

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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High-risk students become artists with Southland Sings *New funding helps incarcerated youth write, perform original music*

- Partnering with ACCESS, a program of the Orange County Dept. of Education
- “My Story, My Voice” program is in progress, continues through this school year
- Students become the artists in a multi-disciplinary program that plays on individual strengths

DUARTE, CA – With new grant funding from the California Arts Council JUMP StArts Program and additional support provided under a contract with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, **SOUTHLAND SINGS** will offer an innovative arts program to Orange County, bringing group and one-on-one instruction in singing, spoken word (poetry writing), and music composition to more than 100 students in alternative education facilities.

My Story, My Voice combines the art of musical composition (“creating music”) and theatre with literacy, communication, and personal and artistic expression. During this groundbreaking standards-based program, participants become the lyricists, composers, singers, actors, sound technicians, producers and directors – they are the artists in an original culminating performance presented at the end of the residency. Southland Sings President ANN NORIEL sees tremendous hope in the program’s potential for growth and individual impact: “These creative, intelligent kids are hungry for the arts, and writing their own original poetry, lyrics and music helps to bring out and sort through their buried ideas and emotions -- it’s like discovering hidden treasure. This program provides tools so they can change their lives, giving them hope for the future.”

The 20-session multi-disciplinary curriculum will be delivered to incarcerated students in a total of eight classrooms on three ACCESS campuses. Residencies are currently in progress, and will continue through April 10, 2015.

This Southland Sings/ACCESS partnership was launched in the spring of 2014 to increase student engagement by bringing innovative curriculum integrated arts programming to high-risk incarcerated students. The Southland program provides adaptive learning opportunities, meeting the organizations’ shared vision to focus on each student's talents, learning style, and strength to ensure academic, behavioral and emotional success.

The CAC grant is a special allocation arranged through Assembly Speaker John A. Perez, to support programs/projects for at-risk children/youth within the juvenile justice system in classroom, after-school or incarceration settings in diverse communities and geographic settings.

About Southland Sings

Our company was founded in 1997 by Ann Noriel and Steve Parkin, and originally called Southland Opera. Since then, we have performed over 7,000 music workshops and assemblies for nearly two million local children. Southland Sings performs at schools throughout Southern California in Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Ventura and Riverside Counties. Our workshops and performances serve many different Southern California communities and locations, including theaters, public and private schools, libraries, churches, and clubs.

Our Mission: Southland Sings is a creative organization, using the arts to unlock potential in every life we reach. We provide high-quality, live productions of opera and musical theater as well as in-class songwriting and vocal workshops for children and adults. We recognize and believe in the value of arts-enhanced learning, and are committed to providing excellent programming marked by artistic integrity. Working directly with teachers and students, these collaborative, hands-on workshops allow students to fully experience music -- not just hear it, but create, perform and present their own musical, theatrical and literary works of art.

**Get more information about Southland Sings at: www.southlandsings.org
Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/southlandsing**

About ACCESS (Alternative, Community, and Correctional Schools and Services)

ACCESS (Alternative, Community and Correctional Schools and Services) is a program of the Orange County Department of Education, serving an average of 7,662 students on a daily basis and nearly 17,000 students annually, all of whom are referred by county service agencies and Orange County's 27 school districts. It is a highly effective program that offers year-round educational options and services to students at over 75 sites located throughout the county. Students improve both their learning skills and their test scores, while earning credits toward graduation.

**Get more information about ACCESS at:
www.ocde.us/ACCESS/Pages/default.aspx**

Praise for Southland Sings:

“...Because of this class I’ve learned that I can be a poet”

-- ACCESS student who participated in this year’s workshop program

“...You continue to have a positive affect long after our twenty weeks are up. This program creates lifetime memories and positive character changes.”

-- Ms. Carey, ACCESS classroom teacher who participated in this year’s program.

“In the workshops I realized that we have something in life and that we can sing from deep inside our hearts,”

-- ACCESS student participant in this year’s program

“I thought it was a really good program for youth. It’s teaching them positive social skills, but it’s also teaching them about music and the arts and how to be more expressive -- to express their feelings and emotions in a positive way. “

-- Mr. Doug Sanger, Division Director, Orange County Probation Department

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