

## For Immediate Release

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## Community Access to Present Inaugural Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival on October 19 at New York City's Village East Cinema

*– Shadille Estepan of Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation will moderate panel of teen and young adult filmmakers whose short films address the subject of mental health*

**(New York, NY, 10/15/19)** – Lights, Camera, *Take Action!* When Community Access presents its inaugural Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival this fall, it will screen more than a dozen films by talented teens and young adult filmmakers who have done precisely that: taken action to share real-life, mental health stories, which challenge the stigma that too often surrounds the subject of mental health.

Made possible by support from the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund and The Isora Foundation, the Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival will screen original, inspiring, and out-of-the ordinary short films made by young people ages 15-25 and will feature a Q&A with a panel of young filmmakers moderated by Shadille Estepan, Communications and Outreach Manager of Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation.

Community Access has held the New York City Mental Health Film festival since 2005 and launched the Changing Minds Young Filmmakers Competition four years ago. This year marks the first that Community Access will host a full-fledged Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival. It will take place on Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup> from 6-9PM at Manhattan's historic Village East Cinema.

"As a leading mental health and advocacy nonprofit in NYC, Community Access is dedicated to expanding opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to take their rightful place in our civil society. We know that people are experts in their own lives and this includes young people." says **Cal Hedigan, CEO at Community Access**. "The Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival is just one of the ways we help to create platforms where people can speak their truth and raise awareness about individual struggles with mental health. This effort is so important in challenging stigma, breaking down misconceptions, and opening a pathway to meaningful connections among us all."

“We are proud to support the Changing Minds initiative,” says **Rick Luftglass, Executive Director at the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund**. “Community Access was one of the first grantees when we launched the Illumination Fund’s Arts in Health initiative. We are inspired by the work that Community Access does – looking for new ways to champion people’s voices and to uplift the stories we too often overlook. Changing Minds is such a creative, important way to spark discussion and combat mental health stigma.”

“Over the last six years, we have recognized Community Access as a pioneer in the innovative work they do, using film to dispel the myths and stigmatization imposed on individuals and families experiencing issues related to mental health,” says **The Isora Foundation’s Director, Wendy Wells**. “The Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival provides us all an important window into the lives of young people and helps deepen our understanding of the challenges they face.”

The 15 films being screened were selected from more than 940 short film submissions, both fiction and documentary. Their stories touch on mental health issues ranging from bipolar disorder to anxiety and examine the myriad issues faced by teens and young adults. The festival features several New York high school and college aged filmmakers, as well as works from as far away as Washington State, Canada, and Malaysia.

*Kaeru*, the festival’s winner, is an animated short by 24 year-old Denise Chan about an artist’s struggle with self-doubt. The documentary *Pulling the Evidence that Remains* by Harlem native and current New York University student Kendra Brown considers the lasting impact of childhood trauma and the role of love in aiding recovery.

“When we envisioned this festival, we wanted young people to lead this effort. We engaged college students to review and select the films, and we are especially excited for Shadille to moderate a conversation with the filmmakers. A young leader herself, Shadille brings great energy and expertise from her role at Born This Way Foundation. We are huge fans of their work to support the emotional wellness of young people,” says **Jon Curtis, Director of Communications at Community Access**.

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#### **FOR CALENDAR LISTINGS:**

**Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival (Village East Cinema, Manhattan)**

**SAT, OCT 19, 6 PM**

*Tickets are \$12 General Admission*

[www.changingmindsfilmfestival.org](http://www.changingmindsfilmfestival.org)

The Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival aims to challenge stigma and positively transform how we think and talk about youth mental health issues. The festival will screen a series of short films, all under 10 minutes long and created by filmmakers aged 15 - 25, and

present a filmmaker panel moderated by Shadille Estepan of Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation.

**About Community Access:**

Community Access' mission is to expand opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable housing, training, advocacy, and healing-focused services. We are built upon the simple truth that people are experts in their own lives.

[www.communityaccess.org](http://www.communityaccess.org)

**About the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund:**

The Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund is a New York City-based foundation that strives to improve access and opportunity for all New Yorkers and foster healthy and vibrant communities. Founded in 2007 by philanthropist Laurie M. Tisch, the Illumination Fund plays an active role in supporting innovative approaches across a range of issues—ensuring that arts and arts education are accessible to all, increasing access to healthy food, promoting civic service and supporting economic opportunity. In 2018, the Illumination Fund launched Arts in Health, a new initiative to support organizations utilizing the arts to address health issues that impact New York communities and emphasize the arts as a tool for healing and for building understanding.

**About The Isora Foundation:**

The Isora Foundation is committed to empowering individuals to improve conditions within their own communities in the areas of health, education, economic development, and social justice. Established in 2006, The Isora Foundation funds communities that have been traditionally under-resourced and values projects that use a variety of media to tell their stories. The Isora Foundation's goal is to replace despair with hope.

**About Born This Way Foundation:**

Led by Lady Gaga and her mother Cynthia Germanotta, Born This Way Foundation was founded in 2012 to support the wellness of young people and empower them to create a kinder and braver world. To achieve these goals, Born This Way Foundation leverages evidenced-based research and authentic partnerships in order to provide young people with kinder communities, improved mental health resources, and more positive environments - online and offline.

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