

**EDUCATE - INSPIRE - EMPOWER**



The **MY HERO** Project

**ANNUAL REPORT 2021**



# OUR MISSION

**MY HERO uses media, art and technology to celebrate the best of humanity. We shine a light on positive role models to help students of all ages realize their own potential to make positive change in the world.**



**Teachers and students around the globe participate in The MY HERO Project.**

# OUR STORY

“ *There is a great and perhaps decisive battle to be fought against ignorance, intolerance, and indifference.* ”  
-Edward R. Murrow

For over a quarter century, MY HERO has provided hundreds of millions of students access to a safe, commercial-free online venue, where they can discover and share essays, art, audio and films that celebrate positive role models from around the world.

Our non-profit educational project showcases those working for human rights, social justice, peace and environmental protection. We honor diverse women, children and men whose accomplishments in the arts, science and technology pave the way for future heroes.

Teachers use MY HERO in the classroom and for distance learning to promote values, creativity, self-expression, cross-cultural understanding and an appreciation of diversity with students of all ages and grade levels.

Through our website, digital storytelling tools, teacher training, salons, contests, film festival and workshops, we help students gain an understanding of their ability to follow in the footsteps of heroes.

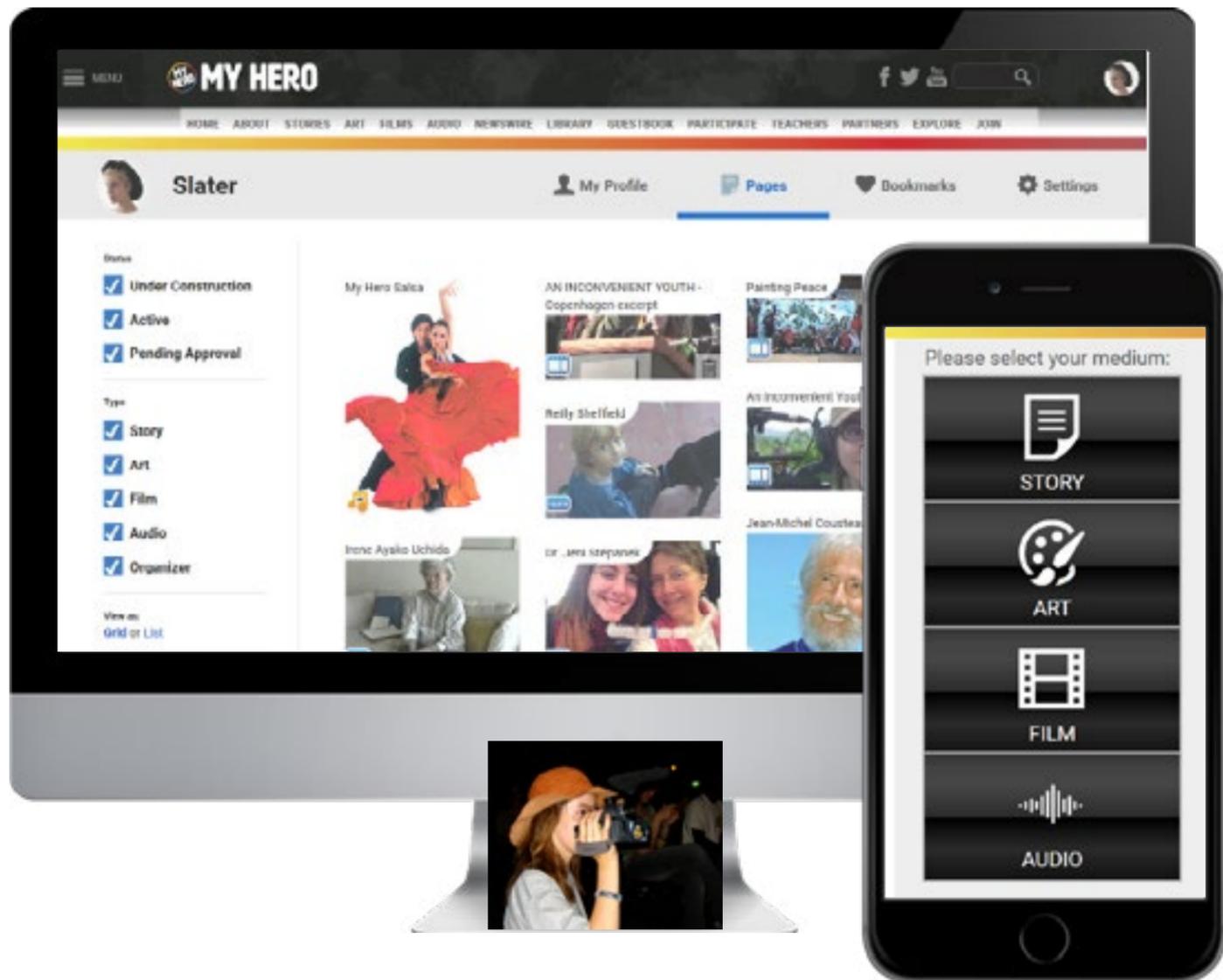
# DIGITAL STORYTELLING

myhero.com/**create**

On the MY HERO website students are provided with tools to publish web pages using text, images, audio and films on cell phones, tablets or computers at home, in school or at the library.

Teachers access special tools to manage student class work shared online and to organize playlists of selected content from our ever-growing media library.

MY HERO's [Media Arts Education Resources](#), [online tutorials](#), mentors, workshops and contests enable students and teachers to create media that honors diverse heroes from all walks of life.



## DISCOVER - CREATE - SHARE



# ONLINE MAGAZINE & CALENDAR

Our team curates special homepage features that change weekly and include [International Women's Day](#), [Black History Month](#), [Earth Day](#), [World Oceans Day](#) and more... Each feature provides links to short films, art and essays from our growing library.

[myhero.com/calendar](http://myhero.com/calendar)

Find inspiration every day of the year by exploring our daily calendar.

## April - Jazz Appreciation Month



## April 22<sup>nd</sup> - Earth Day



## October 11<sup>th</sup> - Day of the Girl Child



## November 10<sup>th</sup> - Malala Day



## December 10<sup>th</sup> - Human Rights Day



# STORY LIBRARY

[myhero.com/stories](http://myhero.com/stories)

An online resource with over 50,000 stories about all kinds of heroes from family members to global leaders.

*"When people tell me nothing has changed, I say walk in my shoes and I will show you change."*  
Congressman John Lewis

Students and professional writers contribute to our library. Prizes are awarded to students for outstanding stories.



# ART GALLERY

myhero.com/**gallery**

Over 3,700 works of art made by students and professional artists.

Prizes are awarded for outstanding portraits.



▲ "Defy Gravity" by Kyle Kerr, Severance, Colorado

- ◀ "Black and Essential" by Gigi Wilborn, Atlanta, Georgia
- "What Woman Means to Me," by Shonibare Olatunbosun, Zaria, Nigeria
- "Wonderful Hedy Lamarr" by Siu Ka Yi, Hong Kong, China
- "Katherine Johnson" by St. George Thompson, California, USA

# AUDIO ROOM

[myhero.com/audio](http://myhero.com/audio)

**Narrated stories** from the MY HERO library support early readers, ESL and ELL students in classrooms and online.

Students and professional artists contribute **music** and **poetry** to inspire, entertain and engage.



**LISTEN and READ**

<b>AIDS Hero:</b> Florence Ngobeni	<b>AIDS Hero:</b> Ryan White	<b>Angel Hero:</b> St. Katharine Drexel by Kristine Shibata from Makawao	<b>Animal Hero:</b> Bear	<b>Animal Hero:</b> Koko Story by Jennie from Ansonia	<b>Artist Hero:</b> Edmonia Lewis by Jerrilyn Madeline Jacobs	<b>Kenji Williams - Founder &amp; Director of Bella Gaia - in Conversation with The MY HERO Project</b>	<b>Tom Madsen</b>	<b>Lifesaver Hero:</b> Chiune and Yukiko Sugihara by Jacob Green
<b>Business Hero:</b> Maggie Johnson by Laura Tucker for MY HERO	<b>Artist Hero:</b> Maria Tallchief by Rebecca Miller	<b>Community Hero:</b> William Kamkwamba	<b>Child Hero:</b> Ruby Nell Bridges	<b>Community Hero:</b> Ablaye by Cheikh	<b>Community Hero:</b> Neil deGrasse Tyson	<b>Philosopher Hero:</b> Confucius by Aaron from San Diego	<b>Musician Hero:</b> Louis (Satchmo) Armstrong by Yusuke from San Diego	<b>Musician Hero:</b> Wynton Marsalis by The MY HERO Project
<b>Earthkeeper Hero:</b> Rachel Carson by Wendy Jewell	<b>Earthkeeper Hero:</b> Elin Gruwell y	<b>Earthkeeper Hero:</b> David T. Suzuki by Anthony from Edmonton -	<b>Earthkeeper Hero:</b> Sachajwea	<b>Earthkeeper Hero:</b> Harriet Tubman	<b>Writer Hero:</b> Anne Frank	<b>Poet Hero:</b> Emily Elizabeth Dickinson by Cassie from Herrin	<b>Science Hero:</b> Carlos Juan Finlay by Emma Navajas	<b>Ronald V. Dellums</b>
<b>Health Hero:</b> Mario Thomas by Ryan from Los	<b>Health Hero:</b> Cesar Chavez	<b>Health Hero:</b> Hannah Taylor	<b>Health Hero:</b> Harriet Tubman	<b>Young Heroes:</b> Skye Malik by Sue	<b>Young Heroes:</b> Anne Frank	<b>Science Hero:</b> Carlson	<b>Science Hero:</b> Finlay	<b>Science Hero:</b> Dellums

**MUSIC**

**POETRY**

**STORYTELLING**



# FILMS

[myhero.com/films](https://myhero.com/films)

**Over 3,000 MY HERO short films available free online.**

Students and professional filmmakers have found a place to create and share documentary, experimental, animated and narrative short films about heroes.

Teachers use MY HERO's film library to enrich learning, promote cross-cultural understanding and provide stories of hope to students around the world.

In support of young filmmakers, MY HERO provides Media Arts Education Resources to help students create their own hero-themed films.

**Molly's Film - by Jonathan Dumont - Head of Television Communications:  
The United Nations World Food Programme - ITALY  
Featuring Molly, a 12-year-old girl from Nairobi, Kenya**





Winners and heroes onstage at the MY HERO International Film Festival celebrate with musician Pato Banton

Students and professional filmmakers come together with heroes, artists and musicians to share inspiring stories with our global learning community.

Screenings have been held in the George Lucas Theater at USC School of Cinematic Arts, The American Film Institute, Moss Theater at The Herb Alpert Educational Village at New Roads School, and in classrooms, community centers and libraries around the globe.

## Special Awards:

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Relationships First  
Dan Eldon Activist  
Shetterly Art Prize  
Ron Kovic Peace Prize  
MY HERO Song Contest  
MY HERO Global Educator  
Sylvia Earle Ocean Conservation  
MY HERO Immersive Storytelling  
Eva Haller Women Transforming Media

# TEACHER'S ROOM

Elementary, Middle, High School and College teachers use MY HERO in classrooms and to captivate students while distance learning.



**MY HERO Receives**  
5 Star Learning Rating From  
Common Sense Education



- Art
- Language Arts
- Social Studies
- Peace Studies
- Social Justice
- Human Rights
- Women's Studies
- Environmental Education
- Ocean Conservation
- Global Studies
- ESL / ELL
- Media Arts Education
- Digital Art
- Journalism
- Film-making
- Character Education
- Social Emotional Learning and more...

*"This is a difficult time in history, and MY HERO creates an awareness of everyday individuals - heroes, not just problems in our society. We need more positivity. Before deciding on heroes or beginning their stories, my students have to collaborate with their families on defining the characteristics of a hero. They then have to interview their parents about their childhoods. Students experience a newfound respect for their families and connections that will impact the rest of their lives."*



-Teacher Julie Reidel  
High School Teacher, Kansas, United States

# TEACHER FEEDBACK



The MY HERO Project's extensive existing training materials, and staff support in creating a curriculum tailored for our program, helped make our summer bridge program a huge success. The students made eight "My Hero" films in groups, all while being completely remote from one another. I am so grateful for the help we received from The MY HERO Project.

**Teacher Coleen Bondy at Los Angeles Unified School District, USA**

Taking part in this global storytelling project helps students understand the many ways each one of us can make a difference in the world. As we face the COVID challenge of distance learning, MY HERO's FREE online library of media provides much needed stories of hope and positive role models to empower our youth - our future heroes.

**Michael B. Matsuda  
Superintendent Anaheim Union High School, USA**



We live in Iran, and we are grade eleven. This is an exciting project because it has given us a vast perspective toward different people from different parts of the world. We loved doing this. Thank you MY HERO.

**Teacher Farnoush Ahmadzadeh Mashar, Iran**



My students used MY HERO to learn more about the world and develop a global citizenship mindset.

**Teacher Eveline Frieitas, Brazil**



Thanks to this project, we learned about so many interesting scientists, doctors, astronauts and other Canadian heroes who have made a difference not only in their communities but in the world.

**Teacher Mali Bickley  
iEARN Coordinator, Canada**



MY HERO creates a great context to teach core character values, such as respect, justice, responsibility, etc.

**Teacher Margaret Chen  
iEARN Coordinator, Taiwan**



Thanks to MY HERO my students have become international citizens who care about Climate Change, and Human Rights. They have become future heroes dedicated to protecting and caring for one another and the environment and demonstrating with the media their success.

**Teacher/Principal Cheikh Darou Seck, Senegal**



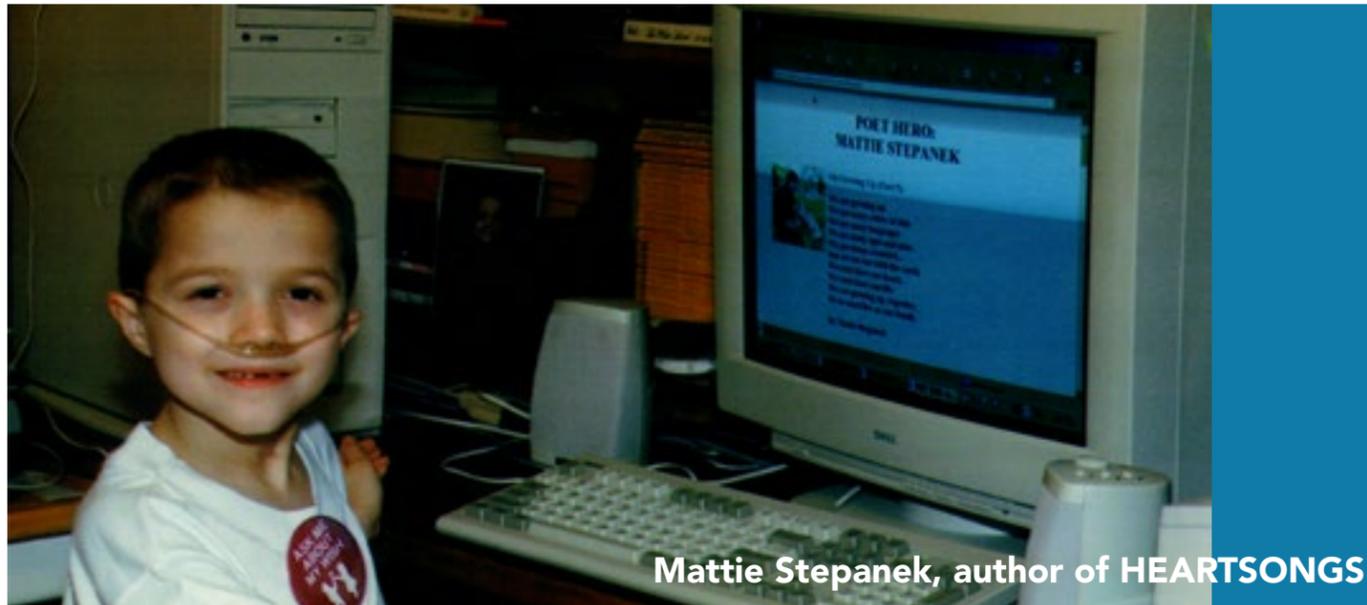
We are a fifth grade class from Morocco and because of this project we had the opportunity to take positive actions in our community: raising awareness in our village about the importance of a clean environment."

**Teacher Abdelaziz R. Rhazzali, Morocco**



# ALUMNI

Participants in The MY HERO Project go on to do amazing things.



When Jim Hawkins of Children's Hospice International nominated Mattie Stepanek as a hero on MY HERO, the young poet hero was only six years old and had already written several hundred poems. Mattie was suffering from a hereditary disease called dysautonomic mitochondrial myopathy, as was his mother. This rare form of muscular dystrophy had already claimed the lives of his three older siblings. Mattie passed away on the morning of June 22, 2004. Mattie's poems of peace and hope have touched millions of lives; his heartsongs will continue to reach people of all ages around the world for decades to come.

*"It was about 20 years ago when MY HERO chose to honor Mattie who was only 6 years old at the time, as a poet hero. MY HERO gave Mattie, a little boy, a platform for sharing his HEARTSONGS, his messages of purpose, purpose for himself and purpose for all of us. When Mattie died in 2004 just before his 14th birthday MY HERO was a place where global neighbors could turn. They were able to share comments and thoughts about Mattie. About their grief and about their ongoing hope for peace routed in lessons they had learned from this little boy."*

**Jeni Stepanek, mother of Mattie Stepanek**  
Recipient, MY HERO 2016 Humanitarian Award



Jeni and Mattie Stepanek



*"The MY HERO Project taught me the power of storytelling. It's endlessly inspiring to me as an artist (and at a deeper level, as a human) to see the empowered community of young storytellers that MY HERO has fostered impact their own communities and bring a little bit more love, understanding and tolerance into a world that so badly needs it."*

**Slater Jewell-Kemker**  
Director of feature film **Youth Unstoppable**



*"In a world where the media sensationalizes violence, the importance of organizations like MY HERO cannot be understated. MY HERO came at a time in my life when my world was in complete disarray. Unable to understand the world outside of the one I had grown up in, MY HERO taught me the true meaning of life by empowering me through the use of media and storytelling."*

**Mohamed Sidibay**  
Former child soldier from Sierra Leone, UNESCO and Global Partnership for Education Advisor

# FINANCIAL REPORT

The following information is a condensed version of our audited financial statements prepared by Piazza, Donnelly & Marlette LLP for fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 in accordance with United States generally accepted accounting principles.

## ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents .....	\$690,825
Grant receivable .....	\$326,000
Prepaid expenses .....	\$3,803
Property/equipment.....	\$95,381
Deposits.....	\$1,200
<b>Total Assets.....</b>	<b>\$1,117,209</b>

## REVENUE AND SUPPORT

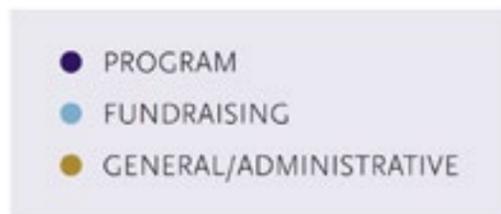
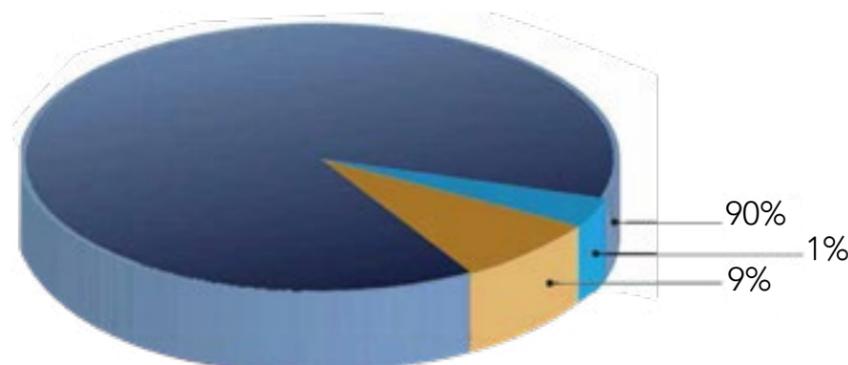
Contributions .....	\$674,598
In-Kind .....	\$221,810
Interest and other .....	\$1,620
<b>Total Revenue and support.....</b>	<b>\$898,028</b>

## CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accrued expenses.....	\$24,248
Net assets .....	\$1,092,961
<b>Total Liabilities and net assets.....</b>	<b>\$1,117,209</b>

## FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

Program .....	\$699,606
Fundraising .....	\$7,924
General and Administrative.....	\$74,119
<b>Total functional expenses.....</b>	<b>\$781,649</b>



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

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Jeanne Meyers | Laguna Beach, California** – Jeanne has been directing The MY HERO Project since its inception in 1995. She oversees all aspects of development for this award-winning multimedia project. She is a film producer and multimedia artist.

**Mark Cavanagh | Chepachet, Rhode Island** – Mark Cavanagh is a screenwriter. He founded Youth Vision, Inc., which promotes television by and for kids. A Recipient of the Action for Children’s Television Award, Mr. Cavanagh has directed projects for Public Broadcast and recently released his first feature film.

**Cynthia Costas Cohen | Beverly Hills, California** – Cynthia Costas Cohen is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in Beverly Hills, California. Cynthia’s specialties include EMDR and hypnosis. She is on the board for the Trauma Resource Institute, and co-facilitates trainings for The Trauma Resource Institute that utilizes an integrative mind-body intervention based on somatic therapies.

**Judith Zucker Anderson, Ph.D. | Laguna Beach, California** – Judith Zucker Anderson, PhD, is a clinical psychologist. She is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the UCI College of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior. Dr. Anderson also serves as President of the Foundation for the Contemporary Family (FFCF), a non-profit foundation whose mission is to support innovative research, clinical training, and community programs that address the important issues facing contemporary families.

**Carolyn Hodge-West | Cassopolis, Michigan** – Carolyn Hodge-West is a change expert and a multi-sector business leader with extensive board leadership and civic involvement. She has served on numerous boards, advisory bodies and commissions. Carolyn is a licensed speciality Executive Mentor Coach and CEO of the Hodge West Group, an executive coaching, training and wellness firm specializing in transformational leadership development, change management, and career and life transition. An entrepreneur and former educator, Carolyn integrates principles of psychology, neuroscience, human development, interpersonal communications and organizational development with strategic coaching to help clients leverage change, optimize performance and achieve business and life goals. Carolyn’s lifelong passion and commitment is to promote diversity, equity and improve the status of women and girls.

**Eva Haller | Santa Barbara, California** – Eva Haller is an activist, philanthropist with a passion for mentoring not profit leaders serving youth, women and the arts. She received an honorary doctorate from Glasgow Caledonian University and was awarded their 2014 Magnusson Fellowship. She is a trustee of the Rubin Museum of Art and the University of California Santa Barbara Foundation. Eva Haller was honored by Forbes for mentoring not profit programs serving the community. Eva was the founding board Chairman for Free the Children, she serves on the board of Blade of Grass, Asia Initiatives, Sing for Hope, News Literacy Project and annually presents the Women Transforming Media Award as part of the MY HERO Film Festival.

**Jennifer Borland, M.A. | Bloomington, Indiana** - Jennifer first became involved with MY HERO in 2007 as an evaluator for a Global Exchange Media Arts Project funded by the U.S Department of State Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs. As part of her work for Rockman et Al she has also managed evaluations for some of the world’s leading media producers, museums, game developers, and educational institutions, with grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the National Science Foundation, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. She has contributed to The MY HERO International Film Festival ever since participating as a volunteer judge.

**Sandy Factor | Los Angeles, California** - Sandy Factor is an advocate for using innovative technology and media in the classroom to promote cross cultural understanding and social and emotional learning. Sandy has helped MY HERO enrich our resources for teachers in Los Angeles and as a result around the world. Her training and work in exotic animal management has given her a unique perspective on how we connect and communicate with one another. She lives in Southern California and works with several non profit organizations.

**Barbara MacGillivray | Los Angeles, California** - Barbara MacGillivray is the Director of Research for MacGillivray Freeman Films. She has, over the last 50 year, worked on pre-production, production and post production for the award winning IMAX filmmaking company. Barbara has a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, and has also worked for 30 years in Children, Youth Services for the Orange County Health Care Agency as a Licensed Clinical Psychologist. She loves her growing family and making films with messages about conservation and education. Her organization, One World One Ocean, awards the Sylvia Earle Ocean Conservation award annually at the MY HERO International Film Festival. The films selected for this honor feature ocean conservation stewards.

# STAFF

Stephanie Cole



Administrative Manager

Betty Bailey



Writer & Communications

Xenia Shin



Editor & WTM Producer

Laura Nietzer



Education Outreach Director

Anthony Pouw



Software Design & Development

Nathan Smith



Director

Giselle Villatoro



Director of Media Arts Education & Film Festivals

Stu Pearlman



Audio Studio Curator & Musician

Saint George Thompson



Artist & Illustrator in Residence

Mohamed Sidibay



Global Education Outreach

Wendy Millette



Director of Media Arts Education & Film Festivals

Shannon Luders-Manuel



Story Director & General Editor

## USC Work Study Interns



Ashlyn Bradshaw  
Intern



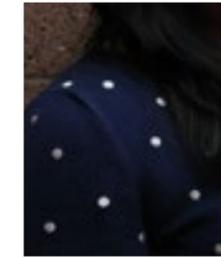
Rachel Priebe  
USC School of Cinematic Arts



Becca Han  
USC School of Cinematic Arts



Dorothy Lie  
USC Annenberg School of Journalism



Mia Islas  
USC School of Cinematic Arts

# INTERNS 2020-2021



Kitty Richardson  
University of Leeds  
Film Festival Social Media



Jessica Ordaz  
Woodbury University  
Animation



Nicole Petrovsky  
Woodbury University  
Animation



Jennifer Bose  
Woodbury University  
Animation



Felicia Paredes  
Woodbury University  
Animation



Jesse Zaragoza  
Cal-State Northridge  
Journalism



Skyler Gallarzan  
Loyola Marymount University  
Journalism



Catherine Lima  
Cal-State Long Beach  
Journalism



Sebastian Ruiz  
San Francisco State  
Journalism



Katie Arten  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Film Festival



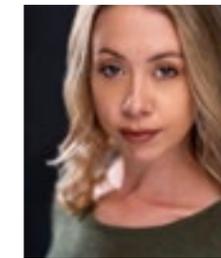
Cheuk Yiu (Rene) Cheng  
UC Berkeley  
Journalism



Trey Carlisle  
SOKA University  
Music



Avery Isabel Sweeney  
NYU Tisch School of the Arts  
Film Festival



Cara McPhie  
Film Festival



Katie Graubart  
Skidmore College  
Film Festival



David Villegas  
Film Festival



Jeremy Hsing  
UCLA  
Film Festival



Lauren Verlinde  
Michigan State University  
Film Festival



Leilani Wetherell  
Film Festival



Michael Gankin  
Boston University  
Film Festival

# WEBSITE COSTS

Pledge your support to cover the costs of this award winning website serving millions of teachers, students and visitors around the world.



# You can help support our basic website hosting costs.

**\$3.41 / Hour**  
**\$82 / Day**  
**\$625 / Week**  
**\$2,500 / Month**  
**\$7,500 / 3 Months**  
**\$15,000 / 6 Months**  
**\$30,000 / Year**

SmarterStats Data - 7/1/2020-6/30/2021

48,139,321 page views and 6,781,752.3 MB bandwidth served



# SUPPORT

Over the years, the following foundations, corporations and educational organizations have contributed to MY HERO. We need your support to grow our educational programs.

## Foundations & Grants

The Seedlings Foundation  
Massen Greene Foundation  
American Legion Child Welfare Foundation  
The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation  
Foundation for the Contemporary Family  
Laguna Beach Community Foundation  
City of Laguna Beach  
Orange County Community Foundation  
Irving Harris Foundation  
Puffin Foundation  
Festival of Arts Foundation  
California Arts Council  
Cox Cares Foundation  
American Association of University Women  
U.S. State Department  
Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs  
Rotary Club Laguna Beach  
William and Dorothy Meyers Foundation  
Max Factor Family Foundation  
mediaThe Foundation  
US Department of Education  
Gertrude Lempp Kerbis Foundation  
Google Grants

## Educational Partners

iEARN  
ISTE  
New Roads School  
Crossroads School  
Herb Alpert Educational Village  
UCI Bren School of Information  
& Computer Sciences  
USC School of Cinematic Arts  
Baycat  
Peace Pals International  
Americans Who Tell the Truth  
Francis W. Parker School  
Journeys in Film  
Freedom Writers Foundation  
BellaGaia.com  
UCLA Center X  
Taft High School  
Foshay Learning Center  
Weemes Elementary School  
Laguna Art Museum  
Laguna College of Art  
Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach  
Soka University  
Guitars in the Classroom  
Art Miles Mural Project  
Creative Visions  
Glasgow Caledonia University  
Global Education Conference  
Mattie J. T. Stepanek Foundation  
Santa Barbara Middle School Teen Press  
One World One Ocean  
Coalition for Engaged Education  
Royal Film Commission - Jordan  
Palo Alto High School Media Center  
Google Cultural Institute  
Facens University  
University of Leeds  
Young Voices for the Planet  
Video Volunteers - Change Chitra

Since 1995, The MY HERO Project has been building a global template for value-added cultural learning, reframing the educational narrative to provide students with a creative platform for academic and personal growth - instilling hope, pride, courage, knowledge, innovation and possibility.

Please join our efforts to bridge the digital divide and help us bring MY HERO's educational resources and media programs to students across the United States and around the world.

Your support will allow us to continue to grow and broaden the scope of our impact, providing students, teachers and individuals from disadvantaged and underserved communities access to our media library, digital storytelling tools, training programs and resources.

**Help us empower tomorrow's leaders to walk in the footsteps of their heroes.**

The MY HERO Project is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization. Donations from individuals and foundations support our global learning community.

[myhero.com/donate](https://myhero.com/donate)



## The MY HERO Project

The MY HERO Project  
1278 Glenneyre #286  
Laguna Beach, CA 92651  
[myhero@myheroproject.org](mailto:myhero@myheroproject.org)



# IMPACT AND REACH

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**MY HERO** annually reaches millions of teachers and students around the world.

Serving  
**197**  
Countries



**20** Million  
Visitors Annually

**3,700**  
Works of Art

**3,000**  
Short Films

**50,000**  
Hero Stories

**With your support we can continue to instill hope, foster courage, and fulfill the dreams of future heroes.**