

**Livingston COMMUNITY PREVENTION Project**

*“Supporting community health and wellness”*

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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**YOUTH ART VOICE EXHIBIT:**

***Art Shows How Local Youth View Mental Health***

**DATE: Saturday, March 12, 2022; Browse the Exhibit between 12-3**

**LOCATION: The Hive Youth and Teen Center, *925 W. Grand River Ave., Howell, 48843***

**[Howell, Livingston County, MI, Feb. 25, 2022]** —Livingston County youth have much to share related to their perception of and experiences with mental health. They want you to see it, hear it, and talk about it. The Hive Youth and Teen Center is hosting the Youth Art Voice Exhibit on Saturday, March 12. The public is invited to browse the art collection anytime between noon and 3pm. Light snacks and refreshments will be served.

Youth Art Voice encourages youth to explore and communicate what mental health means from their unique viewpoints and experiences. Art, in various forms, including photos, sculptures, drawings, paintings, poems, and music, is being used by youth as a way of expressing themselves around this important topic. The Youth Art Voice Exhibit showcases the art, which will be on display at The Hive Youth and Teen Center at 925 W. Grand River Ave. in Howell on Saturday, March 12 from noon to 3pm. The exhibit is free.

“We hope the community gains a better understanding of what our youth are experiencing”, explained Karen Bergbower, a local prevention specialist and therapist, “especially when we have seen increased substance use, isolation, and other mental health needs related to the pandemic.”

Youth Art Voice is way more than creating art. Youth have participated in a process of reflection around mental health. They have had dialogue with others about their artwork, explaining why they created it, sharing what it means, and discussing common themes that emerge. One youth reports her participation in the Youth Art Voice helped her realize how far she has come in her travels with mental health. She shared, “I take natural pictures of myself and draw them all colorful and pretty and it really helps me see my body and myself in a different light and love me for me. It really has helped with my body dysmorphia over time. I still see something different in the mirror, but it helps me see my true self and it also allows me to be creative.”

With the focus on mental health, the art content may be triggering or difficult for some people. “We encouraged the youth to freely express themselves”, explained Lisa Boschma, Director of Prevention at Key Development Center. “Their experiences with mental health are real and deserve a place to be viewed and discussed, regardless of content.” Boschma says that to keep the event safe for all, they are displaying trigger warnings as needed. A trigger warning is a statement notifying the audience about a piece of art containing potentially disturbing content. That content might include graphic references to topics such as sexual abuse, self-harm, violence, eating disorders, and others. Resources for local mental health services will be available at the event and mental health and prevention professionals will be on site to discuss and support reactions to any of the artwork and messages.

The public is invited to attend the Youth Art Voice Exhibit and support local youth who have found their voices using art - art voices.

Youth Art Voice is sponsored by The Livingston COMMUNITY PREVENTION Project (LCPP), the Livingston County Community Alliance (LCCA), and the Livingston Youth-Led Advisory Board. LCPP is a collaborative of three agencies including Karen Bergbower & Associates, Key Development Center, Inc., & Livingston County Catholic Charities. The LCPP was formed in 2008 and implements several prevention programs that have been proven to impact substance use and related problems. LCPP places an emphasis on youth-led prevention, engaging youth in the prevention process, while building assets and fostering success. Youth are encouraged to join local youth-led initiatives as well as participate in our county-wide youth-led advisory board. LCCA is a county-wide, anti-drug coalition that aims to unite the Livingston County community to reduce and prevent youth substance use and to live a healthy and drug-free lifestyle. Our purpose is to connect the Livingston County community to establish and promote healthy community norms concerning the use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. Funding for this event is provided by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Recovery Oriented Systems of Care, and the Community Mental Health Partnership of Southeast Michigan.

**Collaborative Partners:**

Karen Bergbower & Associates Key Development Center, Inc. Livingston County Catholic Charities