

HEALTH HAPPENS IN YOUTH MEDIA

Undocumented student clubs, breaking the cycle of addiction, household toxins, and trash pickers

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[Youth Media for Building Health Communities](#): Each week in the 14 BHC places, young people knit together experiences at school, at work, at home and in their neighborhoods to tell stories about how health happens.



Undocumented high school students say they avoid involvement in clubs and community activities to minimize chances of being noticed by immigration authorities. Well before President Obama's Dream Act opened up opportunities, high school dreamers' clubs have helped undocumented students by providing academic guidance, financial aid, and social connections. *"Before, I wouldn't try talking to you if you came up to me, not even look at you. I didn't know how to socialize. I wasn't good at it or even taking jokes."* [Boyle Heights Beat](#).

School budget cuts have left art programs to die in California high schools. The California Alliance For Arts Education launched a Student Voices campaign to speak to legislators about keeping the arts alive in high schools. *"Theater gave me a voice and it allowed me to use that voice."* [Youth Radio](#).

Raices Cultura helps talented high school students to navigate the college application process and find the resources they may not get from school or family. Their first annual higher education conference, "El Poder De Saber," aims to kick start a local education movement. *"We are targeting freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, because it might capture their interests if they are not fully on the college track. Hopefully it's something that will inspire them."* [Coachella Unincorporated](#).

Two East L.A. teams, the Bobcats and the Bulldogs, are making an effort to restore peace after a game was disrupted by gang violence. Both teams faced restrictions on practices and games due to the fatal stabbing at a pizza parlor following a game last October. *"If you take programs like ours away from the kids you're just sending them back to the gang-infested neighborhoods."* [Boyle Heights Beat](#).

Boys who take career and technical education (CTE) courses in their high school career are more likely to finish high school, according to a recent study. Yet students who aren't doing well academically are often pulled out of these classes and put in remedial math or English classes. *"These classes push people to do what they want, what they believe they should be doing in life."* [Youth Radio](#).

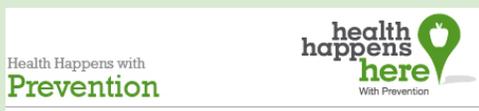
A teen who worked as an aide in her school's office tells the raw truth about school discipline. *"I used to see students getting suspended over simple things, like piercings and hair color, which caused them to fall behind in*

classwork.” [The Know](#).

Roughly a third of Long Beach’s high school students are uninsured, and often go without basic medical treatment. *“I didn’t want to tell my parents [I was sick] because I was afraid I was asking too much of them to pay for the medical attention I needed. For over two months I was really scared and worried.”* Khmer Girls in Action (KGA) hosted a forum advocating the initiation of ‘Health and Wellness Centers’ in local schools. [Voicewaves](#).

East Oakland’s Castlemont community shares their thoughts on the national climate around shootings and the presence of armed police officers on campus. *“Officials are already scared of the youth. To give them a weapon, when they are already scared? That’s Trayvon Martin everywhere.”* [Youth Uprising](#).

Breaking Down The Walls, a school event in which students spend a day playing games and learning more about each other’s struggles, is one way teachers and parents can counter bullying. *“By raising awareness among students with the participation of teachers communities can help students realize their peers aren’t always as happy or well off as they seem.”* [Access Sacramento](#).



“Breaking the Cycle,” an audio slideshow, tells the story of two Merced teens and their parents’ drug addiction and their ongoing battle for sobriety. *“He’s changed a lot. I’ve changed a lot. And a lot of that is because of the fact that I see his change.”* [Venice Arts](#).

Richmond Pulse sat down with Chief Chris Magnus to discuss issues ranging from immigration enforcement to gun control policy to the Christopher Dorner incident. *“I would like to see more resources put towards enforcing some of the gun laws we already have and also making it easier for various legal authorities to exchange information about guns.”* [Richmond Pulse](#).

A young reporter learns about Central Valley history at Merced’s African-American Women’s Health Forum, and interviews keynote speaker Dr. Sandra Davis. *“We think that if they got preventive and early care that we can get some of these disparities resolved in the next decade or two.”* [We’Ced](#).

The slaying of a 15 year-old girl, Hadiya Pendleton, occurred in Chicago, but youth in Fresno are feeling it — and doing some thinking. A young man in Fresno thinks the emphasis on gun control is missing the point, but that *“in this culture today, many people think of these machines as toys.”* [The Know](#).

Proponents for sex-abuse education, including “Erin’s Law” sponsor Erin Merryn, came together to speak about the issue in Long Beach. Their message how to educate youth at school about strategies to curb sex abuse.

“Without education, that child will keep it a secret, continue to be abused.” [Voicewaves](#).

The Iron Triangle’s Pogo Park community is feeling the loss of friend, worker, and neighbor Lincoln Plair. Diverse representatives of the Richmond Community came together to memorialize the young man, who left behind an aging father and many grieving friends. *“Everyday at 8am he would show up at our little park in Richmond and just clean the park and clean the sandbox.”* [Richmond Pulse](#).

In Long Beach, gang killings account for the majority of homicides among 15 to 24 year olds. Data from 2011 shows that in Long Beach, 24 out of 25 homicides were among young people. *“The youth are really the key ingredient here.”* The Police Chief and the city have an action plan for preventing violence and getting youth stakeholders involved. [Voicewaves](#).

High school students from East L.A. and Boyle Heights went to the State Capitol as part of the Youth and Government program at the Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA. They debated in the legislative chambers, discussed bills written by students, and learned about the characteristics necessary to be an effective political leader. *“The trip taught me that to be a great leader you must also be a great servant.”* [Boyle Heights Beat](#).

A board member of the Gay-Straight Alliance Network and an organizer of Expression Not Suppression, a conference curated for gay, gender queer, and questioning youth. As a young transgender man, Calen uses his talent and experience to be an effective activist in queer youth and mental health issues. *“Don’t just say, ‘Yeah, I support you! I love gays!’ Do something.”* [The Know](#).

A young woman in Richmond takes a stand against the “B” word. *“A robot doesn’t think about why it’s operating the way it is.”* [Richmond Pulse](#).

A young man sees chess as a metaphor for life. Lessons like thinking three to four moves ahead, remembering that every move should have a specific purpose, and that the wrong move could set the game off course. He uses these strategies of winning both on and off the chessboard. *“There are too many young black men behind bars or six feet under – and I refuse to be one of them.”* [Youth Radio](#).

Do parents know what their children are eating? According to kids, the answer is “No.” *“My breakfast, I can say on the daily is a pack of Skittles. I make sure I get one every morning.”* [Youth Radio](#).

The WeConnect resource fairs enrolled people with little or no resources into health care programs, but also included help with tax preparation, flu shots, and free healthy food. *“We don’t go to the doctor’s even though we’re sick because we can’t afford the medicines.”* [The Know](#).

Cleaning and beauty products, food pesticides, and other chemicals that we come into direct exposure with can carry significant health risks when used over time. Children are especially vulnerable because they crawl around on ground surfaces and put things into their mouths; this puts their developing organ systems at special risk. *“The reason for why the public still purchases these products is due to the belief that because it is sold in a store it should be safe.”* [Coachella Unincorporated](#).

Last year on October 9, 2012, then 14-year-old, Malala Yousufzai was shot in the head by the Taliban that took over her hometown in Pakistan. Earlier this month, Malala started school in Birmingham, England. Her story resonates with a young woman in Oakland. *“Malala and I are so alike. We both want to promote female education, are politically active, live in areas with gun violence.”* [Oakland Globe](#).

City Fabrick is a nonprofit urban design studio with progressive ideas about enhancing the livability of communities and improving the long-term health of people who live in Long Beach. *“Allow people to understand how they can change their environment for their betterment.”* [Voicewaves](#).

Low-income residents roam East L.A. sidewalks at night — trash pickers who, struggling to pay rent, dig for recyclables despite the dangers of walking alone. *“I dress like this, like a tom boy, so that I can blend in at night.”* [Boyle Heights Beat](#).

The Long Beach Board of Commissioners approved the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a cutting-edge shipping yard, but but an alliance of health and environment community activists, called the Port Working Group, is appealing the decision. *“We consider this to [be] a terrible project premised on the misconception that minority communities can shoulder the pollution burden of our region.”* [Voicewaves](#).



This wouldn't be a newsletter of youth voices if everything they said fit neatly into our agenda. On that

note... Merced students became historians in an event showcasing the fruits of the school's first ever Oral History Project. Students interviewed their elders and put together their stories with photographs and other artifacts. *"I hope they continue to do things like this because I feel that young people are missing a lot of history."* [We'Ced](#).

Visit <http://ymbhc.wordpress.com/> for more youth perspectives on community health.