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**Department of Education
and Early Development**

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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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New ‘Amplify Youth Voices Alaska’ project gives Alaska youth an artistic outlet during COVID-19 pandemic

JUNEAU -- The Departments of Education and Early Development (DEED) and Health and Social Services (DHSS) announced today a new Amplify Youth Voices Alaska (AYVA) project, which enables young Alaskans to use different forms of artistic expression to share creative messages of safety, hope, love, and encouragement about the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative invites young Alaskans to participate in online artist workshops and to submit home-grown art that reflects their resiliency and creativity.

Youth Advisory Member Lillian Yang noted, “the arts have the power to connect to any person in any community. This project makes me feel like I will always be supported through all the challenges of this pandemic.”

AYVA is a collaborative project between DEED, DHSS, the Alaska State Council on the Arts, Youth Alliance for a Healthier Alaska, Spirit of Youth, the Anchorage Youth Development Coalition, and the First Alaskans Institute. The AYVA project will ship Art Ambassador Kits to each school district, encouraging youth to participate and to submit their art. Until July 2021, AYVA will invite youth and adult artists from around the state to offer monthly online art workshops for young people aged 10-25 years old. AYVA’s artist presenters currently include, among others, Stephen Blanchett, Lee Post, George Holly, Ava Earl, Milo Stickle-Frizzell, Sara Tabbert, Lily Hope, and Enzina Marrari.

AYVA’s [interactive project website](#) will include, among other things, a schedule of events, links to register for upcoming workshops, and monthly art submission themes (e.g., January’s theme is Mental Health and Well-Being). The website also will house all submitted art pieces in perpetuity.

Youth can begin participating today by:

- [Visiting the website](#) to learn more about the project and see submitted artwork.
- Creating their own submissions, which can include paintings, sculptures, architecture, poetry, music, fashion, film, fiber or digital arts, culture craft, and more.
- Submitting audio or visuals of their creations to dhss-PIT@alaska.gov. (Note: If a submission is over 20 MB, please email dhss-PIT@alaska.gov and request a link to upload the submission. Submissions containing any illegal activity, nudity, hate speech, and/or profanity are strictly prohibited and will not be posted online. Submissions may be used, shared, or replicated through social media posts, newsletters, websites, and digital/print media by the State of Alaska, DHSS and DEED, or the supporting nonprofit partners of this project.)
- Sharing their art and telling their friends on social media using the hashtags #AYVA, #AlaskanYouthResilient and #AKYouthCombatCOVID.

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*The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development provides information, resources, and leadership to support over 130,000 students in 505 public schools across the state of Alaska. The mission of the department is to ensure an “**Excellent Education for Every Student Every Day.**”*

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