who scrutinize their identity. This statue shows that although many political and public figures may try to erase or belittle the history of trans people, we have always been here – represented in art, culture, and media. Trans people deserve to see their bodies represented and their issues spoken through art.”

PLACING YOUTH AT THE CENTER OF MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE PREVENTION



Youth Creating Change was excited to partner with Civilian on the CDPH-funded Never a Bother youth suicide prevention media campaign, a truly youth centered campaign. The “Never a Bother” campaign was co-created with and for California’s youth as part of the state’s Children, Youth, and Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) to increase awareness, support and resources among California’s youth. Check out the campaign at **NeveraBother.org**.



Subway Sunrise

Claremont High School, 10th Grade, Tri-City (Los Angeles County)

“You are not alone, but you also don’t have to be afraid to take up space. [...] I want people to know they are allowed to feel like they belong no matter where they go.”

PARTNER WITH US:

As a non-profit organization we can't continue to do this work without youth, volunteers, partners and funders. Here are a few ways you can support our work:

"Thank you for these opportunities you give us as adults to see what is on young people's minds – and thank you for giving our kids a way to express themselves!"

- Judge

Adults, Educators and Everyone:

Volunteer to judge sharing youth-created films and art pieces or become a youth mentor. Elevate youth voices by sharing youth created films and art on social media, on websites, in trainings or your next media buy. Fund us so we can continue to offer the program to youth, schools, and organizations and build capacity to meet the growing demand. Sponsor our annual red-carpet award ceremony and support funding for school field trips to attend!

Youth:

Join our advisory group. Participate in outreach events. Learn how to bring our program to a youth school, club, or organization. Create a film or piece of art to submit to one of our contests!

"Being involved showed me another perspective on suicide and mental health. I know how to speak to people or friends struggling with suicide. I can work together with my friends and other people to show people coping with mental issues that they aren't alone and that if they reach out and talk, they'll receive the support they need."

- Youth Participant

Learn more at YouthCreatingChange.org/partner-with-us/

