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**Community Access Celebrates 10th Anniversary of
Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival on May 17th
in New York City**

*—As [1 in 3 young adults in the U.S. experience mental illness](#),
ten outstanding young filmmakers present their original short films to address
this pressing topic on the big screen at Village East by Angelika—*

*—This Festival is made possible thanks to the generous support of the
Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund and the Isora Foundation—*



(New York, NY)—[Community Access](#), a New York City-based mental health nonprofit, proudly marks the 10th year of its [Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival](#) on Saturday, May 17th from 7 to 9 p.m. at Village East by Angelika. *Changing Minds* celebrates the creative work of young filmmakers (ages 15-25) who, through their short films about mental health, challenge the stigma that too often surrounds mental health concerns. Their films explore timely mental health themes, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, gender identity, and more.

The evening will feature ten inspiring, bold, and thought-provoking films made by young people from NYC and beyond. The young filmmakers from diverse backgrounds discuss important themes and how their personal experiences and background shape their mental health. This year's lineup includes a dynamic selection of films, plus a special live panel discussion and audience Q&A with the filmmakers.

FEATURED FILMS:

- ***Heads Full of Life:*** Filmmaker Teo Nalani. A mixed media animated short film about getting out of your head and accepting help from your friends.
- ***Before My Eyes:*** Filmmaker Simone Thomas-Rowe. After getting caught in the middle of a school shooting, a boy hides in a bathroom and thinks back to specific moments in his life where he was happy.
- ***Even Still:*** Filmmaker Grey Anderson. A short film about creating a life that is joyful to live through the experience of transness, building community, breaking free of public perception, and cultivating the things in life that bring happiness.
- ***Ascendant:*** Filmmaker Lucrece Wecxsteen. A young woman's past in toxic relationships echoes into her new, healthy relationship.
- ***Last One There:*** Filmmaker Corey Dostie. A collage of childhood images explores anxiety in young people while forming identity.
- ***Late September:*** Filmmaker Joey Tangradi. A boy spirals into panic after coming into contact with his deep-set anxiety.
- ***Family Matters:*** Filmmaker Arthur Chen. A loving and caring daughter needs to re-negotiate her relationship with two different versions of her mother, who was unexpectedly diagnosed with bipolar disorder in her 60s.
- ***Arcade:*** Filmmaker Erica Travia. A 2D animated short film that delves into the heavy theme of anxiety and panic experienced by a college student named Milo.
- ***Feng Shui:*** Filmmaker Kofi King. A desktop documentary analyzing the complex relationship between the institutionalized college dorm and mental health.
- ***Solstice:*** Filmmaker Julia Messick. *Solstice* is an experimental short film about seasonal depression, isolation, anxiety, and PTSD.

According to the former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, MD, [mental health is the defining public health crisis of our time](#). With [1 in 3 young adults in the US experiencing mental health concerns and 3.8 million having serious thoughts of suicide](#), fostering open conversations about mental health is more relevant than ever. This festival addresses this public health crisis and serves as a vital platform for young adults to share their lived experiences, break the stigma surrounding mental health, and foster meaningful dialogue that empowers and uplifts. Discussing mental health helps to destigmatize it and is often a [critical first step in getting needed support](#).

"Art is powerful. Art can change the way we understand and talk about mental health," said **Cal Hedigan, CEO at Community Access**. "The power behind *Changing Minds* is that it centers on storytelling by and for young people. Through everything we do, we work to uplift the voices that often go unheard; we're proud to give space where young people can speak their truth and have honest conversations about mental health."

The ten films to be showcased at the Festival were selected from more than 1,600 submissions and represent a variety of genres, from documentary to mixed-media and animation. The young filmmakers in the festival hail from New York City, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and France.

The film screenings begin at 7 p.m. at [Village East by Angelika](#) (181-189 2nd Ave, New York, NY 10003). They are followed by a Q&A with the filmmakers moderated by Denise Chan, a young filmmaker who was the winner of the 2019 *Changing Minds* festival.

Tickets to the event are only \$10 and can be purchased at www.changingmindsfilmfestival.org.

Community Access first launched the Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Competition in 2015 as part of its New York City Mental Health Film Festival—the oldest and largest film festival of its kind. In 2019, with support from the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, the organization transformed the program into a fully formed festival, presenting the young filmmakers’ projects on the big screen at Manhattan’s Village East by Angelika and offering an opportunity for young people to gather in person for great films and conversation.

“We are proud to continue supporting the pivotal work of Community Access and the Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Festival,” said **Laurie Tisch, founder and president of the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund.** “Mental Health stigma has real and harmful consequences in our communities. *Changing Minds* creates a crucial space for young people to share their lived experiences, fostering empathy and understanding, and ensuring that their viewpoints are heard, respected, and valued.”

“Having the ability and courage to share your story is a powerful element of advocacy which influences positive social change,” said **Wendy Wells, president of the Isora Foundation.** “Mental health advocacy is a critical piece of what Community Access does best. It is inspirational to see how *Changing Minds* is a megaphone to lift up young people’s voices in so many fundamental ways.”

About Community Access

Founded in 1974, Community Access is a pioneer of supportive housing and social services in New York City for people living with mental health concerns. Driven by the simple truth that people are experts in their own lives, Community Access expands opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable housing, training, advocacy, and healing-focused services. Community Access provides person-centered services that help people pursue goals that are important to them – from gaining access to an affordable home, to learning new skills; from re-establishing community ties, to setting goals for the future.

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, a family foundation established in 2006, is based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It is committed to partnering with individuals to improve conditions within their communities in the areas of health; economic development; environmental action and social justice. Their grants have included projects addressing the health and educational needs of indigenous people; economic development in immigrant communities; youth organizations; individuals affected by the stigmatization of mental illness; and protection of sensitive environmental areas. The foundation values projects that use a variety of media to tell their stories.

Mental Health Data Resources

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

According to the [New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#), one of the reasons people may not seek mental health treatment or support when they need it is due to stigma. Mental health stigma often involves incorrect stereotypes. People who believe these false stereotypes may view or treat others or themselves negatively when experiencing problems with their mental health. It also [states that](#) discussing mental health helps to destigmatize this issue and is often a critical first step in getting needed support.

A [2022 survey by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#) revealed that “nearly one in three New Yorkers (34%) agreed with the statement ‘people with mental illness are more dangerous.’”

The ability to access reliable and relevant information on mental health is [vital for young people](#). Knowing who to talk to and where to go for this information can be a challenge. Teens most often say they go to a parent as a source of mental health information (13%), followed by going to friends (7%) and other family (5%). Discussing mental health helps to destigmatize this issue and is often a critical first step in getting needed support. Among teens in NYC, 69% agree that they would feel comfortable talking about their mental health with those closest to them. Having access to someone to talk to in general, but specifically about mental health, is a powerful predictor of positive mental health. According to NYC teens, 54% feel comfortable telling their parent or guardian that they are interested in mental health treatment.

JED Foundation

The [JED Foundation’s 2024 report](#), *Unraveling the Stigma*, states that “While many barriers to mental health treatment exist, stigma traditionally has been high on the list” and “...each new generation forms its own perspectives on mental health care, which can create opportunities for more open discussion of mental health struggles.”

NASPA

DEI and mental health implications

Each year, [1 in 5 women](#) in the United States experiences a mental health-related illness such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or an eating disorder. [The Black community](#) is disproportionately affected by mental health concerns, including reported increased rates of anxiety and depression. [LGBTQIA+](#) individuals are more than twice as likely as non-queer-identifying individuals to experience a mental health disorder in their lifetime. It is important to [recognize how DEI practices support the mental health priorities](#) of these students.