

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Southland Sings joins hometown in anti-gang initiative *'My Story, My Voice' coming to Duarte as part of Cal-GRIP funding*

- Southland Sings' 20-week program to be delivered to three sites, serving hundreds of students over the next three years.
- Students become the artists in a multi-disciplinary program that plays on individual strengths.
- Three-year grant funds the city's involvement in California Gang Reduction, Intervention and Reintegration Project (Cal-GRIP).
- Southland Sings is one of four main non-profit partners included in the city's grant.

DUARTE, CA – **SOUTHLAND SINGS** will offer their innovative arts program to Duarte starting in 2015, bringing group and one-on-one instruction in singing, spoken word (poetry writing), and music composition to three locations as part of the City of Duarte's evidence-based anti-gang project. The City named Southland Sings as one of just four main partner organizations included in the grant, awarded as part of the State of California's Cal-GRIP initiative to sustain gang prevention, intervention, and expand reintegration programs. Southland Sings will deliver spoken word, theatre and music therapy-based programs to help in early prevention, and primary and secondary intervention.

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 at-risk students in a total of six classrooms at three Duarte sites: Mount Olive High School (a California Model Continuation School), Los Angeles County Pamela Park, and the Duarte Teen Center. These Southland Sings programs will serve an estimated 165 Duarte students each year.

Southland Sings is also delivering *My Story, My Voice* in Orange County, teaching incarcerated youth as part of an ongoing partnership with ACCESS, a program of the Orange County Dept. of Education.

With those residencies, funded in part by the California Arts Council's JUMP StArts Program, Southland Sings will serve more than 100 students in alternative education facilities during the 2014-15 school year. Additional support for *this program* is provided under a contract with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

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 8,000 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.

About the City of Duarte's Prevention, Intervention and Reintegration Project

The focus of the Duarte Prevention, Intervention and Reintegration Project is to reduce gang membership, gang related crime, and juvenile arrests by working closely with at-risk youth, parents, and teachers. The goal is to ultimately achieve a 25% overall reduction in the aforementioned areas during the life of the grant.

The City of Duarte was awarded a \$325,171 competitive state grant in November 2014 under the California Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention (CalGRIP) Program to sustain and expand its gang prevention, intervention, and reintegration programs for 2015. The grant will be up for annual renewal for the next two years (through 2017), pending state restitution funds sourced from the State Budget Act, for a total of \$975,513 for three years. Out of 45 applicants for funding, Duarte's evidence-based anti-gang project was one of 19 awardees.

[A detailed November 14, 2014 press release from the city is available, announcing the grant.]

[Photos are available, including Southland Sings' involvement at the Duarte Equality March on November 15.]

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

Praise for Southland Sings from their Orange County participants:

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

-- 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, teacher participant 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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