

THE WRITE OF YOUR LIFE™

 *WomenWonderWriters™*

WOMEN WONDER WRITERS *Program Kit*

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About WWW

- What is WWW?

- Women Wonder Writers (**WWW**) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in Riverside County, CA made up of individuals dedicated to promoting resilience, tolerance, education, and reducing the crime rate within Riverside County
- WWW is dedicated to supporting juvenile justice and education systems with creative alternatives to suspension, expulsion and incarceration
- WWW was founded by three women in 2011 from the Riverside District Attorney's Office, and currently serves over 300 youth annually in weekly programming

- What does WWW do?

- Implements the 12 week cultural arts program, *The Write of Your Life*™, for youth affected by abuse, trauma, victimization, hardship, or familial struggle
- Implements programming and case management for Youth Courts, a restorative justice and peer diversionary program for youth who would otherwise face school discipline or juvenile court consequences
- Ensures instructors are adequately equipped to mentor and teach youth placed at-risk
- Accesses funding for programs for youth who are at risk
- Collaborates with organizations dedicated towards helping and connecting more resources to reduce risk factors, which often includes providing tailored mentoring

- Why does WWW do this work?

- WWW has a passion to break the cycle of abuse and victimization and transform the criminal justice system, believing no matter one's hardships or current situation, resilience is possible
- WWW believes if youth are provided the right perspective, tools and framework, they can succeed
- WWW believes after school activities, positive role models and emphasizing education can prevent crime and truancy, cut drug and alcohol use, reduce teen pregnancy, and increase school-day attendance and academic achievement

- Why is WWW's work important to the economic impact of the county and state?

- Diverting one youth from incarceration saves approximately \$180,000/year per child in incarceration costs and to prevent a teen from adopting a life of crime (including future adult offenses) saves \$1.7 to 3.4 million dollars over a lifetime per youth
- Nearly 30 million children in the U.S. have been exposed to trauma and/or adverse childhood experiences
- The dropout rate among females alone in Riverside County is 13.3%
- The elementary school truancy rate for Riverside County is 25.06%
- One in five students in California is truant, and the ratios are higher for kids of color, homeless, youth in foster care, special needs or low income

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- High school dropouts are three and one-half times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested, and more than eight times as likely to be in jail or prison.
- 82% of prison inmates did not complete high school
- A 10%-point increase in graduation rates reduces murder and assault rates by about 20%, which would prevent 400 murders and over 20,000 aggravated assaults in California each year.
- Truancy has costed California 4.5 billion dollars over the past 4 years

- Who has WWW collaborated with?

- Big Brothers Big Sisters, California Baptist University, Riverside Youth Opportunity Center, City of Riverside, Riverside County Office of Education, Comeback Kids/Dropout Kids program, University of California at Riverside, Jurupa Unified School District, Family Services Association, Riverside Unified School District, Education Options Center, Riverside District Attorney's Office, Riverside County Deputy District Attorney Association, group homes (Rancho Damacitas, Plan-it-Life), Blick Art, 99 Designs, Inlandia Institute, Daughters Lives Matter, Street Positive, Back to the Grind Coffee House, Mace, Farmer Boys, Worth Visual Arts, Riverside Community Health Foundation, Alvord Continuation High School, John Muir Charter School, Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma (IVAT), Corona Public Library, Girl Scouts of San Geronimo, Gateway College & Career Academy, University of California at Riverside-Undergraduate Research Program, Riverside County Probation Department, Worth Visual Arts, Artist Judi Randolph, Inlandia Institute, Operation SafeHouse, Riverside Family Justice Center, Southwest Juvenile Hall, and Zonta International.

- What is WWW's impact?

- Since 2011, juvenile court filings have gone down every year and continue to go down
- Reducing crime rate and juvenile delinquency in Riverside County, helping budgetary concerns
- Youth have reported elevated grade scores, school attendance, self-esteem and confidence, behavior and character and lower levels of delinquency and substance use after graduating the program
- WWW has paved a path for other groups to reduce risk factors for youth, including Riverside District Attorney's Office programs Real Men Read, Board Kids, and Young Justice
- Media (Press Enterprise and Charter California Edition Riverside 13, La Prensa) and community support is positive

- What are WWW's accomplishments?

- **WWW** and its Founders are recipients of the 2012 Riverside District Attorney's Office *Community Hero Award* and the 2012 City of Riverside Parks Recreation and Community Services Department *Certificate of Appreciation*.
- **WWW** and its Founders & Instructors have been recognized for its remarkable service by the U.S. Congress, California State Senate, California Legislature Assembly and Riverside County Board of Supervisors.

How WWW is funded?

Private and corporate donations, fundraisers, program sales and grants such as from RCDDAA, Asset Forfeiture, Community Foundation

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The logo for WomenWonderWriters features a stylized silhouette of a woman's head and shoulders in profile, facing left. To the right of the silhouette, the text "WomenWonderWriters" is written in a cursive, script font. A small trademark symbol (TM) is located at the end of the text.

Mission

To break the cycle of abuse and victimization for students faced with adversity through education, empathy, and expression by providing cultural arts and restorative justice mentoring programs.

Vision

Strengthen youth, their families and the community it serves, by:

- Empowering youth to be educated, empathetic and expressive
- Cultivating awareness and advocacy towards social injustices
- Decreasing student dropout rates thus lowering crime rate
- Building tolerance & empathy
- Working with victims to stop the cycle of victimization & recidivism

Values

Collaboration

Innovation

Inclusiveness

Diversity

Tolerance

Accessibility

Engagement with its clients and target population

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Program Summary

The Write of Your Life™

The Write of Your Life™ is a 12-week program for youth and young adults ages 12-22. It is typically twelve students to two facilitators, meeting once weekly for two to three hours.

The Write of Your Life™ Beyond Bars is a 12-week program functioning like the original, but serving inmates in prisons as well as youth in juvenile detention centers, with an additional focus on family reunification.

The Write of Your Life™ is designed to creatively engage & mentor individuals who have been affected by abuse, crime, trauma, victimization, hardships, and academic or family struggle, teaching them accountability, empathy, resilience, critical thinking & self-expression through art, writing, meditation and public speaking. It strives to help them write their journey and overcome their past so they can become dynamic, successful, and confident individuals. *The Write of Your Life™* further accomplishes the following:

- ' Provides positive role models / mentors.
- ' Teaches youth there is more to life than drama, abuse, pregnancy, drugs and gangs.
- ' Provides lessons and speakers aimed at teaching youth that victimization is not an excuse to give up in life and does not define them.
- ' The study of positive public figures and interpretations of their work and words to inspire the youth, such as philanthropists, artists, writers, educators and survivors, such as WWW Guest Speaker & Child Holocaust Survivor Ruth Treason, author of *The Long Walk*.
- ' Development of reading skills through exercises and pairing the youth with books specific to their passions / interests.
- ' Exercises in public speaking and debate to help the youth build confidence, critically think about issues around them, organize their thoughts, and develop clear and effective communication skills
- ' Exercises to challenge the youth to set goals and find their passion and future career goals, including the research and mentor matching for jobs / colleges / trade schools and programs to get the youth on track for their future careers.
- ' Strong focus on education implementing lessons to increase vocabulary, school attendance, historical awareness / appreciation, passion to learn, self-esteem building and lessons to further cultivate empathy.
- ' The youth create introspective art projects, journaling, poetry, writings, and a group art and writing project aimed at creating awareness in the community on a chosen topic.
- ' Every activity is aimed at teaching and expanding the youth' world view. Our goal is to always inspire the youth to strive to learn more and leave their comfort zone.

By the end of the 12 week workshop, each student will have engaged in an in-depth journey of self-discovery, published one writing in an anthology, completed one art-work and, delivered one speech, and participated in one empathy building and team project.

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Youth Court Training and Case Management

WWW provides consulting, training, program management, evaluation, and case management to support start-up or existing youth/student courts. Youth court is a collaborative, results-based, peer-to-peer intervention and prevention program that provides:

- 1) An alternative response for school suspensions for youth at high risk, with school/site-based behavioral and delinquency problems and/or;
- 2) An alternative response for the Juvenile Justice System for first-time, school-based, non-violent, misdemeanor, infraction, and incidents for juvenile respondents.

Community youth determine the appropriate consequences for the respondent. The program holds youthful respondents accountable and provides educational, life skills & enrichment services to respondents and youth volunteers in an effort to promote long-term behavioral change that leads to enhanced school safety and academic excellence.

Our P'Art of Parenthood

Our P'Art of Parenthood includes various offerings that promote parental engagement including interactive bonding activity of guided painting projects to strengthen the bonds between child and their respective caregivers. These program offerings are designed for youth, ages 7-18, and their parent-figures. Though, it is not limited to any specific demographic, and any and all are welcomed. Students who have experienced adverse childhood events are particularly encouraged to attend, as this activity will strive to help heal some of the wounds that may have resulted from those challenging events. We also invite community exhibitors and highlight community members who present unique, nontraditional career opportunities for the teenage population present, providing resources for personal and professional achievement. While this is a stand alone program offering, it is also available at the culmination of other programs. For example, it can be implemented at the end of The Write of Your Life session, for those qualifying disciplinary-free students, to participate in a bonding painting activity to encourage familial involvement. At the culmination of our Beyond Bars sessions, this can also be implemented for those qualifying disciplinary-free students there to send artworks to family members to promote familial support and reunification.

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What People are Saying

What the youth are saying about *The Write of Your Life*...

"I wrote an essay on issues facing Latina women and I wrote about this program and won a trip to Sacramento." *Daisy, Gateway to College RCC freshman*

"I'm from the Eastside. Coming into this program, I never thought I would become friends from someone from Casablanca. Because in Riverside, we were always taught they were bad and couldn't associate with them," *Andrea, Gateway to College at RCC 11th Grade*

"I feel more confident, self aware" *Jennifer M. Temecula Community School 10th grade*

"I see almost everything with a positive outlook. I can express myself more than I did before." *Daisy Gateway to College RCC freshman*

What the youth are saying about the instructors...

"They have shown us they really care about us and not for the money." *Cassandra, 9th grade, Jurupa County Class*

"They are all so friendly and inviting. I feel like we can talk about anything." *Daisy Gateway to College RCC freshman*

What educators are saying...

"This is a wonderful program. I am a believer in all of these components and happy to help coordinate this with our staff." *Debra Sacks Administrator, Riverside County Office of Education Alt Ed/Come Back Kids Program*

"I noticed the girls are truly invested in your program, we observed all the support you provide for them and think it's tremendous. It's a real pleasure to work with someone dedicated and understands their individual issues." *Michele Worth from Worth Visual Arts*