

Our Youth Panel

TEEN PANEL: WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT

Panel Moderator: Mary Patterson

Mary Patterson is a child and youth advocate and consults on special projects for several South Bay non-profit organizations committed to community change. She is also an instructor for the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital's Heart-to-Heart class. She is an active volunteer in her local public school and serves on the Vision Council of Kids in Common. For over 20 years Mary has worked in the non-profit sector, blending direct service, executive management, policy advocacy and community partnership-building across sectors. Her professional training is in the field of maternal and child health and she holds a Master's of Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Mary has traveled extensively, including a year in Brussels, Belgium as a Fulbright Scholar conducting research in the field of child health. She lives in San José with her husband and two young daughters.

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Joseph Isidro

Joseph Isidro is actively involved in the California Youth Connection and the Department of Family and Children's Services' Youth Advisory Board, serving as Vice President. Joe is a full time student who dreams of becoming a chef and possibly owning his own restaurant. Joe has a strong sense of community; he volunteers for youth and community oriented causes. He traveled to Louisiana after the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina to help. Joe takes advantage of the resources available to him, and uses his experience to give youth a "voice".

Ronald Meyers

Ronald Meyers is the current President of the Department of Family and Children's Services' Youth Advisory Board. He is employed by a large high-tech company and is a student at a local community college. Ronald has experience with both juvenile probation and foster care. He uses his experiences from both systems to advocate for other youth and as motivation to "give back". Ronald has utilized the services available to him in order to set the foundation for a bright future. He encourages other youth to do the same.

Alyce Rivas

Alyce Rivas is the President of the Junior class at Lincoln High School. She has been passionate about writing since middle school, enjoys scrap booking, taking photos, and dancing. Alyce stands out as a Breakthrough student for being one of only two participants to have traveled to New Hampshire to attend the Phillips Exeter Summer School Youth Program in 2005. She takes honors and advanced placement courses to challenge herself and plans to attend Stanford University or go out of state to study medicine.

Jessica Wenzel

Jessica Wenzel is twenty years old and a senior at University California, Berkeley. In her free time she enjoys helping the community and working with children. This semester she will be working with a pre-kindergarten enrichment program. She will be graduating this spring with a B.S. degree in Spanish and a minor in Education. In the future she plans to work in education, and eventually teach middle school math. Jessica was a student teacher with Breakthrough San Jose for 3 summers. She finds it more difficult to leave every year, because she knows each day she spends with the students makes an impact.

Our Poet: Diego Gomez

Diego Gomez is a Senior at Downtown College Prep, a high school geared towards helping students succeed in higher education. In April of 2008 he competed along side 20 of San Jose's top youth poets, making his way onto the San Jose Poetry Slam Team. In July of that year, MACLA sponsored him and the team to travel to Washington, D.C. and perform in the Brave New Voices national slam poetry competition. He has become a prominent figure in downtown San Jose's poetry scene, participating in various slams, open mics and volunteering his time to promote the art of spoken word to his community.

Diego will also be participating on the youth panel.

About MACLA's South Bay Teen Slam Poetry League:

MACLA/Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana is an inclusive contemporary arts space grounded in the Chicano/Latino experience that incubates new visual, literary and performance art in order to engage people in civic dialogue and community transformation. MACLA started the South Bay Teen Slam Poetry League in 2002 for adolescents interested in developing as spoken-word artists. Students are primarily Latino, Asian, and Caucasian, and many are first-generation immigrants, truly reflecting the region's ethnic diversity. Now in its sixth year, the Slam League provides school presentations and performances, live slam competition events as well as a weekly writing workshop.