



"Stronger Together" By: Ella Vokes, 11th Grade, Yale High School

Stronger Together: You Are Not Alone

2026 Creative Arts Contest Winners



**St. Clair County
Community Mental Health**

Providing Opportunities for Health, Wellness, & Connection



www.scccmh.org



To the talented students featured in this booklet – this is about you!

At St. Clair County Community Mental Health (SCCCMH), we believe creativity is more than something we make. It's a powerful way to express emotions, build understanding, and support mental wellness. Each year, our Creative Arts Contests invite students across the county to share their voices through art and writing while exploring the importance of mental health.

*This year's theme, **Stronger Together: You Are Not Alone**, is a meaningful reminder that connection matters. Through your work, you've shown what it looks like to support one another, to be seen and heard, and to find strength in community. These contests are more than a competition. They are an opportunity to reflect, to connect, and to remind each other that no one has to navigate life's challenges alone.*

To every student who submitted work, you should be proud. Your creativity, honesty, and courage shine through in every piece. And to the parents, teachers, and supporters who encouraged them along the way, thank you for helping create space for young people to express themselves and be heard.

*As you turn the pages of this booklet, we invite you to celebrate the insight, imagination, and perspective of these young artists and writers. Their work reminds us that even in difficult moments, **we are stronger together**.*

Thank you for helping us promote wellness through the arts.

Warm regards,

*Deb 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

Kindergarten	Alaina Kubinski	Millside Elementary School
First Grade	Claire Edgette	Palms Elementary School
Second Grade	Jolene Roberts	Palms Elementary School
Third Grade	Madeline Wallbank	Thomas Edison Elementary School
Fourth Grade	Harrison Czewski	Avoca Elementary School
Fifth Grade	Graham Vogel	St. Clair River Elementary School

Middle School Poetry Contest

Grand Prize	Aria McCaskill	6th Grade	Central Middle School
First Place	Adelyn Todd	6th Grade	Marysville Middle School
Second Place	Jaxon Dunn	8th Grade	Marine City Middle School
Third Place	Haiden Knapp	7th Grade	Marysville Middle School
Honorable Mention	Lilyanna Dingman	6th Grade	Central Middle School
Honorable Mention	Violet Giles	8th Grade	Yale Junior High School
Honorable Mention	Amelia Hirst	8th Grade	St. Clair Middle School
Honorable Mention	Melody Tomaschko	8th Grade	Yale Junior High School

Creative Arts Contest Winners

High School Art Contest

Best In Show	Ella Vokes	11th Grade	Yale High School
People's Choice	Payten Danneels	12th Grade	St. Clair High School
First Place	Peytan Bingham	10th Grade	St. Clair High School
Second Place	Nicole Drouillard	12th Grade	Marine City High School
Third Place	Amy Campbell	11th Grade	Yale High School
Honorable Mention	Emily Lashbrook	10th Grade	Yale High School
Honorable Mention	Tsuzumi Kitamura	12th Grade	Yale High School
Honorable Mention	Linkin Terry	11th Grade	Yale High School
Honorable Mention	Rilei Vannatter	10th Grade	Marine City High School



Elementary School Bookmark Contest



First Grade
Claire Edgette
Palms Elementary



Second Grade
Jolene Roberts
Palms Elementary



Third Grade
Madeline Wallbank
Thomas Edison Elementary

Elementary School Bookmark Contest



Fifth Grade
Graham Vogel
St. Clair River Elementary



Fourth Grade
Harrison Czewski
Avoca Elementary



Kindergarten
Alaina Kubinski
Millside Elementary

Stronger Together

Aria McCaskill
Central Middle School

GRAND PRIZE

In the quiet corners of the mind where shadows stretch and doubts unwind,
you're not alone on the days the sun forgets to shine, but don't forget.

We break, we heal, we fall, and we rise

We learn to see through tearful eyes
Each scar is a story
Each morning born from endless nights

So when your heart pulls apart, bring kindness to others, and they will
bring you light.

We are weaker without
But
Stronger Together

She sat in the rain with her thoughts in a spin,
A war in her head she could never quite win.
The world moved on, she stayed behind,
Searching for anything but peace she couldn't find.

Then someone stopped, sat down, and stayed, no fixing, no pity,
just warmth conveyed.

A simple soft "you're not alone" became the light her heart had known.

Compassion's not grand it's quiet it's near it's holding a hand when the
night feels nervous and severe.

Strength isn't smiling when breaking apart, it's sharing the pain and
opening your heart. We're stronger together, through dark or fair weather,
each scar a reminder we heal better together.



Be Strong

Adelyn Todd
Marysville Middle School

FIRST PLACE

Helen Keller once said,
"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much"
And I believe her words to be true
Sometimes people are mean
And it's not always about you
But a smile
Or a kind word can change more than you know
Being kind means sticking together,
Even when it's hard
It means helping someone
Instead of laughing and just walking past
Imagine a kid on their first day of school
Lost, confused and scared
What would you do?
Be the helper?
Be the one they remember?
Kindness comes from the word "kin"
And if we treated everyone like family, the world would be better for all of us
Being unkind causes problems, Hurt feelings, Arguments,
Words we wish we didn't say
But kindness makes people stronger,
Including you!
No one wants to feel alone
Togetherness is something we all need
A friend, a family member, even the lunch lady at school
Can lift your spirits
Staying connected matters
A phone call, a walk, a smile, "hello"
We are all connected in some way
So be kind. Be strong.
Because alone we are small
But together, We are POWERFUL!



Stand Strong Together

Jaxon Dunn
Marine City Middle School

SECOND PLACE

A single thread is easily torn
But when woven together, a rope is formed
Stronger together, we bond like leather
If we don't stick together, we're light as a feather
This is why we must be hand in hand
Working hard to take a stand



We Will Always Be Stronger Together

Haiden Knapp
Marysville Middle School

THIRD PLACE

When one person tries alone
things can feel really tough.
But when we stand side by side
suddenly we're strong enough.
One small voice can start a spark
but many voices make a fire
We lift each other up
and help each other rise higher
We're all different in our own ways
different thoughts and dreams
but when we work together
we're the perfect kind of team
If you fall
we'll help you up
If you're scared
we'll help you through
We're better when we stick as one
there's nothing we can't possibly do
Because together we are braver
and we're a better team than ever
And no matter what we face
we will always be Stronger Together



Without You

Lilyanna Dingman
Central Middle School

HONORABLE MENTION

Without you, I'd lose my way,
Even through my darkest days.
You're the smile when I feel sad.
The quiet place when life feels bad.

Together, we're steady and strong,
With you is where I belong.
Impeccable, always side-by-side –
I'll be with you, through every tide.



Between Roots and Sky

Violet Giles

Yale Jr. High School

HONORABLE MENTION

You plant a tree in your yard to fill some empty space.
After you plant it, you leave;
it grows by itself, nothing and no one to help it grow.
It tried to get help but even when
it screams at the top of its lungs in the wind
nobody comes to help.

Another tree – gets planted in the forest with all the trees and sun.
Your tree grows to be small, fragile, and falls down when there's a
storm, breaking your window.

The tree in the forest however grows to be big, strong, and lives
to be hundreds of years old gathering wisdom and stories, never
once breaking anything no matter how strong the storm.
People – like trees – need support to grow big and strong.
Without it, even the smallest storm can break us.

The Myth of Solitude

Amelia Hirst
St. Clair Middle School

HONORABLE MENTION

Who are you when you're alone? Many claim that solitude reveals their truest self, but in truth, being alone can feel like staring into an endless void – there's no one to share conversations, laughter, and cherished memories with.

Sometimes, solitude brings a sense of calm, but when isolation stretches too far, it leaves you feeling hollow; the only voice you hear is your own, echoing back as a faint reflection.

If someone seeks solace by withdrawing from the world, it may be because they've never truly felt the comforting warmth of genuine friendship that everyone needs.

Everyone is stronger together; you aren't alone.



Heartbeats and Locketts

Melody Tomaschko
Yale Jr. High School

HONORABLE MENTION

The tearing feeling of loneliness
Shadows that haunt your soul
Crushing feeling of weight on your shoulders
Heavy burdens that never cease

All these things can be discarded
If you really tried your hardest
Never have to see the darkness
Rarely feel like you are powerless

Free as the breeze in the trees
Warm as the hearth by the fire
Situations never dire
True are all your best desires

Heartbeat always stays the same
Never grows or makes complaints
Feel the wind whip cross your face
And know your body's filled with grace

The warm touch of a fluffy cat
Times your parents pat your back
Your feelings rush to hug them back
Compassion is the key

In your heart a secret locket
Filled with different vast emotions
Feelings stored briefly inside
Sins are locked away with pride

Complicated strong emotions
Written everyday devotions
Put away in deep dark caves
Never seen by light of day



Stronger Together
Ella Vokes • 11th Grade • Yale High School
Best in Show



Pod Goals

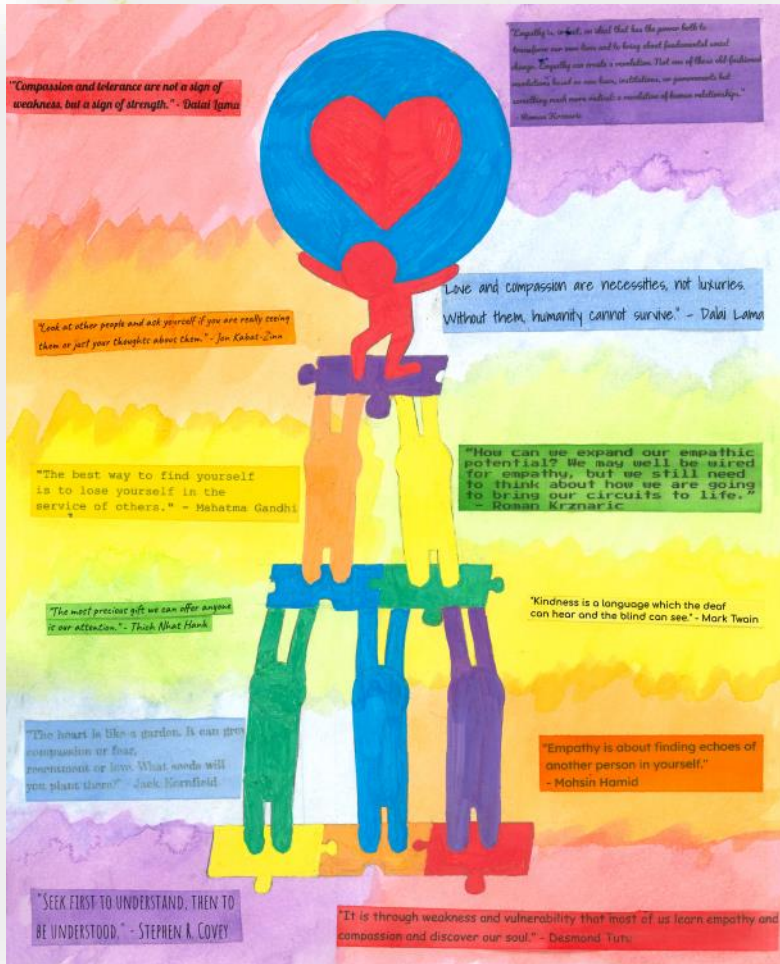
**Payten Danneels • 12th Grade • St. Clair High School
People's Choice Award**



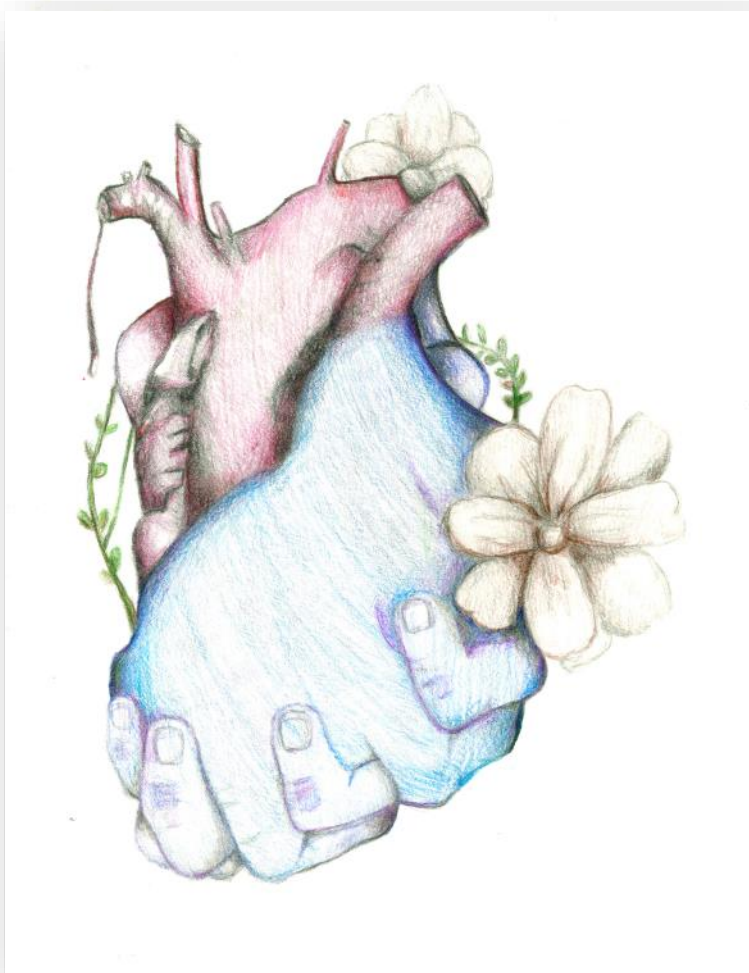
The Empathy Link
Peyton Bingham • 10th Grade • St. Clair High School
First Place



Helping Friends Bloom
Nicole Drouillard • 12th Grade • Marine City High School
Second Place



Together We Can Get It Done
 Amy Campbell • 11th Grade • Yale High School
 Third Place



United in Pain

**Emily Lashbrook • 10th Grade • Yale High School
Honorable Mention**



Big Tree
**Tsuzumi Kitamura • 12th Grade • Yale High School
Honorable Mention**



Forever Strength
Linkin Terry • 11th Grade • Yale High School
Honorable Mention



Symbiotic Friendship
**Rilei Vannatter • 10th Grade • Marine City High School
Honorable Mention**

Self-Care Tips for Families

Emotional

- Write positive notes
- Verbalize & talk about feelings
- Draw self-portraits
- Practice positive self-talk

Physical

- Dance party
- Go for a walk
- Free yoga (Cosmic Kids)
- Good sleep
- Eat a balanced diet

Spiritual

- Make a gratitude list
- Write thank you notes
- Spend time outside
- Talk about forgiveness

Mental

- Read together
- Draw or write stories
- Practice belly breaths
- Make vision boards
- Make mindfulness jars

Practical

- Clean up/declutter
- Assign chores
- Learn about money
- Homework/study
- Have a daily routine
- Create a budget

Social

- Play in the park
- Call friends/family
- Have family dinner
- Talk about friendship
- Take a break from media

Information adapted from Children's Mental Health Matters.
Learn more at www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

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.

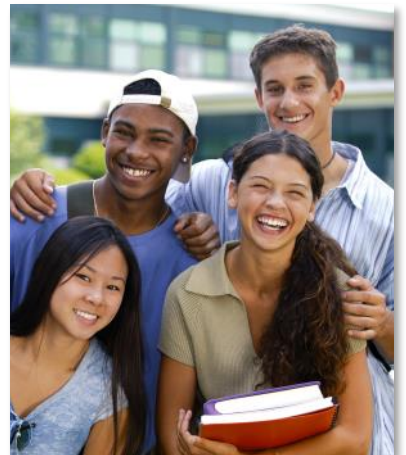
Whether someone thinks they are doing a good job of masking their emotions, or they are obviously being sarcastic when they say that they're alright, it's normal to want to help in some way. While what you say will likely be different depending on how well you know the person, here are some ideas for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



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: **810-488-8888**. For 24/7 crisis support, call: **810-966-2575**.



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