

The MY HERO Project

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**

FY2025 at a Glance

MY HERO's FY2025 audited financial statements report \$928,609 in total revenue and support, \$816,541 in total functional expenses, \$814,340 in year-end net assets, and \$840,822 in cash and cash equivalents.

Those audited results supported MY HERO's core public work during the year, including its website, workshops, Media Arts Education programs, and the MY HERO International Film Festival, while maintaining access to a multimedia library used in 174 countries.



\$928,609

**TOTAL REVENUE
AND SUPPORT**

\$816,541

**TOTAL
FUNCTIONAL
EXPENSES**

\$814,340

**YEAR-END
NET ASSETS**

\$840,822

**CASH AND CASH
EQUIVALENTS**

5,500

**VOLUNTEER HOURS CONTRIBUTED
DURING FY2025**

A GROWING MEDIA LIBRARY

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.

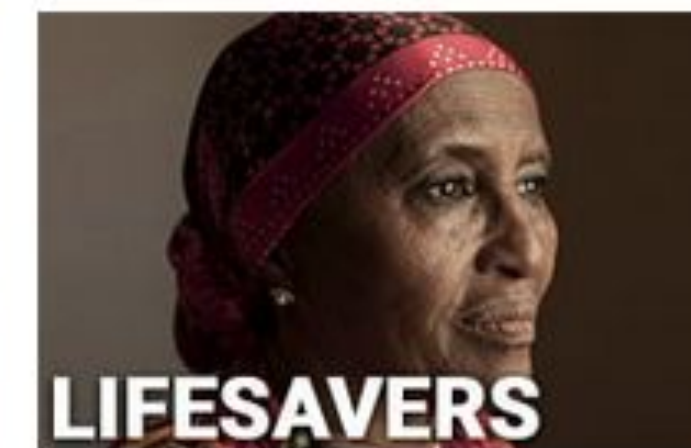


A GROWING MEDIA LIBRARY

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.

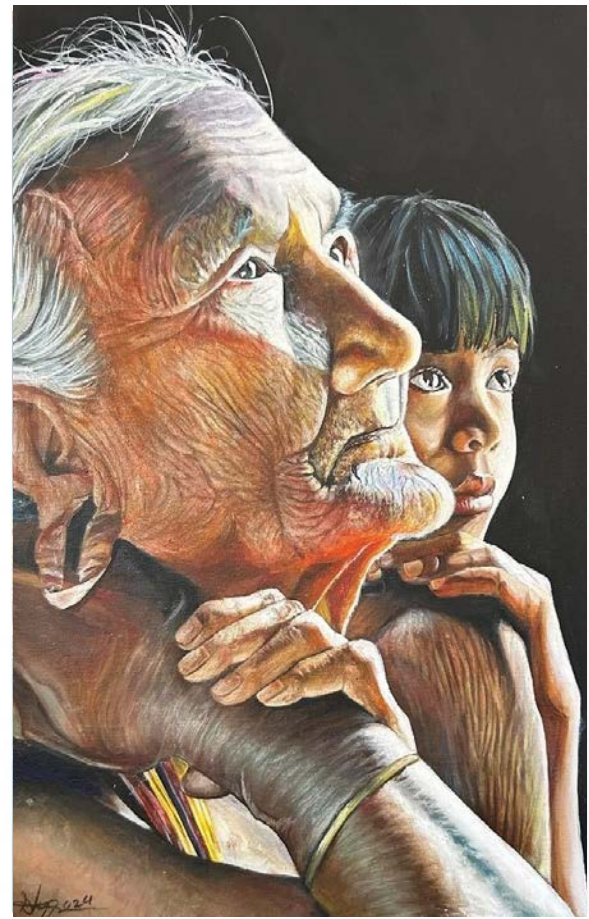


A GROWING MEDIA LIBRARY

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.

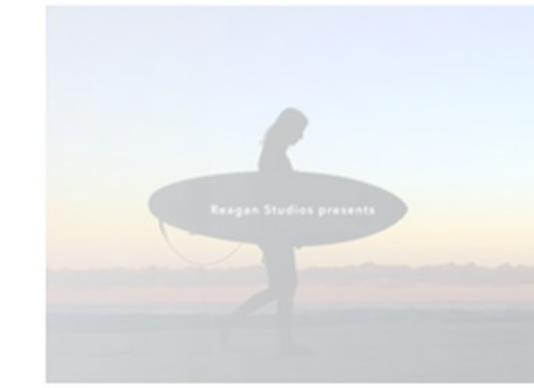
Many festival selections become part of the library, extending their classroom life far beyond a single screening. Teachers can return to them throughout the year, and students can see how powerful storytelling takes shape through image, sound, structure, and point of view.

Darius Goes West



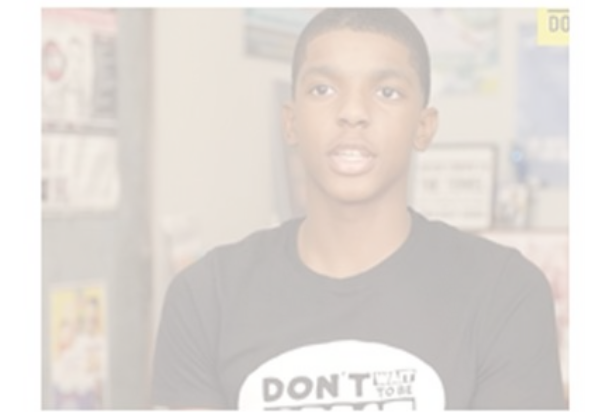
Darius captures the hearts of a nation on his journey west to spread awareness about Muscular Dystrophy.

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

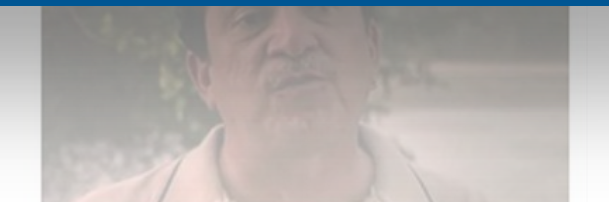
Houses
Budget... of

Love!



3,000+ SHORT FILMS

Holly Carter



Randall Arauz fights shark finning in Costa Rica.

Rights of Nature



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.

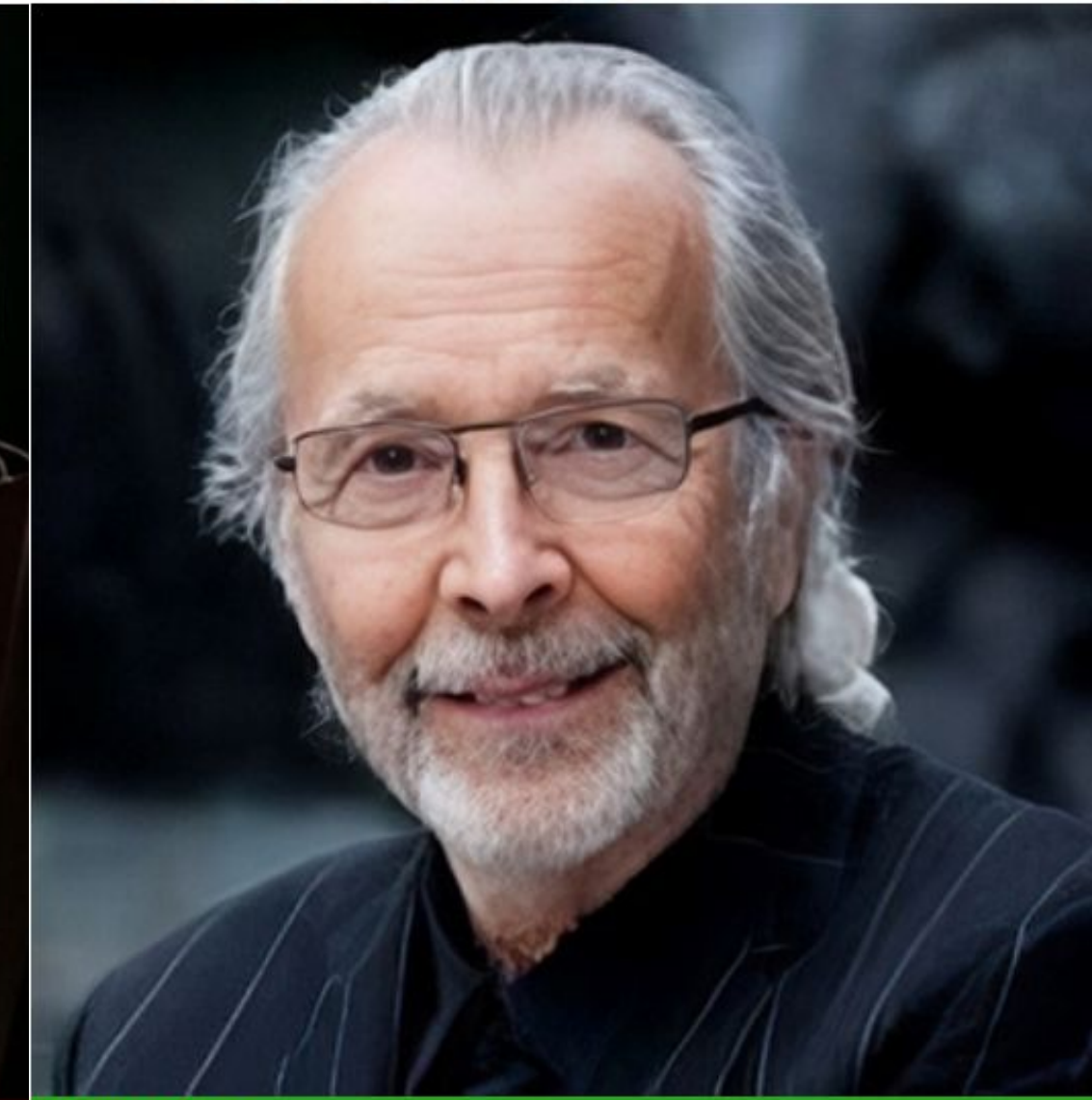
That editorial care is part of what gives the archive lasting value. Stories, art, films, audio, and lesson-plan-ready media are maintained so visitors can discover original work, navigate by theme, and return to the library as a trusted public resource throughout the year.

stories



Diana Chao Changing the World for Mental Health

audio



Herb Alpert

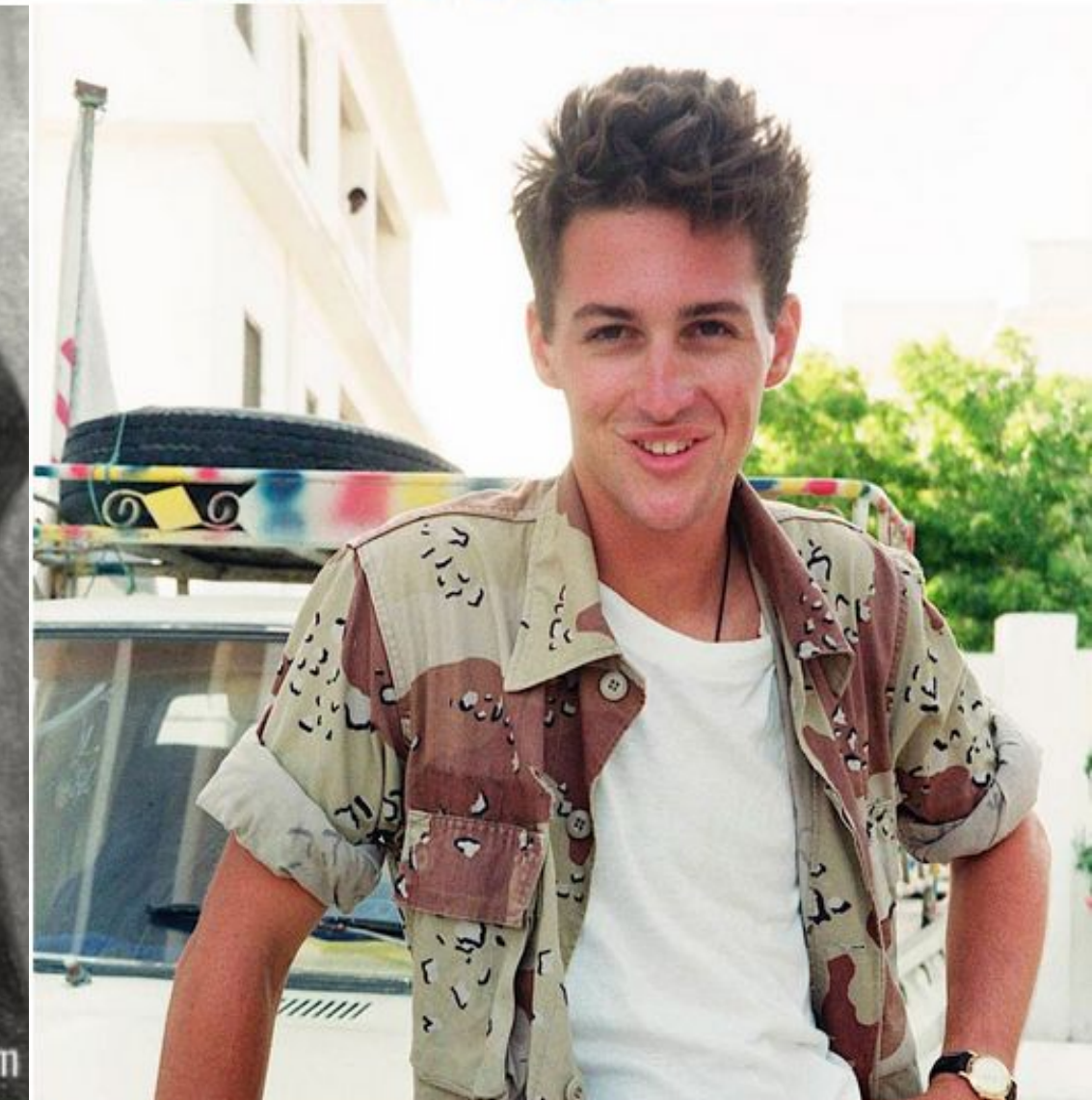
art



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

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.

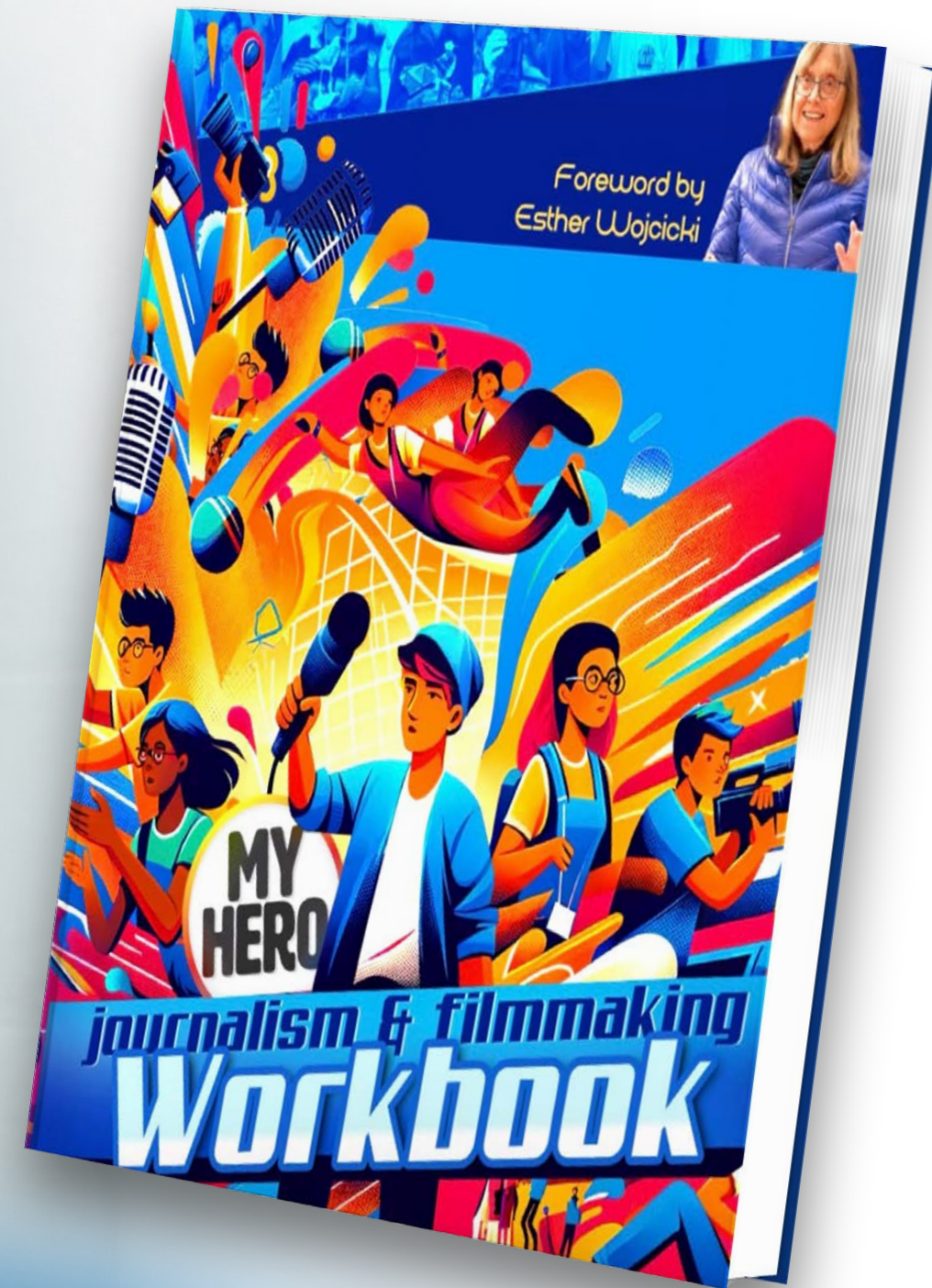
Between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025, MY HERO reached classrooms across multiple states and countries. That broader use provides the context for deeper site-based partnerships such as Ascot Avenue Elementary.

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.

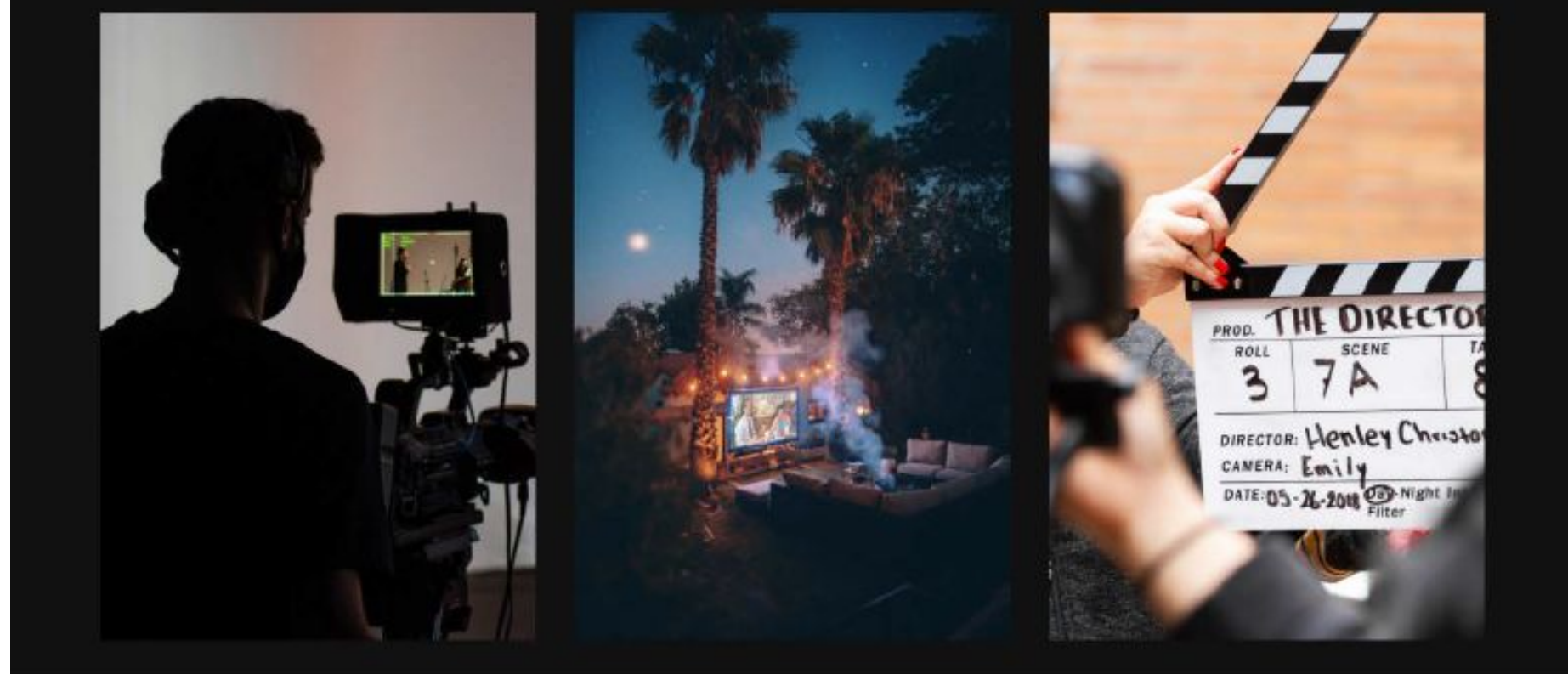
The documentary aired in December on KLCS-PBS through OC World. Because KLCS is owned by LAUSD, that broadcast also strengthened MY HERO's visibility as an education-focused media resource.



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

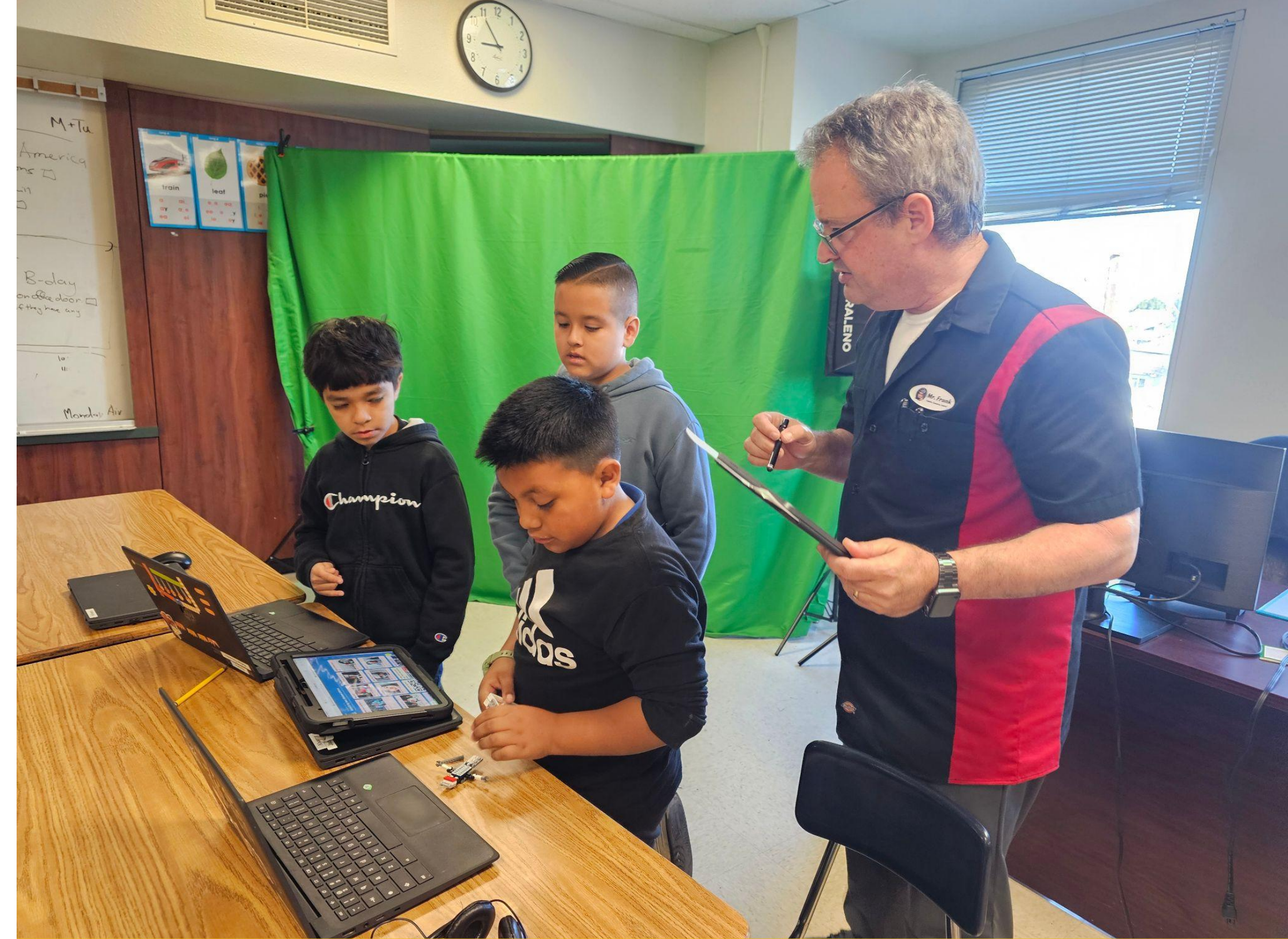
RIVIAN SOUTH COAST THEATER, 162 S COAST HWY, LAGUNA BEACH, CA

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

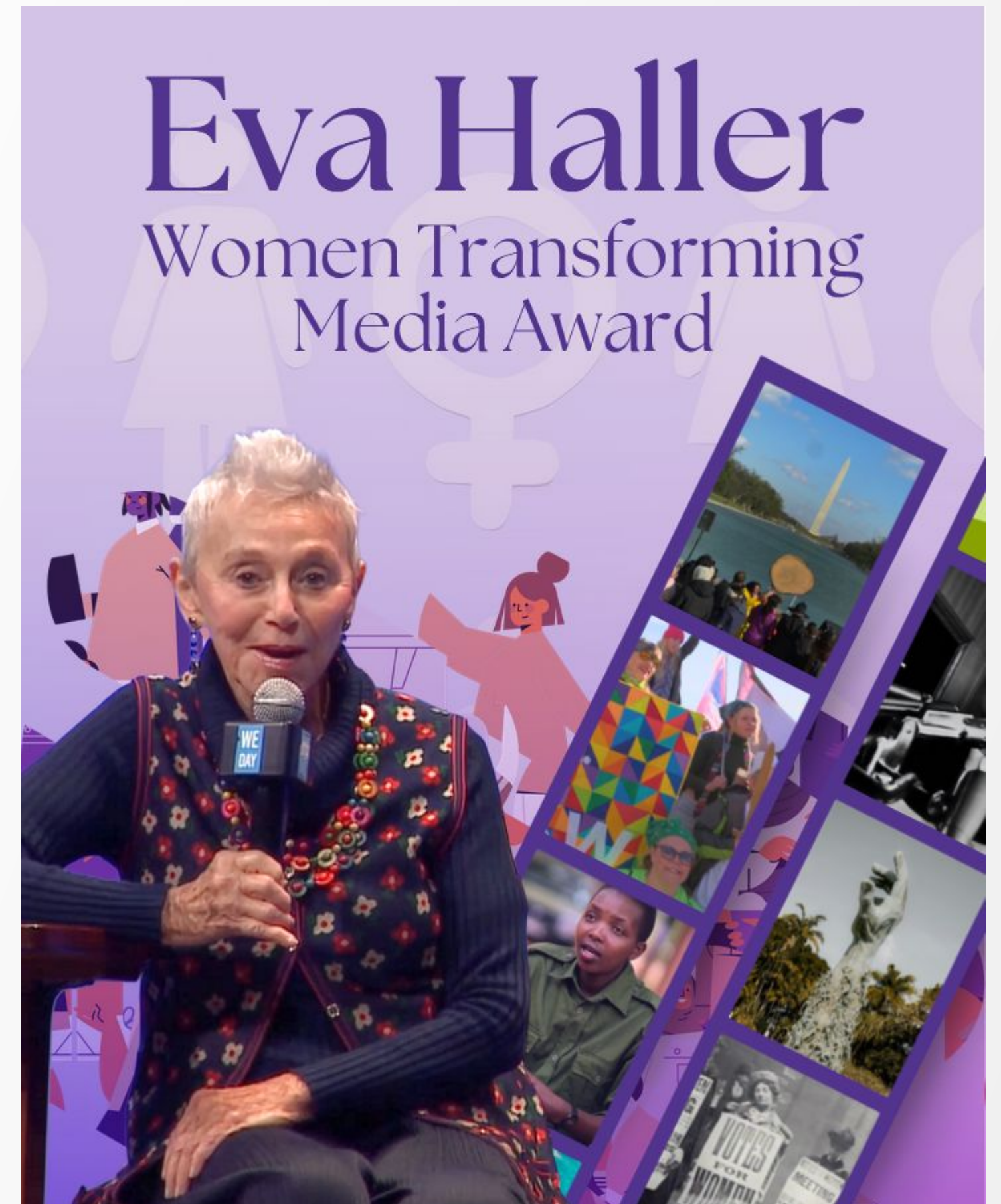
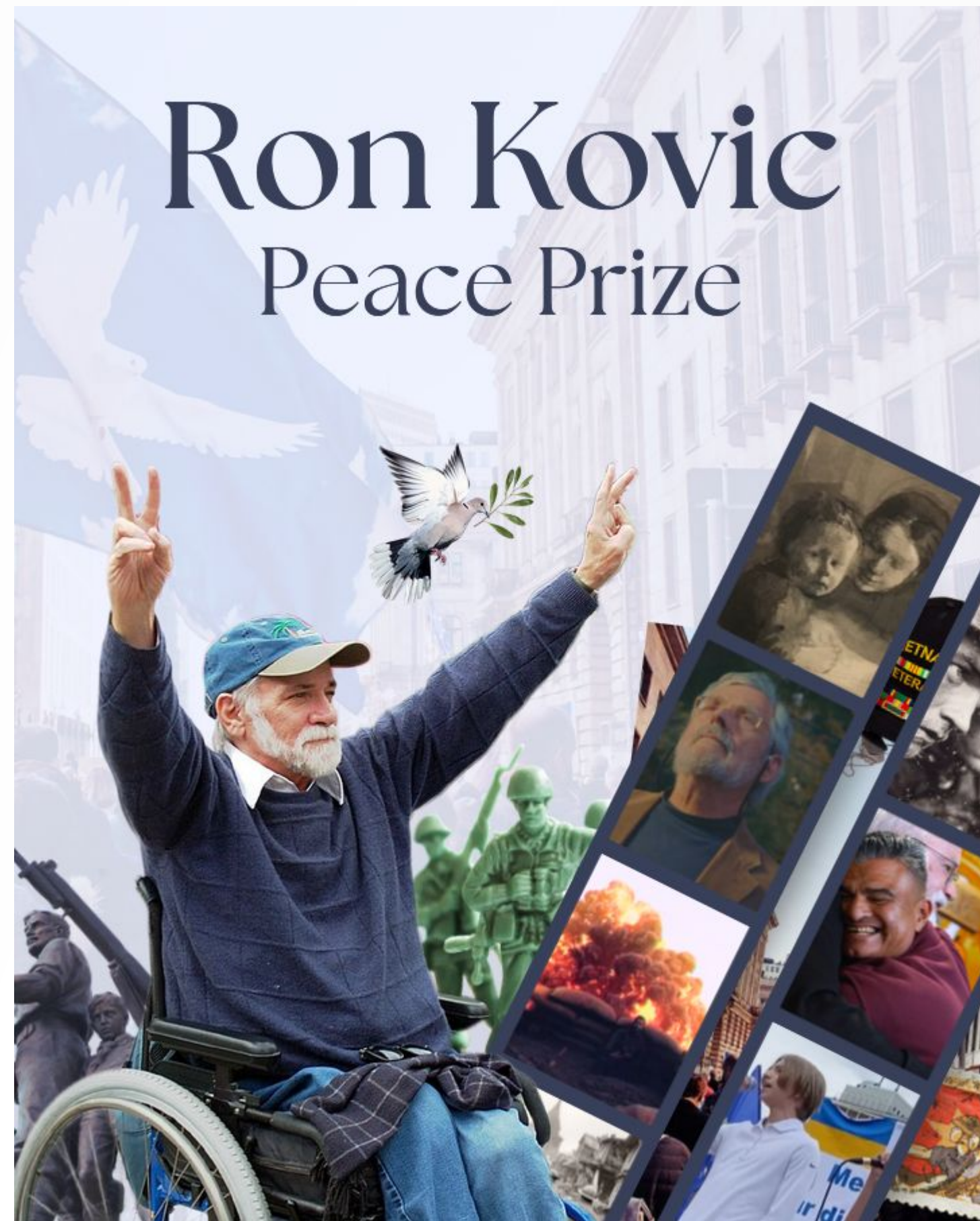
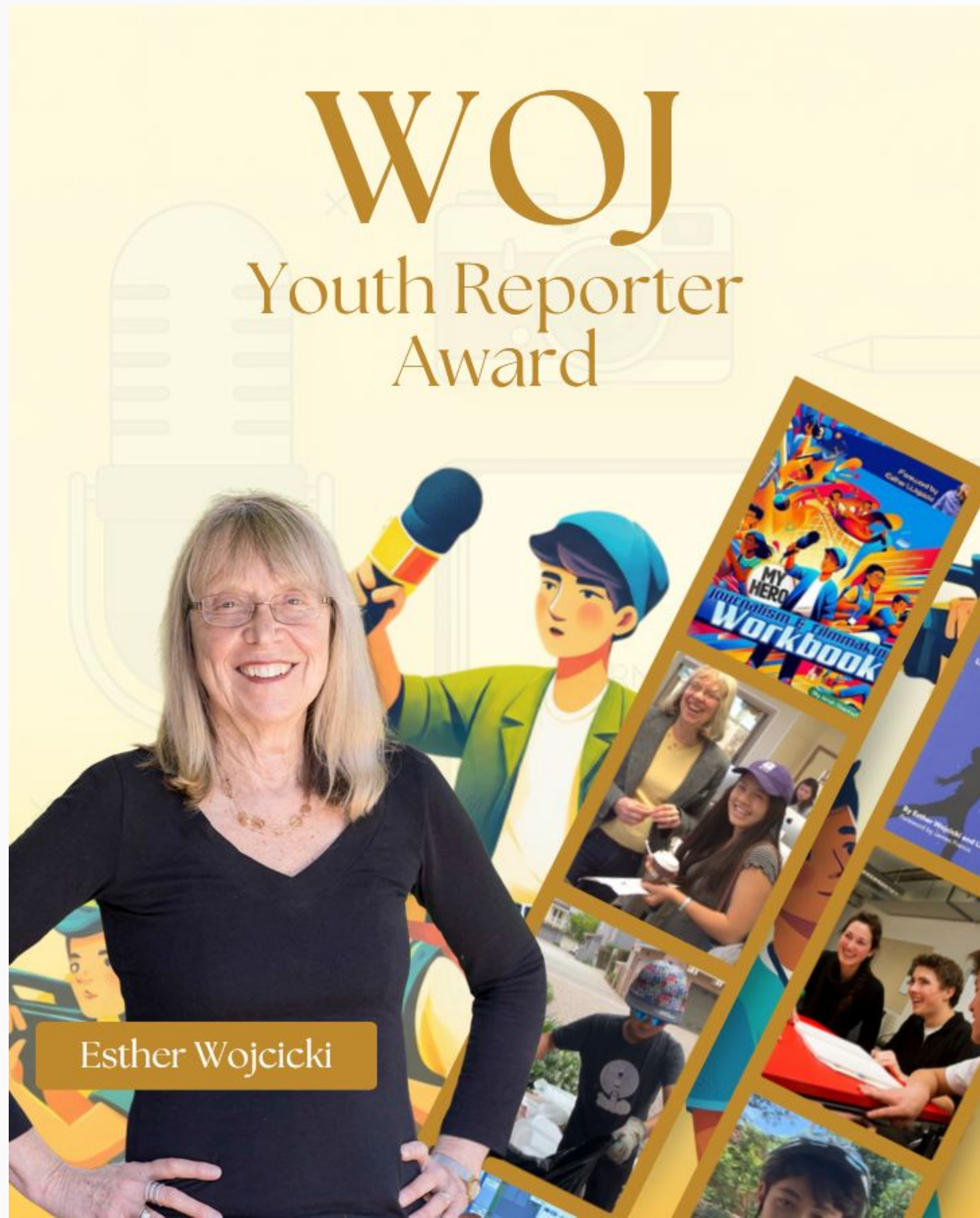
WORKSHOPS, MENTORSHIP, AND STUDENT STORYTELLING
SUPPORTED IN THE CLASSROOM

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

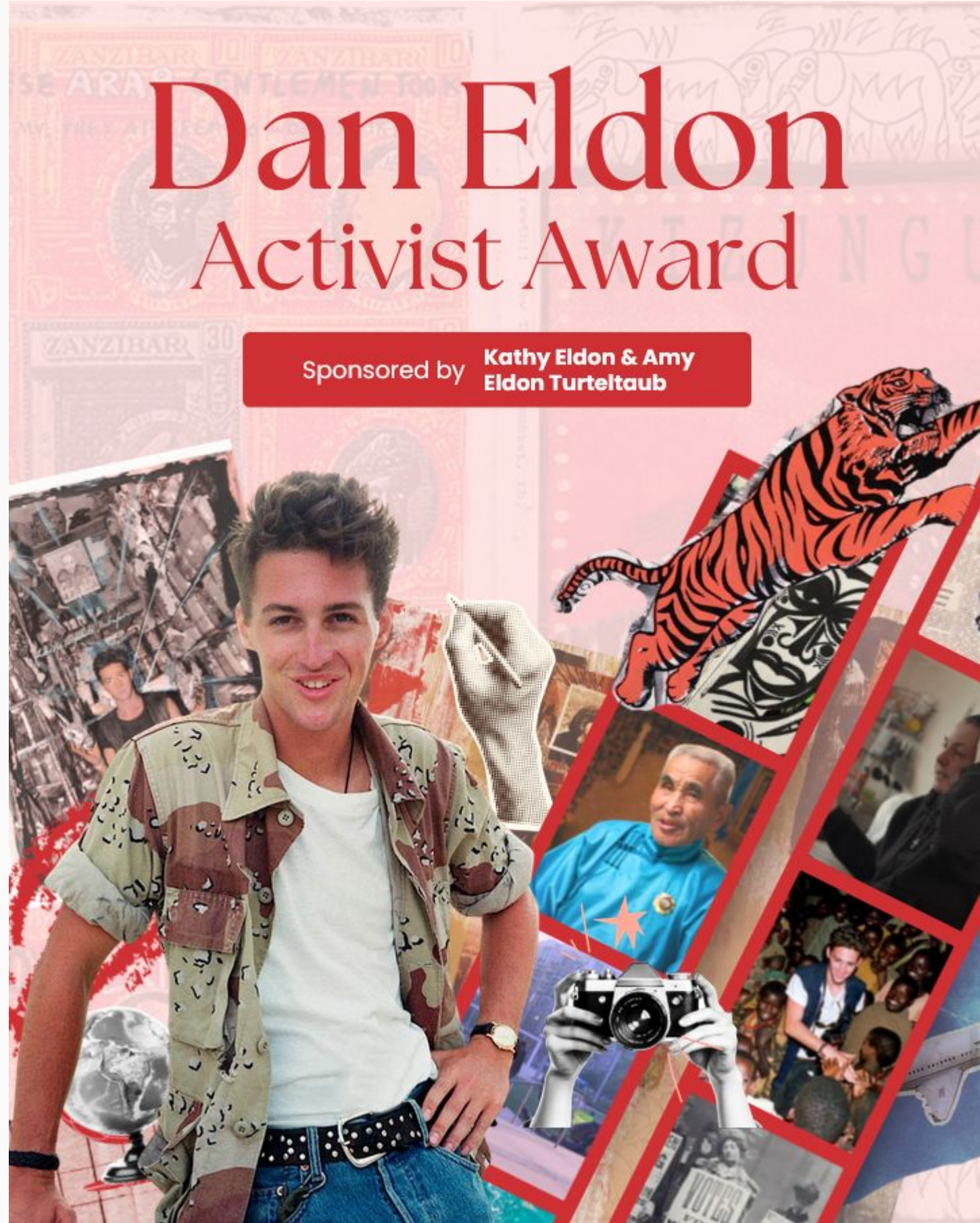
Since 2005, the MY HERO International Film Festival has given students and professional filmmakers a global platform for short films that honor people working for peace, ocean stewardship, healthy relationships, women transforming media, social justice, and the public good.



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, and the overall color palette is warm and red-toned.



Relationships First
Award

Sponsored by **FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY FAMILY**

The graphic shows a woman kissing a young girl on the cheek, with a collage of photos of families and children in the background. The text is in a serif font, and the background is a light purple color with faint line art of people.



Sylvia Earle
Ocean Conservation Award

Sponsored by **ONEWORLD ONEOCEAN**

The graphic features a diver in the foreground, with a collage of photos of marine life and underwater scenes in the background. The text is in a serif font, and the background is a light blue color with faint line art of coral and jellyfish.

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

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 A WORK HALLER: IN PROGRES S

MY HERO FILMS

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

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

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.



1995 MY HERO
LAUNCHED ONLINE

30 Years

OF ARCHIVE-BUILDING, EDUCATION
AND GLOBAL COMMUNITY



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

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 Tractman 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	McKennaNancy Caruso	Toni Iseman
Arthur Bushkin	David Marienthal	Jim Pelts	Nancy Nickerson	Tony Medici
Barbara Sideman Fulton	David Wilmore	Joanne Tawfillis	Nikki Pope	Tom & Vickie Lamb
Ben Warner	Dorothy Meyers	Joann & Coby Keller	Ninette Root-Golub	Trudy Joyce
Betsy Jenkins	Dr. Gustavo	John Secretan	Odile Dewar	Wade Killefer
Blaine McFadden	Ortiz-Escalante	Joy Wolf	Peter & Patty Cohen	Barbara Flammang
Bob Whalen	Elena Corchero	Joyce Sharman	Peter Anderson	Wendy Aird
Bruce Pearlman	Ellen Freeberg	Kathleen Duhl	Penny Pinsky Ellis	Yasmine Sherif
Carolyn Hodge West	Erin Gruwell	Kathleen and Greg Abel	Rowena Gerber	
Cathy Herman	Frank Guttler	Kathryn Linehan	Saint George Thompson	
Ché Rae Adams	Gary and Betsy Jenkins	Ken Koslow	Sandi and Ken Malamed	
Chris Cain	Gregory & Dale Stamos	Kimberly Kenna	Sara Armstrong	
Cindy Ortiz-Plant	Harriet Gordon	Kitty Rothschild	Sheri Saperstein	
Cliff Bass	Jack Salvador	Laird Malamed	Steve Gore	



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

Renee Edelman

Rita Stern Milch

Karen Pritzker

Molly McCabe

Eva & Yoel Haller

Barbara & Greg MacGillivray

Judith Anderson

Jeanne Meyers

Celebrating 30 Years of MY HERO

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.

