Student Video Contest Addressing Suicide and Mental Illness Gets Overwhelming Response From California High Schoolers

Part of a statewide effort to prevent suicide, reduce stigma and promote student mental wellness, the “Directing Change” student video contest had to be extended to meet the demand of high school students interested in participating.

Sacramento, CA (PRWEB) March 21, 2013 -- Part of a statewide effort to prevent suicide, reduce stigma and promote student mental wellness, the “Directing Change” student video contest had to be extended to meet the demand of high school students interested in participating.

The contest and statewide effort are funded by counties through the Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63) and administered by the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA), an organization of county governments working to improve mental health outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

“We had an overwhelming response to this contest,” said Jana Sczersputowski, Directing Change project lead. “This contest is a unique effort that it is empowering youth to have a voice about a topic that affects them directly. We wanted to make sure all students interested in submitting had the chance to participate. So, we extended the deadline to meet the demand.”

More than 370 videos have been submitted; 302 suicide prevention and 69 eliminating stigma related to mental illness.

“This significant response is proof that mental illness and suicide are important issues to our youth,” said Tom Torlakson, California Department of Education’s State Superintendent of Public Instruction. “This contest gives them a platform for participation and a voice for expression to raise awareness about student mental health.”

All video submissions will be subject to Regional Judging beginning March 20th. Metta World Peace, formerly known as Ron Artest, of the Los Angeles Lakers and Brian Malarkey, well-renowned San Diego chef and restaurateur (also on this season’s show on ABC ‘The Taste’ and featured chef on Bravo’s ‘Top Chef’) and Jay Asher, author of the award-winning and New York Times Best Seller Thirteen Reasons Why top the list of celebrity judges.

Finalists from Regional Judging will advance to a second round of judging through a Public Voting option online where contest finalists will be determined. Contest winners will be honored at an Awards Ceremony in Sacramento on May 23rd.

Contest at a glance:

• Open to high school students in California
• Asks students to develop a 60-second public service announcement about suicide prevention or eliminating mental illness stigma during the 2012/13 school year
• Awards the winning team and associated school a $1000 cash prize
• Enters each school into a drawing for a free suicide prevention program
• Recognizes students and schools at a screening and award ceremony in Sacramento at the end of the school year
• For each Intent to Direct form that is submitted the student’s school is entered for a chance to win a suicide prevention program.

Questions? Email jana(at)directingchange(dot)org.

About Directing Change
The Directing Change PSA contest is funded by the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63). It is one of several Prevention and Early Intervention Initiatives implemented by the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA), an organization of county governments working to improve mental health outcomes for individuals, families and communities. CalMHSA operates services and education programs on a statewide, regional and local basis. For more information, visit www.calmhsa.org
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