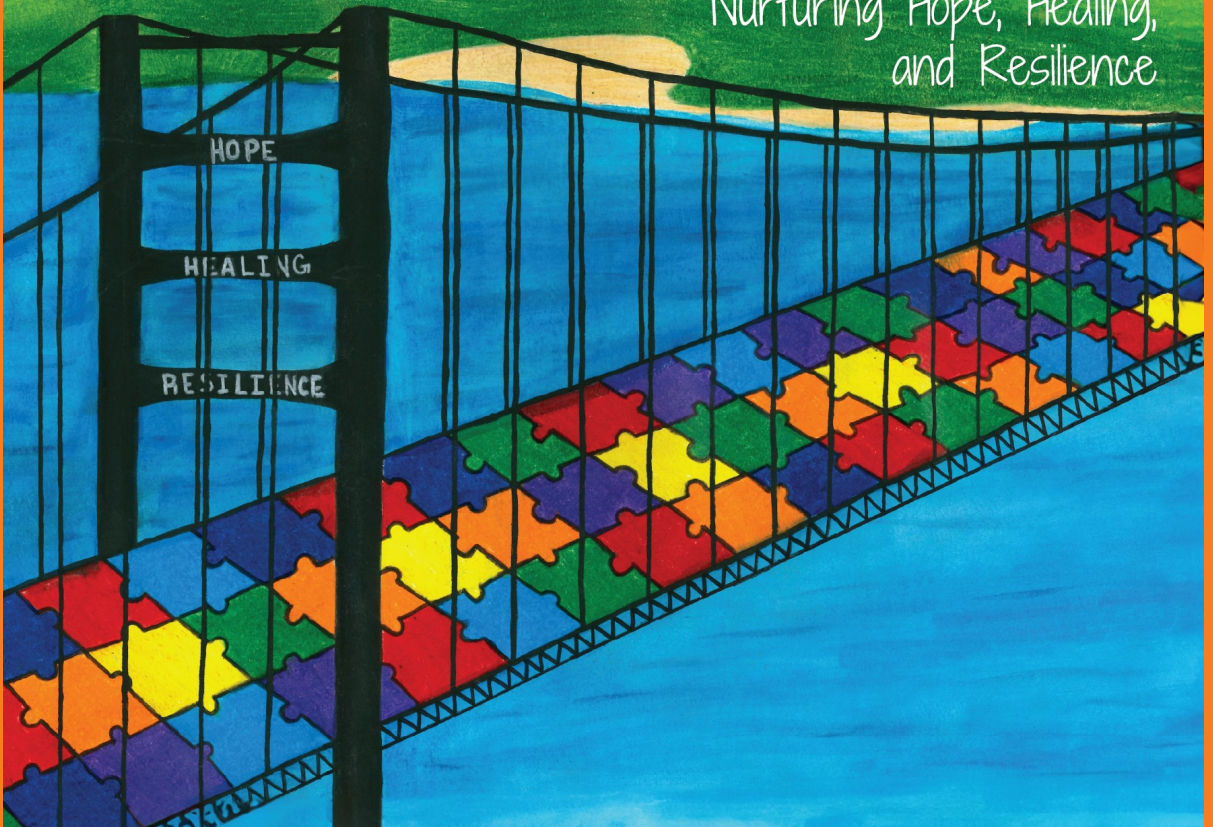


# BUILDING BRIDGES TO WELLNESS

Nurturing Hope, Healing,  
and Resilience



## 2024 Creative Arts Contest Winners




**St. Clair County  
Community Mental Health**

*Providing Opportunities for Health, Wellness, & Connection*



[www.scccmh.org](http://www.scccmh.org)



*At St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMH), we believe in the power of creativity as a tool for fostering mental well-being and resilience. Our annual Creative Arts Contest provides a platform for students to express themselves artistically and to learn and explore themes related to mental health.*

*We recognize the importance of starting conversations about mental health early and often with children. By fostering a culture of openness and understanding from a young age, we can help equip our youth with the knowledge and skills they need to prioritize their mental well-being throughout their lives.*

*Creative outlets, such as art and writing, play a crucial role in this process. They provide children with a means of self-expression, emotional release, and problem-solving, which are essential for building resilience and coping with life's challenges.*

*I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the students, encouraged by their parents and teachers, who participated in this contest. Your support and dedication to promoting mental health awareness are invaluable, and I commend you for your commitment to nurturing the well-being of our community's youth.*

*As you flip through the pages of this booklet, I encourage you to marvel at the creativity and talent on display. Each piece of artwork and writing is a testament to the strength and resilience of our young minds.*

*Thank you for joining us in celebrating the creativity and courage of our students, and I hope you find inspiration in their work!*

*Warm regards,*

*Debra Johnson  
Chief Executive Officer  
St. Clair County Community Mental Health*



# The Power of Creativity: The Top Ten Ways Art and Writing Benefit Children's Mental Health

- **Expressing Emotions:** Creative activities provide an outlet for children to express their emotions in a safe and constructive way.
- **Boosting Self-Esteem:** Creating something unique fosters a sense of pride, which can significantly boost self-esteem and confidence.
- **Enhancing Problem-Solving Skills:** Art and writing often require children to think critically and solve problems creatively, which strengthens their cognitive abilities.
- **Encouraging Self-Reflection:** Engaging in creative activities encourages children to reflect on their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives, promoting self-awareness and personal growth.
- **Reducing Stress and Anxiety:** Creative tasks can act as a form of mindfulness, helping children relax, unwind, and reduce stress and anxiety levels.
- **Promoting Brain Development:** Participating in art and writing stimulates different areas of the brain enhancing cognitive development, including language skills and spatial awareness.
- **Fostering Communication Skills:** Creative activities encourage children to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and stories, improving their verbal and non-verbal communication skills.
- **Cultivating Imagination and Innovation:** Art and writing nurture children's imagination and creativity, encouraging them to think outside the box and explore new possibilities.
- **Building Resilience:** The process of creating art or writing involves trial and error, and perseverance in overcoming obstacles, which are valuable life skills for children to develop.
- **Creating a Sense of Belonging:** Engaging in creative activities often involves collaboration and sharing with others, fostering a sense of belonging, connection, and community among children.



# Creative Arts Contest Winners

## Elementary School Bookmark Contest

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Kindergarten	Hendrix Bueche	Morton Elementary School
First Grade	Alex Mihora	St. Mary/McCormick Catholic Academy
Second Grade	Harper Hitchcock	Yale Elementary School
Third Grade	Isabella Gudme	Gearing Elementary School
Fourth Grade	Jenna Qualls	Gearing Elementary School
Fifth Grade	Rowan Delor	Belle River Elementary School

## Middle School Writing Contest

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**Grand Prize Winner** Kaylee Isaac Yale Junior High 8th Grade

### Fiction/Short Story

First Place	Riley Phillips	Memphis Jr/Sr High School	6th Grade
Second Place	Brooke Carrier	Yale Junior High	8th Grade
Third Place	Josephine Ferguson	Fort Gratiot Middle School	8th Grade

### Nonfiction/Essay

First Place Josephine Ferguson Fort Gratiot Middle School 8th Grade

### Poetry

First Place	Vivienne DeGroff	Marysville Middle School	8th Grade
Second Place	Faith Ognian	Memphis Jr/Sr High School	6th Grade
Third Place (tie)	Karam Jazrawi	Marysville Middle School	8th Grade
Third Place (tie)	Josephine Ferguson	Fort Gratiot Middle School	8th Grade

# Creative Arts Contest Winners

## High School Art Contest

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<b>Best in Show</b>	Reese Klei	Yale High School	11th Grade
<b>First Place</b>	Alan Daugherty	Memphis High School	11th Grade
<b>Second Place</b>	Heather Segura	Marine City High School	12th Grade
<b>Third Place</b>	Madison Hoenicke	Yale High School	10th Grade
<b>Honorable Mention</b>	Justin Hudzinski	Yale High School	11th Grade
<b>Honorable Mention</b>	Olivia Pastrone	Algonac High School	9th Grade
<b>People's Choice Award</b>	Payten Danneels	St. Clair High School	10th Grade





Kindergarten  
**Hendrix Bueche**  
Morton Elementary

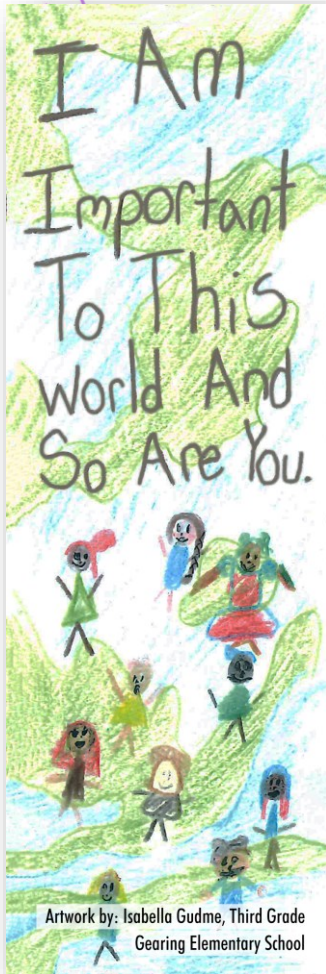


First Grade  
**Alex Mihora**  
St. Mary/McCormick  
Catholic Academy

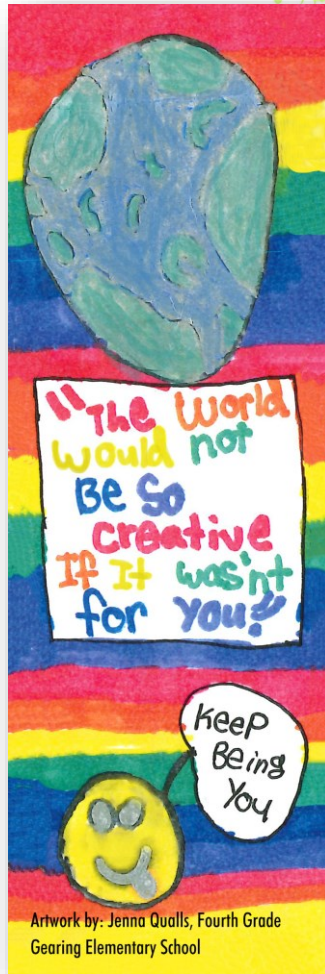


Second Grade  
**Harper Hitchcock**  
Yale Elementary

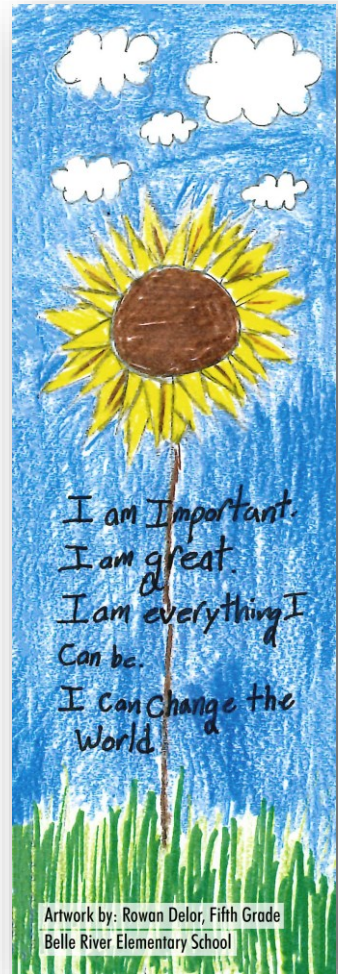
# Elementary School Bookmark Contest



Third Grade  
**Isabella Gudme**  
Gearing Elementary



Fourth Grade  
**Jenna Qualls**  
Gearing Elementary



Fifth Grade  
**Rowan Delor**  
Belle River Elementary

## Elementary School Bookmark Contest

# The Sunflower's Legacy

**Kaylee Isaac**  
Yale Junior High School

## **GRAND PRIZE—POETRY**

The sunflower was awakened,  
by the sun's nourishing rays of light.  
The petals slowly extending open,  
revealing the heart of the sunflower.


As the day went on, the air got colder.  
Cold wind chills filled the air.  
The petals slowly started to retract to cover the face;  
and protect the heart of the flower.

The hot sun was no longer all day  
and the wind whispered,  
"Winter is near."

By the end of the week,  
the sunflower shriveled up,  
stalk drying out, leaves falling off,  
and one by one, the petals fell to the ground.

To the surrounding climate, it looked  
like the heart of the sunflower stopped beating.  
The end of the sunflower's life came to an end.  
However, even though the heart of the flower  
seems lifeless; the seeds of the heart  
are alive and ready to descend to the next  
generation of life.





As life comes to an end,  
Like the sunflower, the human body deteriorates.  
And eventually dies.

Like the sunflower even though it dies;  
Humans and sunflowers leave pieces of them behind.  
Humans leave memories for their children and friends,  
to cherish and remember them by.  
Sunflowers leave behind their seeds for the  
next flowering season to produce the next generation.

As humans we are like the sunflower;  
we protect our mind and heart from harm.  
We have protective mechanisms,  
to cope with life.

Even though life is over.  
Emotions such as anger and sadness can sometimes  
overwhelm people.  
The importance of life is to cherish the memories,  
and times you had during their journey with them.  
Although a loved one has passed away,  
you should not let the anger and sadness,  
inside of you consume you.  
Be like the sunflower,  
do not be afraid to extend your petals  
to open your heart to others.

# Mother's Note

**Riley Phillips**  
Memphis Jr./Sr. High School

## **FIRST PLACE – FICTION**

The friends walked through the school's double doors, holding them open for each other, and laughing as they went. They all held a backpack and a sheet of paper with all their classes. They all had different personalities, traits, and now that summer was over, classes. And this year as seventh graders, they were sure that they were going to be the best students in the whole school.

They'd try. "Guys, who do you have for the first hour?" Chloe asked, holding out her paper.

"I got math, room 204" Amy said, smiling with her love for math.

"Lucky! I've got social studies! 145." Taylor said, sticking her tongue out in disgust.

"I've got writing in room 201!" Emma said, sighing.

"Someone's happy." Chloe said, nudging Emma.

"Well, I'm not mad." Emma said blushing. Emma left her friends and went to her class with Chloe. Her favorite class no doubt was her first hour. When she was writing she felt at home with her characters. She sometimes felt as if she was one of them. Yet she knew that soon the story would end, and her life would go back to normal.

"Come on Emma! We're going to be late!" Chloe said, dragging her back to reality.



RING!

Emma and Chloe sat down in the middle, with seats right next to each other. Pulling her homework out of her binder, Emma noticed a note from her mother. *Have a great day, Emma!*

Chloe noticed the pained expression on her friend's face, "What's wrong?"

"It's an old note from my mother." Emma said and she could tell she was about to cry.

"Oh Emma!" Chloe said, hugging her friend tight.

"My mother has been gone for two years, I shouldn't cry when she's mentioned or stuff like this. I'm being a baby." Emma said, whipping her tears away.

Chloe looked at Emma sternly, "You are not a baby for missing your mother. If I was the one in your shoes, I wouldn't be half as strong as you are."

"You're just saying that to make me feel better. You don't really mean it." Emma said, frowning at her friend's words.

"If that were true then why would I be your best friend." Chloe said, hugging Emma again.

"Now let's get back to work. I don't want everyone staring at us." Emma said, grabbing her math book off her desk.



Me

**Brooke Carrier**  
Yale Junior High School

## **SECOND PLACE – FICTION**

I am Martha O'Reilly. I live in Denmark, and I am a modest 16 year old teenager. I have been told all my life, "You're too skinny," "You look fat," "Too much makeup," "Eww, cover those pimples." To a teen girl you can never be perfect. Either you are too lazy or you are trying too hard. Either way, I don't care. I can thank Willow for that.

Willow is my big sister, and she recently went to college for nursing school. When Willow was a week away from leaving, tears came to the whole family. I was one of the worst. Willow has been the best sister, friend, and most confident pal I have ever had. She started to pack her stuff two days before she was going to leave, and that is when it finally hit her: She is going away from her family for almost a year until she can see them again. It was a very emotional week.

At the time, I had been severely bullied. People would make fun of my hair and how my makeup looked. Middle school was rough and I never wanted to be there. I would come home and cry to my sister because my parents were always at work. She would be there like my mom, combing my hair with her soft swift fingers and wipe away my tears by kisses on the forehead.

It was the day she left she gave the most heart warming and confidence boosting thing she has ever said. She had almost got all her bags down from her bedroom upstairs, and she stared me in the eyes. We shared a gaze of concern that she is leaving and happiness that we had each other in our lives. She pulled me close and talked softly.



She spoke, “No matter how hard it gets in life, you are going to soar. Don’t let anyone stop you from that. I don’t care how hard you want to cry, you can think of me and you will be filled with confidence. You hear me?”

I looked her dead in the eyes. “Yes I hear you,” I said as tears started to pour from my eyes.

From then on, nothing could stop me. No matter how hard someone tried to bring me down, I stood with confidence. I made sure that nobody else was brought down as well. Bullying is a serious thing in a teen’s life, and I make sure people can overcome it.

Teens and other people can be mean but no matter what they say I will always stick up for myself. I always go to school with a smile on my face and confidence that I look amazing. I will always love me, and no one is going to change me.

# The Wellness Arc: Building Bridges to a Thriving Harmony Springs

**Josephine Ferguson**  
Fort Gratiot Middle School

## **THIRD PLACE – FICTION**

In the bustling city of Harmony Springs, where the pace of life matched the rhythm of a thousand footsteps, a community emerged with a shared aspiration—to build bridges to wellness.

Amidst the towering skyscrapers, a remarkable project took shape, transforming the city's landscape and the lives of its inhabitants.

Architect Maya Sullivan, inspired by a vision of interconnectedness, proposed the creation of a unique structure known as the "Wellness Arc." This architectural marvel would weave through the heart of the city, a symbolic representation of the journey toward hope, healing, and resilience.

Maya collaborated with local artists, engineers, and urban planners to bring her vision to life. The Wellness Arc became a fusion of form and function, with sections designed for relaxation, exercise, and communal gatherings. As construction progressed, the entire city became invested in the project, recognizing its potential to unite people in a shared commitment to well-being.

As the first section of the Wellness Arc was unveiled, a vibrant park emerged, adorned with sculptures and greenery. Families gathered for picnics, children played, and individuals found solace in the tranquil surroundings. The park became a haven for fostering connections and igniting a sense of community.



One day, Astrid, a dedicated nurse at Harmony Springs Medical Center, noticed the positive impact the Wellness Arc had on her patients. Eager to contribute, she organized health and wellness workshops beneath the Arc, empowering individuals to take charge of their physical and mental well-being.

A local chef, Adam, saw an opportunity to nurture the community through culinary bridges. He transformed an area of the Wellness Arc into a community kitchen where residents, regardless of their culinary expertise, could come together to share recipes and learn about nutrition. The aroma of fresh ingredients and the sounds of laughter filled the air, creating a melting pot of flavors and cultures.

As the Wellness Arc expanded, so did the spirit of volunteerism. Residents dedicated time to maintain community gardens, organize fitness classes, and offer support to those facing challenges. Bridges of empathy and understanding were forged, knitting the diverse fabric of Harmony Springs even tighter.

The final section of the Wellness Arc soared into the sky, creating an observation deck that provided breathtaking views of the city. Here, a yearly Wellness Festival became a celebration of achievements and a reminder of the collective strength that had been cultivated. The city had successfully built bridges that spanned beyond concrete and steel—bridges of compassion, education, and unity.

Harmony Springs became a beacon of inspiration for other cities, showcasing the transformative power of community-driven initiatives. The Wellness Arc stood tall, a testament to the idea that, with determination and collaboration, every community could build bridges to wellness and create a brighter, healthier future for all.

# Bridges of Resilience: Navigating Grief, Gratitude, and the Symphony of Healing

**Josephine Ferguson**  
Fort Gratiot Middle School

## **FIRST PLACE – NONFICTION**

The night echoed with EMS sirens, a prelude to tragedy. "Your Great Grandma, Telitha, died," my mother's words shattered my world. Days unfolded like scenes in a surreal movie, unpredictable twists of grief. Another wave of devastating news followed, "Your Grandma has terminal breast cancer."

Life became a film on fast forward, scenes changing abruptly. Amidst the chaos, a revelation emerged—a beacon of light cutting through darkness. The departure of Great Grandma in 2019 shattered illusions. Memories flooded my mind—running into her open arms, seeking comfort. Her teachings on faith and strength prompted introspection.

Then came Grandma, Audrey Sumner, wrestling with terminal breast cancer. Despite the pain, she imparted lessons of unwavering faith. These remarkable women left a lasting mark, teaching the true value of gratitude. In the imminent loss, every experience served a purpose. The impending farewell to Grandma became a motivation for maturity and a call to extend compassion.

As I faced the inevitable farewell, I embraced their teachings. Their legacies ingrained a profound gratitude for life's fleeting moments. The hardships became stepping stones toward a more mature version of myself.





In the tapestry of loss, threads of gratitude were woven, building bridges to wellness. The pain of goodbyes transformed into a celebration of impact. With each tear shed, a seed of strength sprouted, nurturing hope. The echoes of wisdom reminded us that in adversity, we have the power to choose our response—to build bridges over the fierce waters of grief.

The relentless passage of time did not diminish the ache of loss but carved space for growth. Through the journey of grief, I discovered resilience, a force that could withstand storms and emerge stronger.

As the seasons changed, so did the contours of grief. The bridge to wellness extended beyond personal boundaries, reaching others grappling with their grief. In shared stories and tears, the universality of pain and the strength from collective healing emerged.

The nights, once filled with sirens, became quieter. The scars of loss remained, part of the intricate architecture of my being. Each scar told a story, a testament to battles fought and victories of resilience.

And so, the bridge to wellness stood strong, built with bricks of gratitude, mortar of resilience, and arches of shared humanity. It spanned depths of sorrow, connecting realms of pain to shores of healing. In life's ongoing melody, a new rhythm emerged—one harmonizing with echoes of love, the cadence of acceptance, and the melody of hope.

# The Monster of Mental Illness

**Vivienne DeGroff**  
Marysville Middle School

## **FIRST PLACE – POETRY**

All hope is gone in one thought  
Feeling the pit of mental suffocation  
The pain and suffering  
Though there's always hope

The wrenching feeling of emptiness  
And feeling no such happiness  
And no sense of worthiness  
Though there's always hope

No feeling of accomplishment  
Feeling like you're not wanted  
Like you're just a burden  
Though there's always hope

There's always a light  
That shall be followed  
In order to feel the senses of  
Worth, accomplishment, and healing

The feeling of light in your chest  
Senses of happiness  
And excitement in what you are doing  
The best feeling of conquering  
The monster of mental illness



# Quicksand

**Faith Ognian**

Memphis Jr./Sr. High School

## **SECOND PLACE – POETRY**

The ground seems solid, so you take a step  
It seems stable until you trust it enough, then it collapses underneath you  
It is the only thing you can think of, filling your mind  
But you have to overthrow it, and float peacefully away  
Forget about the situation you're in and move on,  
and keep moving forward, even when trust is low  
Keep hiking on, getting to higher ground each push you make  
Even if it feels like its too much, you must keep going until you can say:  
"I can trust my own path"  
You push yourself, until you reach your goal, and you make it out of the darkness.  
You grab your hiking stick, and turn around to keep going on your journey,  
although you are unaware of what you may come across...  
Because you can trust in yourself, and your own way.

# Wellness of the People

**Karam Jazrawi**  
Marysville Middle School

## **THIRD PLACE (TIE) – POETRY**

Building bridges to wellness,  
Brings a lot of happiness.  
No matter how long it takes,  
Just have patience and kindness.  
Be helpful with cleverness,  
Possess confidence in life,  
To move forward in life,  
And achieve your goals step by step,  
Move forward with your progress,  
Handle the not good now,  
To enjoy the good in the future.  
Enjoy yourself more and be creative,  
Be positive and be strong,  
Continue through hard times and experiences,  
Never give up, and help others,  
And others will help you.  
Let progress drive you to the good,  
Be happy for what you have,  
And enjoy your life the correct way.



# Building the Garden of Wellness: Nurturing Love, Hope, and Resilience

**Josephine Ferguson**  
Fort Gratiot Middle School

## **THIRD PLACE (TIE) – FICTION**

In the construction of wellness, love's foundation laid,  
Hope blossoms, a garden where emotions are displayed.

Healing, a gentle touch in moments shared,  
Resilience nurtured, in love's embrace declared.

Untitled

Reese Klei • Yale High School • Best in Show





*Cutting the Chains*  
**Alan Daugherty • Memphis High School • First Place**



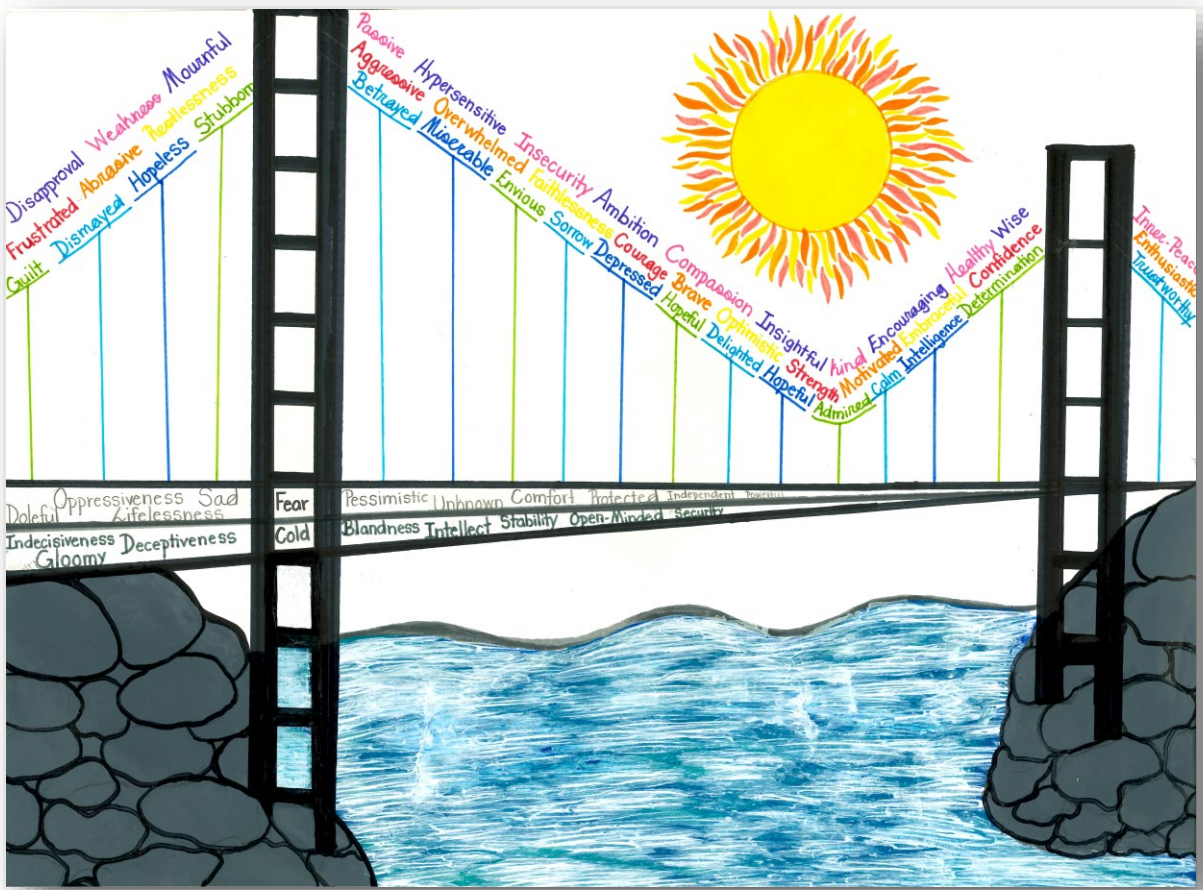
*Bridge to Clear Paths*  
**Heather Segura • Marine City High School • Second Place**

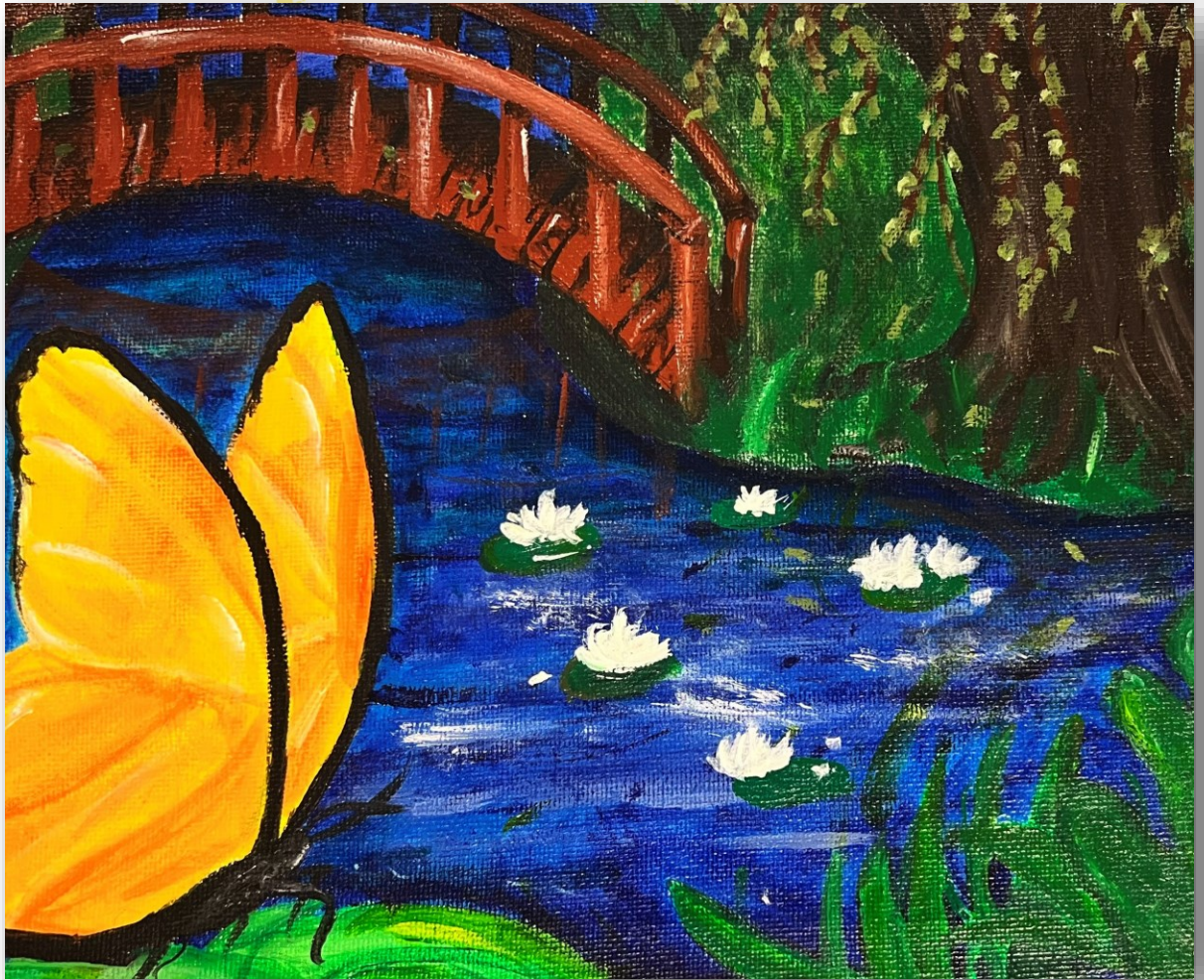




# The Road Ahead

Madison Hoenicke • Yale High School • Third Place

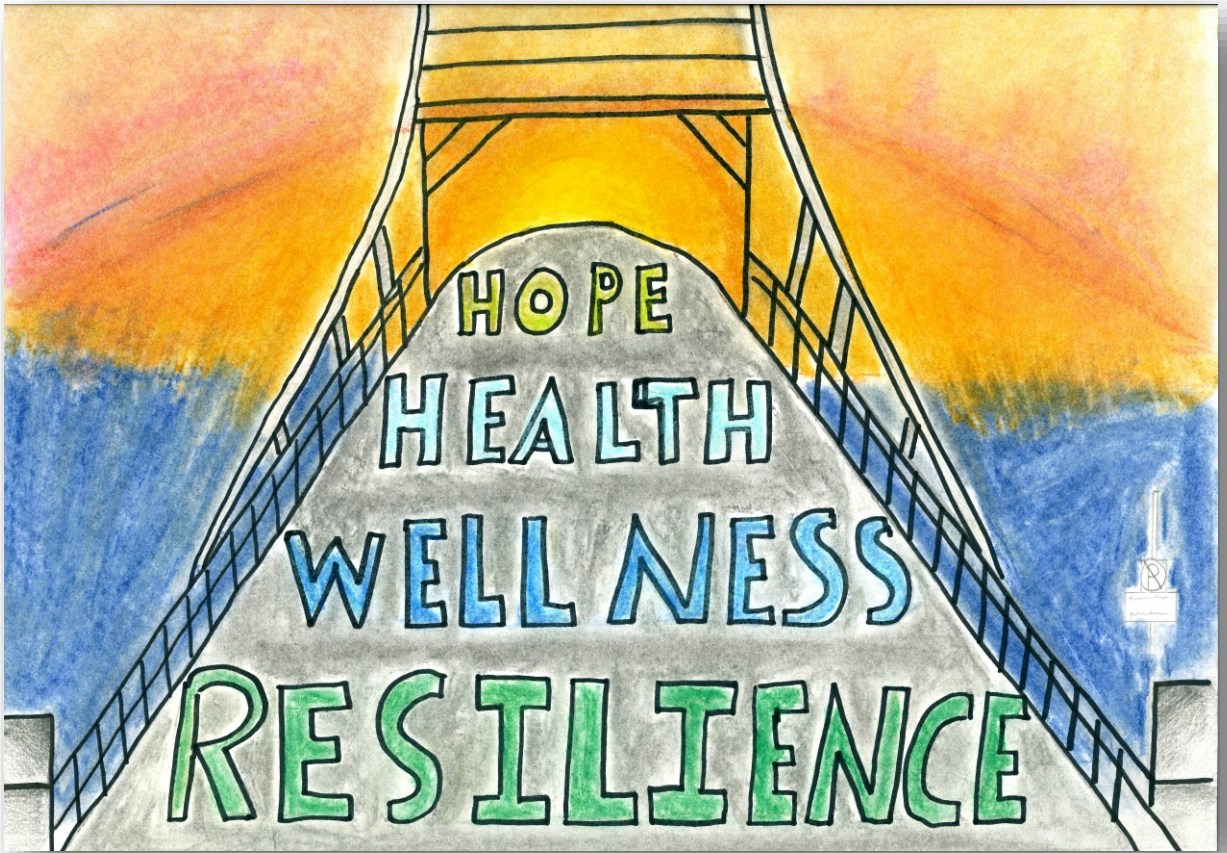




*Wings of Resilience*

**Payten Danneels • St. Clair High School • People's Choice Award**





*A Bridge to Wellness*  
**Justin Hudzinski • Yale High School • Honorable Mention**

# Nine Self-Care Activities for Kids

Self-care can help you learn how to manage your feelings or emotions in fun, healthy ways. Self-care is an important tool for maintaining good mental health and wellbeing!

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Use your imagination to act out your favorite story or make up your own! Perform for your family or friends.

Have a playdate with friends.

Grab some paper and art supplies and let your imagination run wild! Create whatever comes to mind.

Get cooking! Ask a grownup to help you make an easy snack or follow a recipe to create something delicious.

Curl up with a good book and let the story take you on an adventure. Use your imagination to picture the characters and scenes in your mind.

Put on your favorite song and dance! Move your body in whatever way feels good to you.

Find a cozy spot to relax and unwind. Close your eyes and take deep breaths.

Take a nature walk. Pay attention to the sights, sounds and smells around you.

Make a list of five things you love about yourself

# Talk About It: THINGS YOU CAN SAY WHEN YOU'RE NOT "FINE"

A simple "Hey! How are you?" is usually followed by "I'm good" or "I'm fine." But what if you're struggling? Here are some things you can say when you're not ok.

Saying "I'm Not Fine"	Saying "I Want to Talk About It"	Saying "I Don't Want to Talk About It"
I'm actually going through some stuff	Do you want to get coffee/lunch and chat later?	Thanks for asking, but I don't feel like going into detail.
Thanks for asking. _____ has been stressing me out lately.	Did you hear about _____ (something that's bothering you)?	I appreciate that, I'm just not ready/don't have time to talk right now.
I'm in my feels/ I've got all the feels.	I'd love your advice about something.	I'm still trying to find the right words.
I'm having a day/It's been one of those days, well, weeks really.	Can I text you?	I'm not in a talking mood right now. Thanks though.
I'm feeling some kind of way.	Want to take a walk with me?	I don't feel like talking, but I'll take a hug.
Ugh. I can't stop thinking about _____.	I need to vent.	I don't want to talk, but I don't want to be alone. Do you have time to hang out for awhile?
Not so great, to be honest.	Do you have time to listen?	Can I come to you when I'm ready to talk?
On the struggle bus.	I'm having some issues with _____. Do you have time to talk?	I'm still thinking things through.
Feeling rough today.	Can I bounce some thoughts off you?	Let's talk about _____ instead right now.
Today is not my day.	Have you ever felt like _____ (how you're feeling)?	I'll reach out when I'm ready.

# Talk About It: WHEN SOMEONE SAYS THEY'RE FINE, BUT THEY'RE NOT

*Fine. Okay. Alright.* We've all had someone tell us they were one of those things and known that it couldn't be further from the truth. Maybe it was the look on their face, the tone of their voice, or their body language that gave them away – or maybe you've noticed that they have been acting differently lately. Distress can show up in many ways.

Whether someone thinks they are doing a good job of masking their emotions, or they are obviously being sarcastic when they say that they're alright, it's normal to want to help in some way. While what you say will likely be different depending on how well you know the person, here are some ideas for things to say to create an environment that encourages someone to open up about what they're going through.

- ☑ **“Are you sure? If you want to talk, let me know.”**
- ☑ **“It seems like something is bothering you. I'm here to listen if you want to share.”**
- ☑ **“I've been 'fine' before – I'm here if you want to talk about it.”**
- ☑ **“Do you want to (get coffee/go to lunch/grab a bite/take a walk) later? I feel like we have a lot to catch up on.”**
- ☑ **“That wasn't very convincing – I'm here if you want to chat.”**

Visit [mhanational.org](http://mhanational.org) for additional information and resources about how to support someone who is struggling with their mental health.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available 24/7.

- **Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Call/text 988**
- **SCCCMH Crisis Line: Call 810-966-2575**
- **Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741741**



# Thank you!

Thank you to the students and teachers who participated in the  
**St. Clair County Community Mental Health Creative Arts Contests!**



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St. Clair County Community Mental Health supports individuals with mental illness, intellectual/developmental disabilities, and substance use disorders focusing on integrated healthcare and recovery. For information and to access services, call: **1-888-225-4447**. For 24/7 crisis support, call: **1-810-966-2575**.



**St. Clair County  
Community Mental Health**

*Providing Opportunities for Health, Wellness, & Connection*

[www.scccmh.org](http://www.scccmh.org)

