

# Directing Change



Program & Film Contest

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## CONTACT

Jasmin Sosa  
o: 916-287-9674  
m: 443-535-3914

## STATEWIDE WINNERS ANNOUNCED IN STUDENT FILM CONTEST ON MENTAL HEALTH *12 Student Films Take Top Honors in Program to Prevent Suicide and Eliminate Stigma*

**Sacramento, CA** - Student filmmakers from five high schools and six University of California (UC) campuses received top honors in the third annual Directing Change Program and Student Film Contest to reduce suicide and end the stigma around mental health challenges. Regional finalists and hundreds more gathered at the Crest Theatre on Tuesday afternoon for the awards ceremony hosted by contest sponsors the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) and Each Mind Matters: California's Mental Health Movement. Prizes were presented to students by Senator Mark Leno and screenwriter and producer Michael Gilvary who was also honored for his work on the film "According to Greta" that deals with mental health issues.

Confronting stigma matters when it comes to young people. About 1 in 5 teens experience a mental health challenge in a given year, yet due to stigma many wait an average of 6 to 8 years from onset of symptoms before they seek help. A recent RAND Corporation study found that 90 percent of Californians with mental health challenges, including students, reported experiencing discrimination in the past year. Sixty-nine percent said they would hide a mental health problem from co-workers or classmates.

"Activities like Directing Change are truly transformational," said Dr. Wayne Clark, executive director of CalMHSA. "By engaging young people in talking to each other, we not only educate the current generation, we take a long-term step toward changing society's attitudes and making today's generation of young people the first that doesn't fear coming forward for help."

The Directing Change program empowers high school and UC students to educate their peers through the creation of 60-second films in two categories: suicide prevention or ending the silence of mental illness. A total of 420 submissions were received for this year's contest, representing 1,226 students, 112 high schools and 7 UC schools covering 31 counties.

The films feature individuals who have the power to stand up for themselves and their friends. They also show that those dealing with a mental illness are not defined by it and are not alone.

"When we decided to participate in Directing Change, it was crucial to us that we created a film that showed hope and the importance of peer support, since this is what our program is all about," said UC Davis student Sarah Raphael. "Ending the silence, to us, is not only about encouraging people struggling with mental illness to seek help. It's also about getting others around them to show support. Mental illness is hard to talk about, but the more people show acceptance and start conversations, the easier it will be for people to get the help they need."



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Directing Change also acknowledges responsible portrayal of mental health in film and television as examples for the young filmmakers. Certain presentations of the subject matter may influence a vulnerable person toward either harmful behaviors or toward seeking help. The film “According to Greta,” written and produced by Gilvary, was recognized as an outstanding film with messaging around suicide prevention. The film, which stars Hilary Duff, is lauded by the mental health community for empathizing with not only those who experience thoughts of suicide, but also survivors of suicide loss with a real portrayal of survivor grief.

Student films were judged in two rounds by volunteer experts in mental health and suicide prevention, members of the media and professionals in film making and video production. High school and UC films were judged separately and the top three films were chosen in both categories. The following winning films are available at [www.directingchange.org](http://www.directingchange.org):

	High Schools	UC
<b>Ending the Silence</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place 3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	San Juan Hills High School, San Juan Capistrano Pleasant Valley High School/Butte ROP, Chico Whitney High School, Rocklin	UCLA UC Santa Barbara UC Davis
<b>Suicide Prevention</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> Place 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place 3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	1 <sup>st</sup> - Franklin High School, Elk Grove 2 <sup>nd</sup> - Whitney High School, Rocklin 3 <sup>rd</sup> - Canyon High School, Anaheim	UC Riverside UC San Diego UC Irvine

The contest is the first step in engaging California youth. Participation in Directing Change opens the door to introduce prevention programs to the school. Every school that engages with the contest receives an Ending the Silence presentation from National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) or one of several donated suicide prevention programs. In addition, students and schools are provided with access to a variety of educational resources on these topics throughout the school year.

### **About the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA)**

*CalMHSA is an organization of county governments working to improve mental health outcomes for individuals, families and communities. Prevention and Early Intervention programs implemented by CalMHSA are funded by counties through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63). Prop. 63 provides the funding and framework needed to expand mental health services to previously underserved populations and all of California’s diverse communities. The Directing Change Program & Student Film Contest is one of 25 programs that are part of comprehensive statewide efforts to prevent suicide, reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental illness, and to promote the mental health and wellness of students.*

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