

**The MY HERO Project**

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# **2025 ANNUAL REPORT**

Celebrating 30 Years of Media, Art, and  
Technology in Service of Hope and Inspiration.



# Filling the Need for Hope and Inspiration

Since 1995, MY HERO has used media, art, and technology to highlight people whose lives reflect courage, compassion, and service. Founded in response to violence, hatred, and the lack of positive role models in mainstream media, MY HERO has grown into a commercial-free, child-friendly learning community where people of all ages can share stories, art, audio, and film.

In FY2025, that work continued through the website, classroom resources, workshops, and the MY HERO International Film Festival. Students, educators, artists, and filmmakers used the platform to publish work, teach with it, and bring new voices into the archive.



# A Public Resource with Global Reach

Each year, millions of visitors in 174 countries rely on MY HERO's growing multimedia library of inspiring content. Across the site, visitors can discover stories, art, film, audio, lesson plans, tutorials, and digital storytelling tools, or contribute original work of their own.

That reach matters because MY HERO is not just broad; it is curated. Submissions are reviewed to help ensure the site does not promote hatred, violence, racism, or sexism. Visitors can discover material, and contributors can publish work, in the same trusted public space.

**174** COUNTRIES REACHED  
EACH YEAR

**Millions**  
OF ANNUAL VISITORS TO THE MY HERO WEBSITE

**50,000+**  
STORIES IN THE ONLINE LIBRARY

**3,700+ / 3,000+**  
WORKS OF ART AND SHORT FILMS AVAILABLE  
TO VISITORS, TEACHERS, AND STUDENTS

**MY  
HERO**

# A GROWING MEDIA LIBRARY

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**At the heart of MY HERO is a living global archive.** Visitors, teachers, students, artists, filmmakers, and staff continue to add to a growing library of original work that helps people see what courage, compassion, and moral imagination look like in practice.

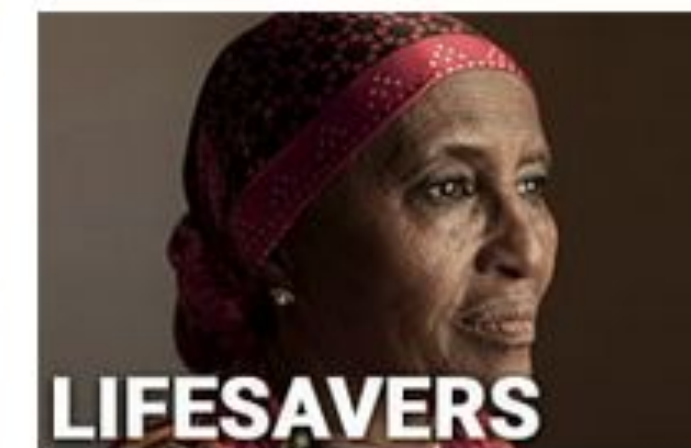


## A GROWING MEDIA LIBRARY

# Story is the foundation of MY HERO

The MY HERO library hosts more than 50,000 stories by students, teachers, journalists, and professional writers. Some profiles honor world-changing figures. Others shine a light on the heroes people know personally: parents, teachers, organizers, neighbors, scientists, artists, and peers.

Together, these stories make a simple but powerful argument: heroism is not abstract. It is lived, local, and often within reach. Every story added to the archive helps readers recognize their own capacity to create positive change.



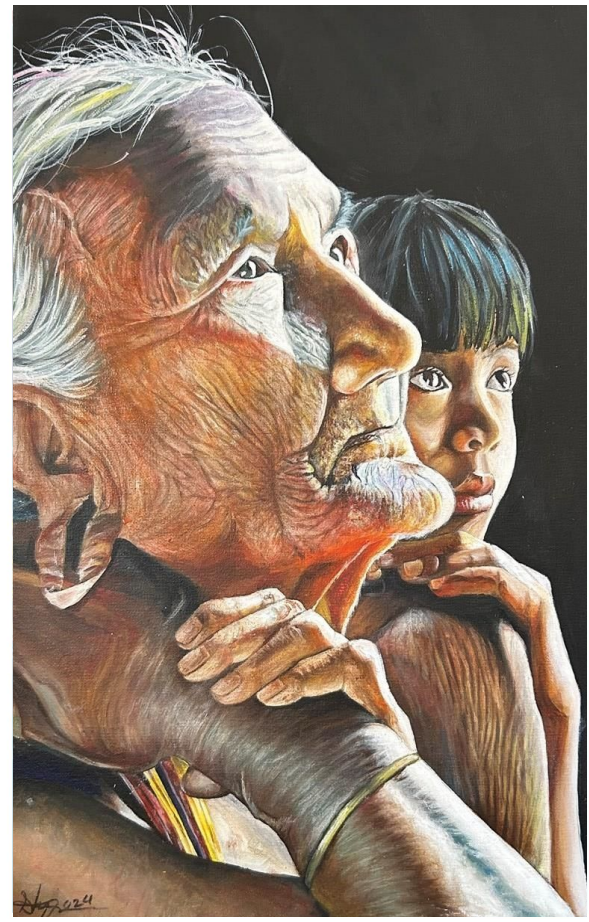
## A GROWING MEDIA LIBRARY

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# Art and audio widen access to the archive

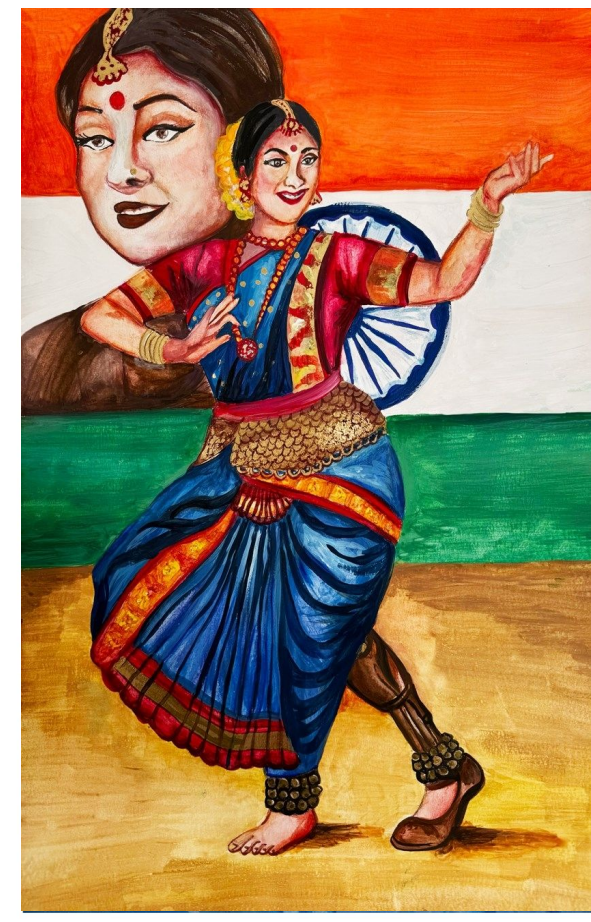
MY HERO's Art Gallery and Audio Collection expand the library in different ways. The gallery includes more than 3,700 works of art by contributors of all ages. The audio collection adds poetry, spoken word, narrated stories, and recordings that let visitors listen and read side by side.

For teachers and students, those formats matter. They make the library easier to use across different ages, reading levels, and classroom settings.



**Continue**

By: Sara



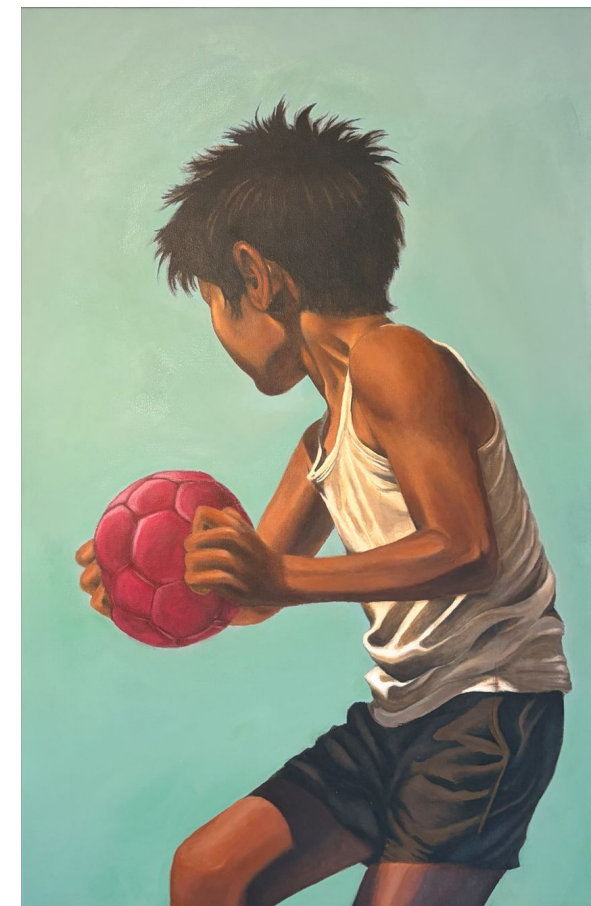
**The Rhythm of Resilience**

By: Shriya Kale



**Panda-Lover Kang Chul**

By: SIU KA YI



**Childhood Quest**

By: Mathilde Abiragi

## A GROWING MEDIA LIBRARY

# A home for short films that honor courage, justice, and human possibility

With more than 3,000 short films, the MY HERO Film Library gives students and professional filmmakers a place to share stories of courage, justice, ocean stewardship, healthy relationships, creativity, and social change.

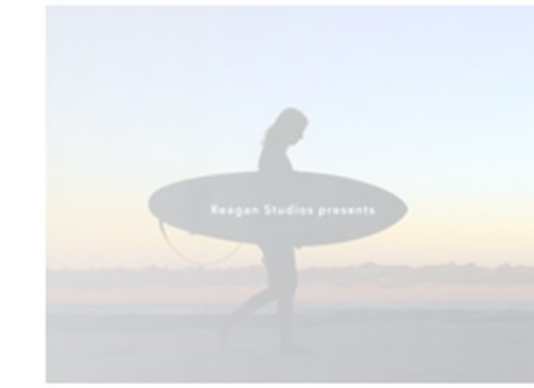
Many festival selections become part of the library, extending their classroom life far beyond a single screening. Teachers can return to them throughout the year, and students can see how powerful storytelling takes shape through image, sound, structure, and point of view.

Darius Goes West



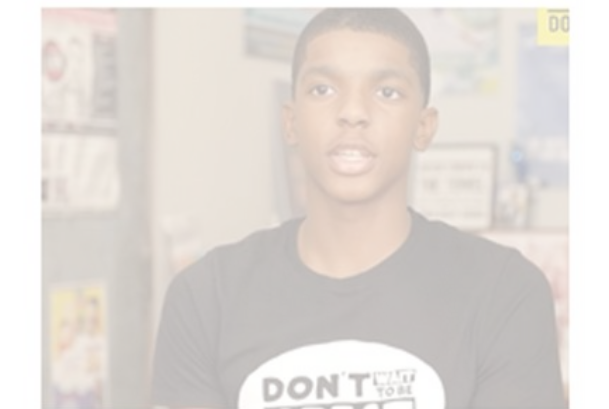
Darius captures the hearts of a nation on his journey west to spread awareness about Muscular Dystrophy.

Ministry of Surf



An intimate look inside the healing power of water & surfing on autistic children and the surfers who offer "one perfect day" to kids!

60 Sec Docs with Jahkil Jackson



Jahkil Jackson from Chicago is the founder of Project I Am, an organization raising



Chico's

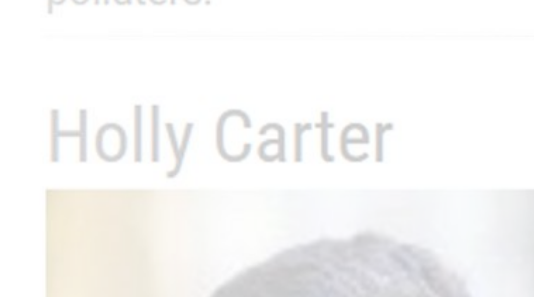
Hou...  
Budget... of  
Love!



**3,000+ SHORT FILMS**

Holly Carter

A young girl defends her community from corporate polluters.



Rights of Nature

Fin... shark finning in Costa Rica.



## A GROWING MEDIA LIBRARY

### A public archive becomes more valuable when it is curated with care

MY HERO's growing media library is not an open dump of content. It is a curated, child-friendly public resource maintained by staff who review submissions, reject work that promotes hatred, violence, racism, sexism, or plagiarism, and organize content so teachers, students, and families can use it with confidence.

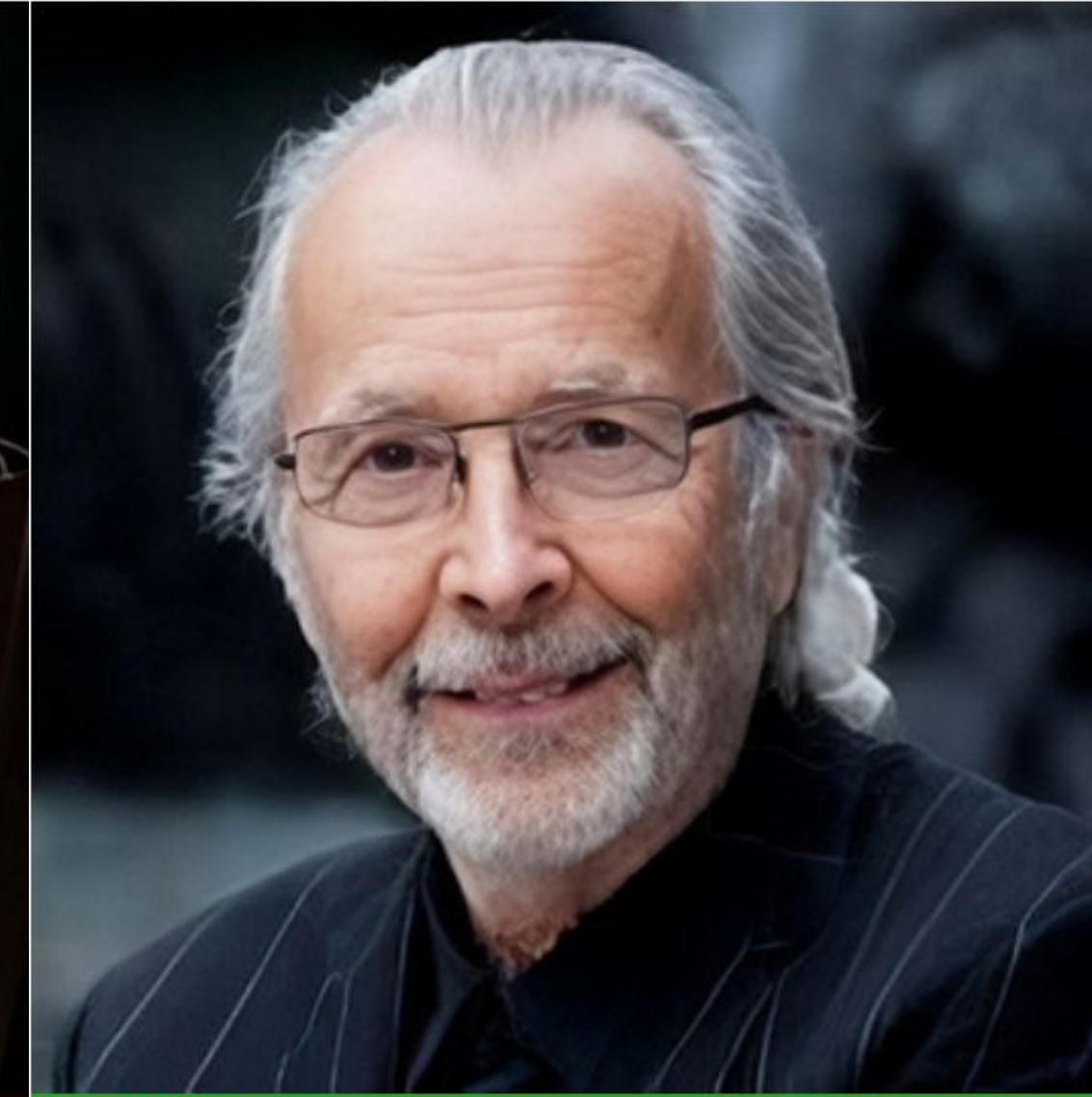
That editorial care is part of what gives the archive lasting value. Stories, art, films, audio, and lesson-plan-ready media are maintained so visitors can discover original work, navigate by theme, and return to the library as a trusted public resource throughout the year.

stories



Diana Chao Changing the World for Mental Health

audio



Herb Alpert

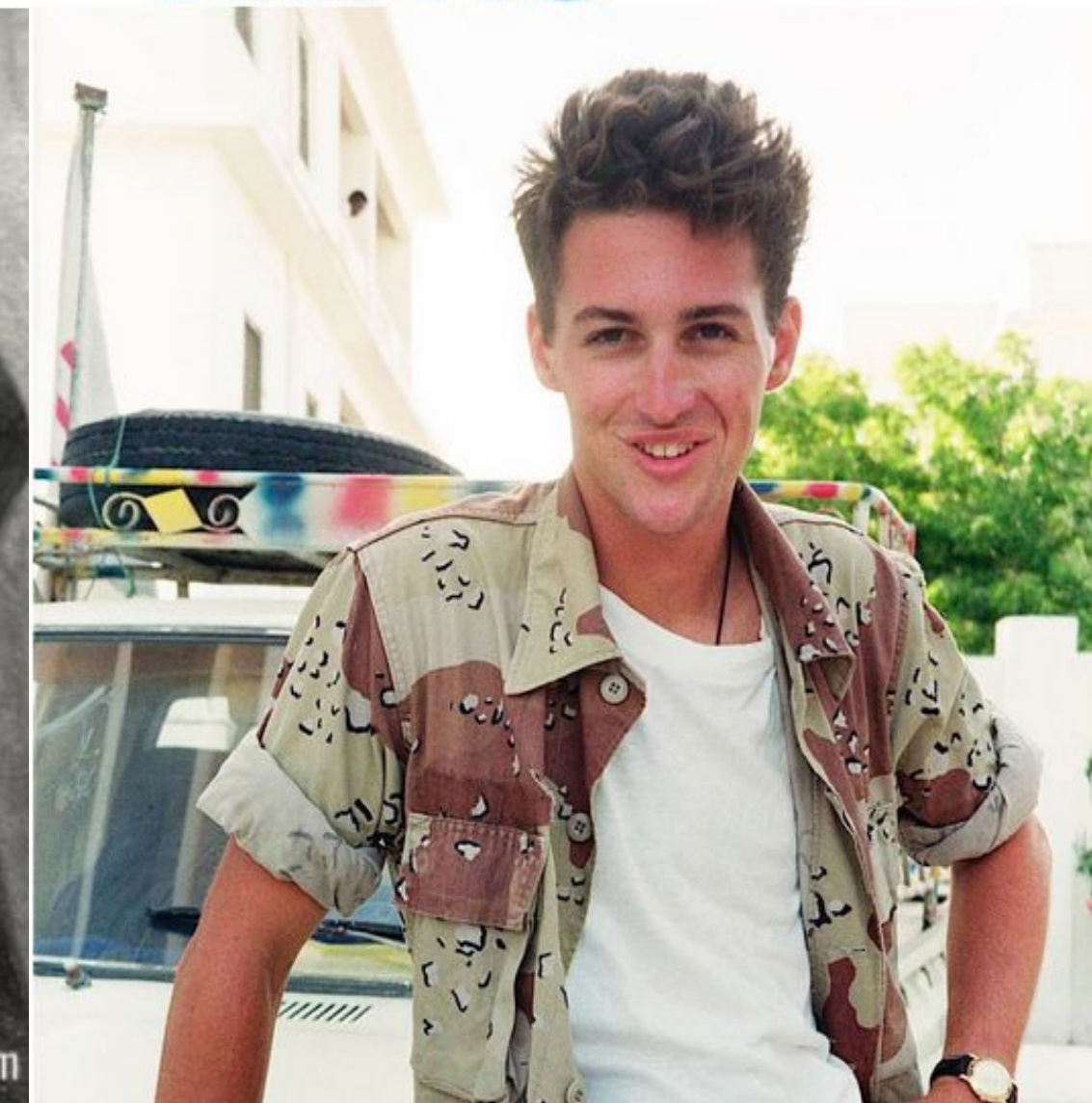
art



by Gamin Kim

Resilience

films



Dan Eldon

## A GROWING MEDIA LIBRARY

# The Eva Haller Salon Series brings live conversation into the archive.

More than 200 recordings from the Eva Haller Salon Series are archived on the MY HERO website. Since its launch in March 2020, the weekly virtual series has brought together artists, educators, journalists, filmmakers, scientists, and public thinkers for conversations that continue to live on the site.

Season 5 ran from September 2024 through June 2025 and included 37 episodes. Guests included Esther Wojcicki, Ron Kovic, Clyde Haberman, Ichak Adizes, Robert Klitgaard, Christie Hefner, Jeff Greenfield, and Mindahi Bastida.



# MEDIA ARTS EDUCATION



**MY HERO's Media Arts Education program helps students move from consuming media to creating it.** Through free tools, workshops, mentorship, lesson plans, and classroom partnerships, students learn how to research, interview, write, film, edit, and present stories that matter.

**MY  
HERO**



## MEDIA ARTS EDUCATION

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# Used in classrooms across schools, states, and countries.

Teachers in the United States and abroad use MY HERO's stories, films, lesson plans, Teachers' Room resources, and digital storytelling tools in classroom settings. The site gives educators ready-to-use material and gives students a way to research, create, and publish original work.

Between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025, MY HERO reached classrooms across multiple states and countries. That broader use provides the context for deeper site-based partnerships such as Ascot Avenue Elementary.

## MEDIA ARTS EDUCATION

### A practical filmmaking workbook for classrooms and young creators.

With support from the Scripps Family Impact Fund, MY HERO published The MY HERO Journalism & Filmmaking Workbook, written by Jonah Steinhart with a foreword by Esther Wojcicki. The workbook gives students, teachers, and emerging filmmakers a practical guide to researching, shaping, and producing short films.

The book is designed for classroom use. It breaks the process into clear steps and pairs well with the companion documentary REEL HEROES: Student Films and Filmmakers. Promotion by Wojcicki, including at ASU+GSV in San Diego, helped introduce the resource to a wider education audience.



## Esther Wojcicki

Wrote the introduction to the book and is a champion for youth journalism  
She annually gives the 'WOJ' prize at our Film Festival to student filmmakers.

## Jonah Steinhart

AUTHOR OF THE WORKBOOK

## FREE

digital copies available for  
students and educators.

## MEDIA ARTS EDUCATION

### A documentary companion to the workbook.

MY HERO also produced REEL HEROES: Student Films and Filmmakers, a 30-minute companion documentary to the workbook. Built from award-winning student films and filmmaker interviews, it gives young creators a concrete look at craft, structure, and the choices behind strong work.

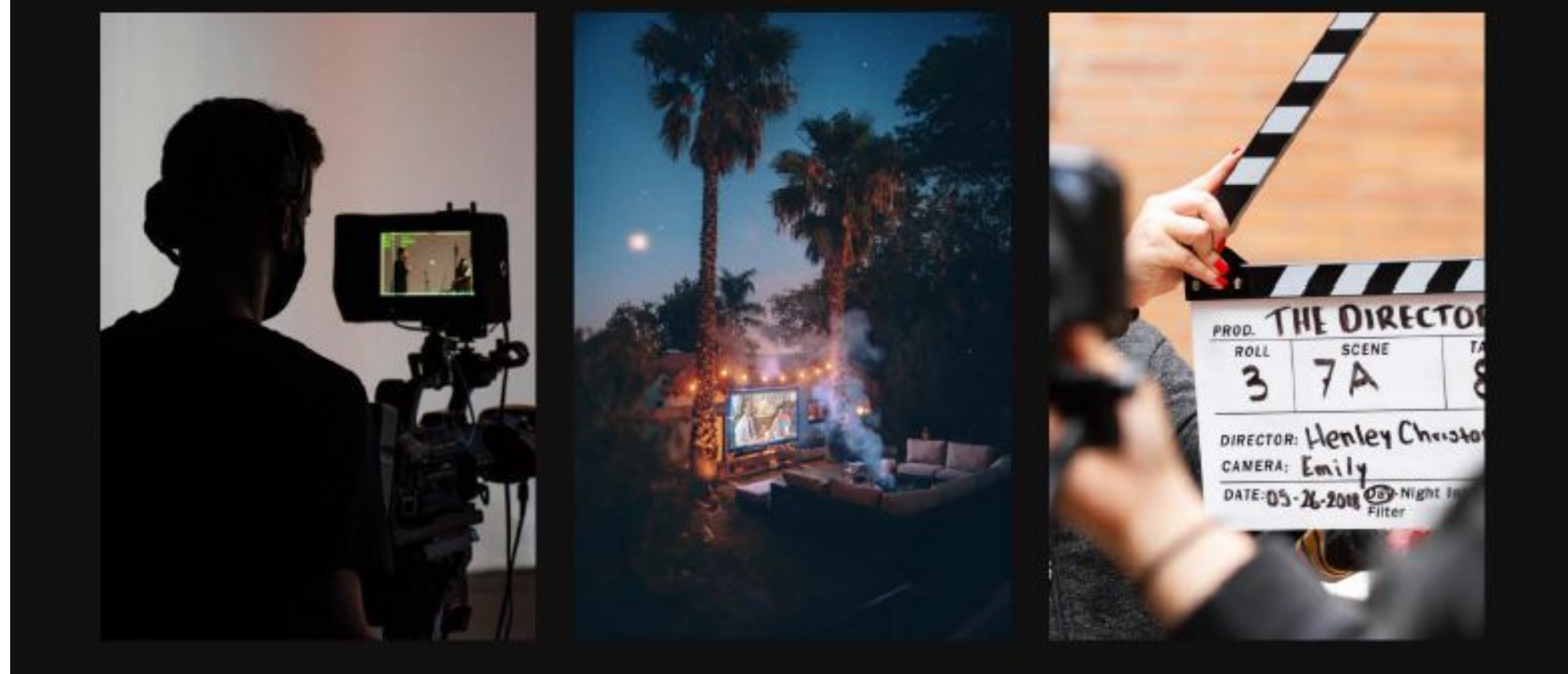
The documentary aired in December on KLCS-PBS through OC World. Because KLCS is owned by LAUSD, that broadcast also strengthened MY HERO's visibility as an education-focused media resource.



SPONSORED BY COAST FILM FESTIVAL AND THE RIVIAN SOUTH COAST THEATER

THE MY HERO PROJECT PRESENTS

# REEL HEROES: STUDENT FILMS AND FILMMAKERS



Join us as MY HERO storytellers, and the heroes they've introduced to the world, gather in Laguna for an evening of inspiring stories, uplifting music and the premiere screening of "Reel Heroes: Student Films and Filmmakers" a 30-minute glimpse into The MY HERO Project.

## 20 SEPTEMBER 2025

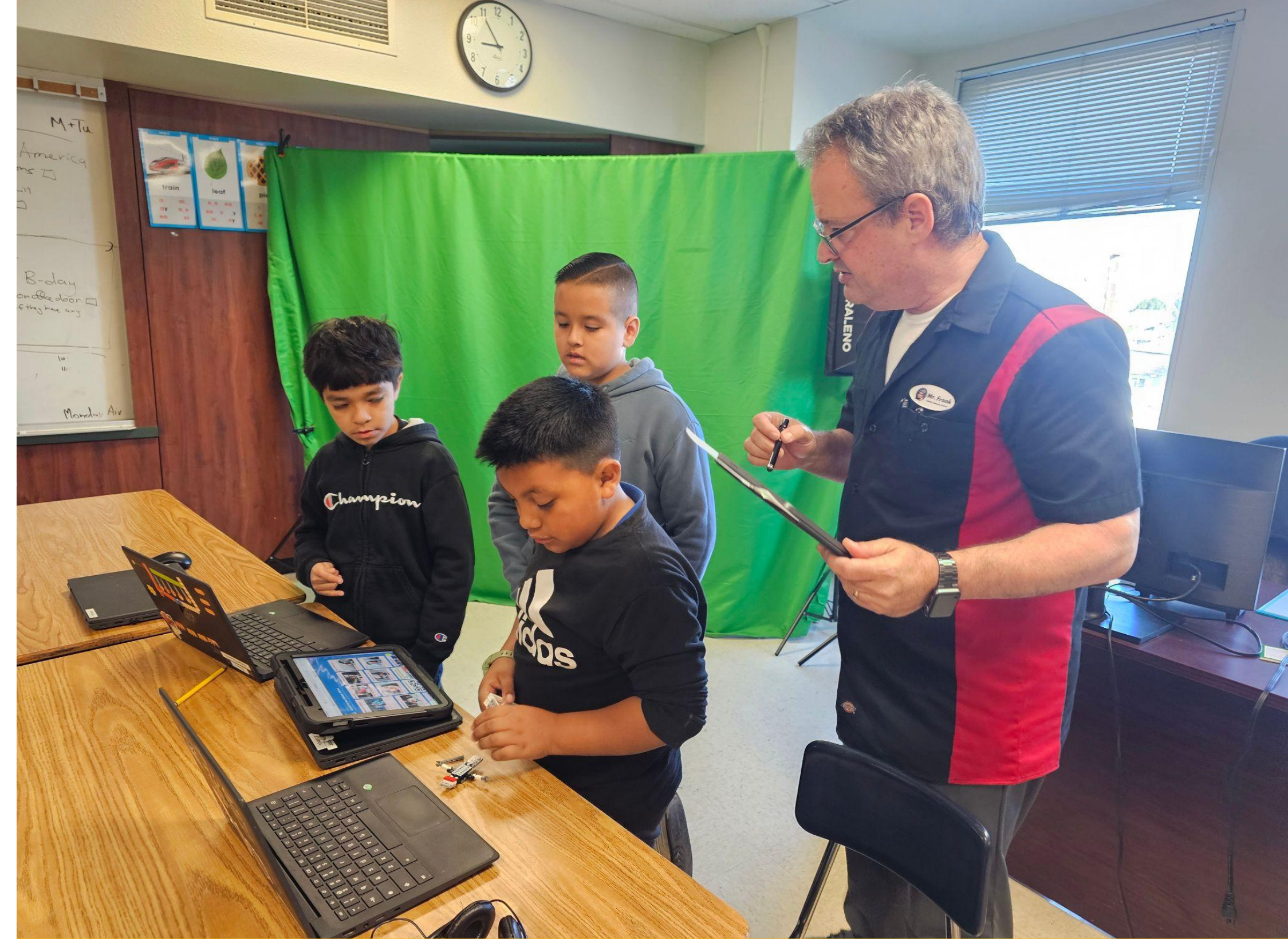
RIVIAN SOUTH COAST THEATER, 162 S COAST HWY, LAGUNA BEACH, CA

## MEDIA ARTS EDUCATION

# Ascot Avenue Elementary shows the model in practice.

At LAUSD's Ascot Avenue Elementary School, support from the Max Factor Family Foundation, Los Angeles Unified School District, and the Scripps Family Impact Fund helped MY HERO bring mentorship, training, and media arts education into the school.

Ascot is one example of what MY HERO can do when grant support and school partnership make sustained classroom work possible. Students created award-winning films about their STEAM and Community Heroes while building writing, media literacy, and production skills.



**Pilot School**

ASCOT AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**On-the-ground model**

WORKSHOPS, MENTORSHIP, AND STUDENT STORYTELLING  
SUPPORTED IN THE CLASSROOM

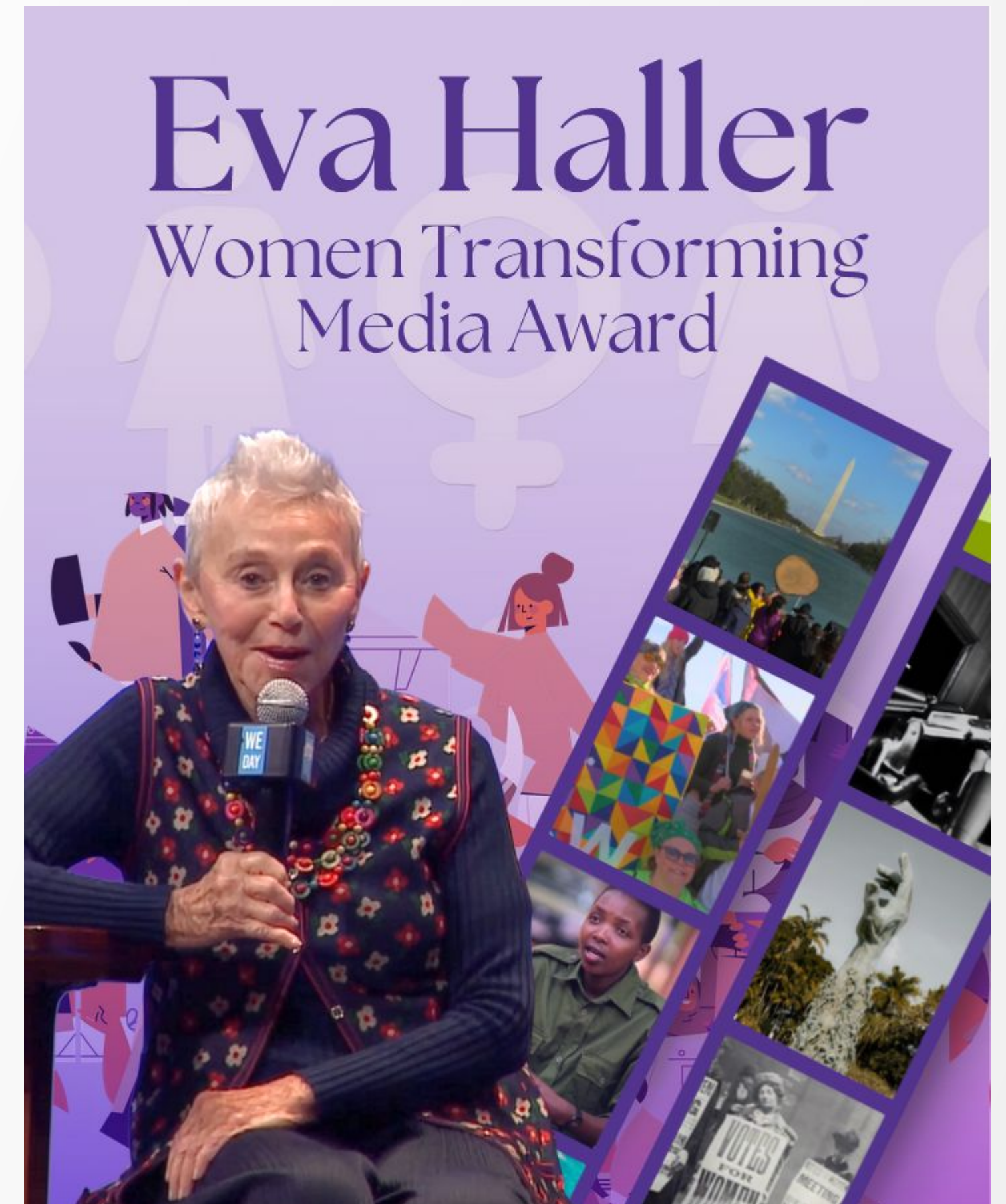
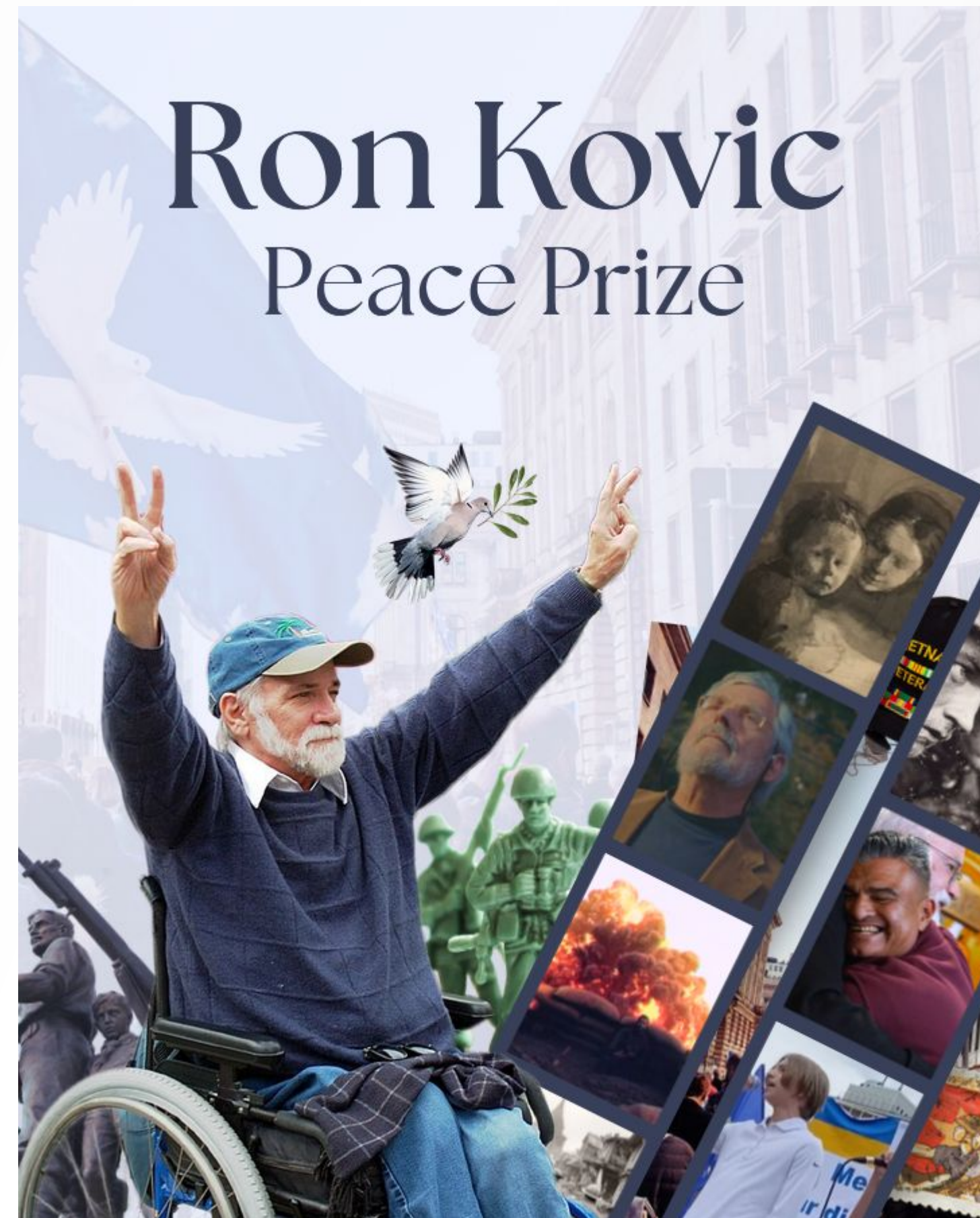
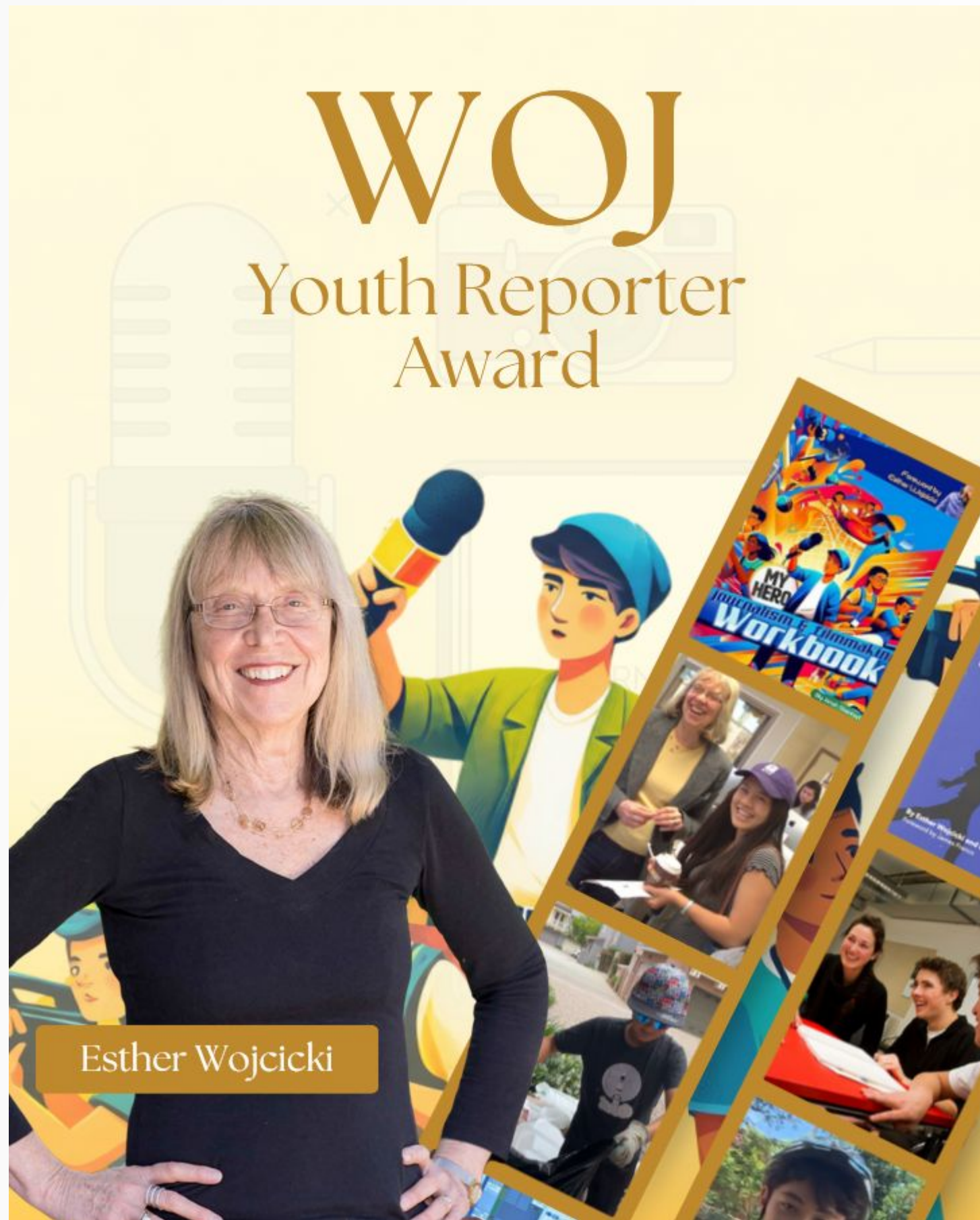
# INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

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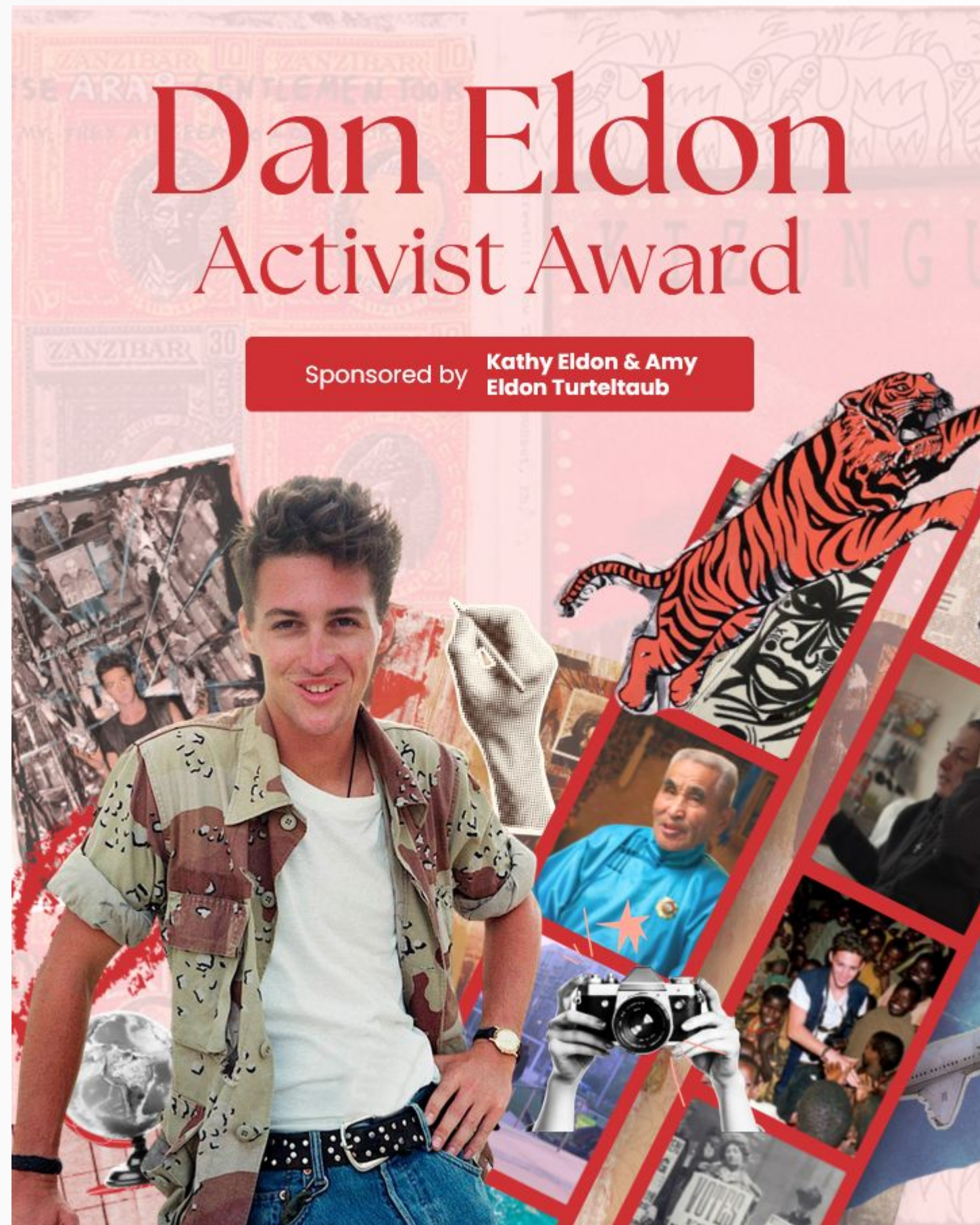
Since 2005, the MY HERO International Film Festival has given students and professional filmmakers a global platform for short films that honor people working for peace, ocean stewardship, healthy relationships, women transforming media, social justice, and the public good.



# SPECIAL AWARDS



# SPECIAL AWARDS



**Dan Eldon**  
Activist Award

Sponsored by **Kathy Eldon & Amy Eldon Turteltaub**

The graphic features a central photograph of Dan Eldon, a young man with a camera, set against a background of various images including a tiger, a globe, and a collage of photos. The text is in a serif font, with the name 'Dan Eldon' in a larger, red font.



**Relationships First**  
Award

Sponsored by **FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY FAMILY**

The graphic features a central photograph of a woman kissing a young girl on the cheek, set against a background of various images including a family silhouette, a child, and a collage of photos. The text is in a serif font, with 'Relationships First' in a larger, purple font.



**Sylvia Earle**  
Ocean Conservation Award

Sponsored by **ONEWORLD ONEOCEAN**

The graphic features a central photograph of Sylvia Earle in scuba gear, set against a background of various images including coral, jellyfish, and a collage of photos. The text is in a serif font, with 'Sylvia Earle' in a larger, blue font.

# INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

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## A milestone year for MY HERO's global film community.

In November 2024, MY HERO celebrated its 20th Annual International Film Festival with a special awards ceremony at the Moss Theater at New Roads School. Hosted by MY HERO alumna Gabrielle Gorman, the evening brought together filmmakers, educators, students, and longtime supporters to celebrate stories that move audiences toward empathy and action.

Presenters included Ron Kovic, Esther Wojcicki, Kathy Eldon, and Daniel Eldon Turteltaub. Winners included Goldie Hawn, Tiffany Shlain, Kids in the Spotlight Director T.G. Charity, and student and professional filmmakers whose work reflected the range and seriousness of the festival's mission.



# A second public screening extended the life of the festival and widened the audience.

In December 2024, MY HERO returned to Laguna Beach for a special screening of festival highlights at the Rivian South Coast Theater. The event created another public space for community, recognition, and reflection around the films and the people behind them.

At the screening, Judy Anderson, President of The Foundation for the Contemporary Family, presented the Relationships First Award to USC graduate student Dima Puchkarev, and the Global Educator Award was presented to Shaun and Greg MacGillivray.



# Festival honors extend the reach of the work and create more ways to participate.

Alongside its main festival categories, MY HERO presents special awards and year-round contests that recognize courage, empathy, imagination, and public service across film, art, poetry, and poster design.

Programs such as the Robert Shetterly Portrait Prize, the Visualize Heroism Poster Contest, and the Mattie Stepanek Poetry Award invite students and artists to contribute in many forms, reinforcing the festival's larger message: heroism can be seen, heard, written, filmed, and shared.

**SUBMIT BY JUNE 1ST 2026**  
**CALL FOR ENTRIES**  
Mattie J.T. Stepanek Poetry Contest  
myhero.com/poetry-contest  
In partnership with the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Peace Foundation

**SUBMIT BY JUNE 1ST 2026**  
**MY HERO Visualize Heroism Art Contest**  
myhero.com/my-hero-art-contest-for-students-of-all-ages

**SUBMIT BY MARCH 1ST 2026**  
**Robert Shetterly Portrait Contest**  
myhero.com/portrait-contest  
Courtesy Robert Shetterly

# EVA HALLER: A WORK IN PROGRESS

## A feature documentary rooted in MY HERO's larger mission.

Eva Haller: A Work in Progress, a feature documentary directed by Jeanne Meyers won honors and was screened at multiple festivals around the globe. The film opened The Illuminate Film Festival in Santa Barbara, where Eva Haller received a special award.

The film expands MY HERO's storytelling work and highlights a life marked by resilience, community, and civic commitment.



## THE MY HERO PROJECT

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# Thirty years of public storytelling, education, and creative work.



**1995** MY HERO  
LAUNCHED ONLINE

**30 Years**

OF ARCHIVE-BUILDING, EDUCATION  
AND GLOBAL COMMUNITY

For thirty years, MY HERO has built its case through publication, education, and curation: stories matter, young people need constructive role models, and a public archive can shape how people see their communities and themselves.

What began in 1995 has grown into a trusted platform used by teachers, students, artists, filmmakers, and readers around the world.



**Founders**

KAREN PRITZKER VLOCK, JEANNE MEYERS,  
AND RITA STERN MILCH

# The next chapter builds on the same public mission.

As MY HERO looks ahead, the core work remains clear: keep the library open and trusted, deepen media arts education, elevate student voices, and continue bringing people together through story, art, audio, and film.

That need is still concrete. Young people and educators need credible, constructive media spaces, and MY HERO continues to serve that role by combining curation, access, and opportunities to create.



**The work reflected in this report is made possible by a small, committed team of educators, artists, producers, designers, editors, interns, and collaborators.**

**Jeanne Meyers**

Co-Founder & Director

**Stephanie Cole**

Administrative Manager

**Mohamed Sidibay**

Interim Director

**Nathan Smith**

Art Director & Webmaster

**Santos Herrera**

Film Festival & Media Arts Education

**Rachel Priebe**

Film Festival Assistant Director

**Kitty Richardson**

Film Festival Production

**Stuart Pearlman**

Interim Audio Manager

**Maria Alonso**

Graphics

**Betty Bailey**

Writer & Producer

**St. George Thompson**

Illustrator & Filmmaker

**Abigail Richardson**

Staff Writer & Editor

**Naomi Gledhill**

Staff Writer

**Anthony Pouw**

Database Programmer

**Samuel Fredericks**

USC Intern

**Ambi Butler**

USC Intern

**Samantha Caldera**

USC Intern

**Emily Sedeno**

Intern

**Andrew Scibelli**

Intern

**Stewart Hvidston**

Intern

**Maya Gonzalez**

Intern

**Alix Rousseau**

Intern



**With gratitude to  
the board members  
who support MY  
HERO's mission,  
stewardship, and  
long-term direction.**

**Jeanne Meyers**

**Mark Cavanagh**

**Cynthia Costas  
Cohen**

**Judith Zucker  
Anderson, Ph.D.**

**Carolyn  
Hodge-West**

**Eva Haller**

**Elena Corchero**

**Kathleen Duhl**

**Jennifer  
Borland, M.A.**

**Sandy Factor**

**Barbara  
MacGillivray**

**Mohamed Sidibay**

**Rita Stern Milch**

**Greg Stamos**

**Nikki Pope**



# **We thank the partners whose collaboration helped MY HERO expand its educational reach and share stories that build empathy and hope.**

Guitars in the Classroom

Ascot Avenue Elementary School

Alliance of Women Directors

Art Miles

Lincoln High School

Kids in the Spotlight

California StoryTelling Association

New Roads School

iEARN.org

AAUW

Youth Unstoppable

Mattieonline.com

Creative Visions Foundation

Eva Haller Saturday Salons

One World One Ocean

ISTE.org

Foundation for the  
Contemporary Family

USC School of  
Cinematic Arts

Sing for Hope

Streets Are for Everyone

# FY2025 at a Glance

The following information is a condensed version of our audited financial statements prepared by Piazza, Donnelly & Marlette LLP for fiscal year ending June 30, 2025 in accordance with United States generally accepted accounting principles.



**89% PROGRAM**  
Services & Resources



**10% GENERAL/ADMINISTRATIVE**  
Operations & Management



**1% FUNDRAISING**  
Fundraising Efforts

## CURRENT ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	\$840,822
Receivables	\$ 9,393
Property/equipment	\$ 597
Deposits	\$ 1,200
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$852,012</b>

## CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accrued expenses	\$ 37,671
Net assets	\$814,341
<b>Total Liability &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$852,012</b>

## REVENUE AND SUPPORT

Contributions	\$676,537
In-Kind	\$213,702
Interest and other	\$ 38,370
<b>Total Revenue and support</b>	<b>\$928,609</b>

## FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

Program	\$716,342
Fundraising	\$ 10,148
General and Administrative	\$ 90,051
<b>Total functional expenses</b>	<b>\$816,541</b>

The MY HERO Project is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.



**Special thanks to the sponsors whose support helped sustain MY HERO's work this year.**

Scripps Family Impact Fund

Seedlings Foundation

Max Factor Family  
Foundation

# **We gratefully acknowledge the donors whose generosity has sustained MY HERO over the years and helped grow a global learning community rooted in courage, creativity, and compassion.**

Abby Trachtman Hazel	Cordula Ohman	Jerry & Lorraine Factor	Mark & Robin Cavanagh	Steve and Karen Bershad
Algers Thompson	Connie Rensink	Jerrilyn & Matthew	Mary Jo Winefordner	Stacy Marienthal
Ann Ochs	Cynthia Costas Cohen	Jacobs	Mary Zimmerman	Sandy Factor
Anthony Bozanic	David Factor	Jennifer Borland	McKenna	Toni Iseman
Arthur Bushkin	David Marienthal	Jim Pelts	Nancy Caruso	Tony Medici
Barbara Sideman Fulton	David Wilmore	Joanne Tawfilis	Nancy Nickerson	Tom & Vickie Lamb
Ben Warner	Dorothy Meyers	Joann & Coby Keller	Nikki Pope	Trudy Joyce
Betsy Jenkins	Dr. Gustavo	John Secretan	Ninette Root-Golub	Wade Killefer
Blaine McFadden	Ortiz-Escalante	Joy Wolf	Odile Dewar	Barbara Flammang
Bob Whalen	Elena Corchero	Joyce Sharman	Peter & Patty Cohen	Wendy Aird
Bruce Pearlman	Ellen Freeberg	Kathleen Duhl	Peter Anderson	Yasmine Sherif
Carolyn Hodge West	Erin Gruwell	Kathleen and Greg Abel	Penny Pinsky Ellis	
Cathy Herman	Frank Guttler	Kathryn Linehan	Rowena Gerber	
Ché Rae Adams	Gary and Betsy Jenkins	Ken Koslow	Saint George Thompson	
Chris Cain	Gregory & Dale Stamos	Kimberly Kenna	Sandi and Ken Malamed	
Cindy Ortiz-Plant	Harriet Gordon	Kitty Rothschild	Sara Armstrong	
Cliff Bass	Jack Salvador	Laird Malamed	Sheri Saperstein	
			Steve Gore	



**Additional recognition  
for major supporters  
and long-standing  
champions of MY HERO.**

**Renée Edelman**

**Rita Stern Milch**

**Karen Pritzker**

**Molly McCabe**

**Eva & Yoel Haller**

**Barbara & Greg MacGillivray**

**Judith Anderson**

**Jeanne Meyers**

# Celebrating 30 Years of MY HERO

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**In September 2025, MY HERO** marked its **30th anniversary** with a celebration at Rivian South Coast Theater, honoring the teachers, students, filmmakers, artists, donors, and partners who have helped build this global archive of hope.



We invite you to become part of

*this global learning community.*



THE MY HERO PROJECT PRESENTS  
*International*  
**DAY OF PEACE**

**MY HERO**

SINCE 1995

MY HERO 20th  
INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL  
Films by Kids For Kids  
WINNER  
Presented to  
The Runaway Bear  
Alivia Hsu  
Imagine It