



For Immediate Release
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**Young addicts use artistic creativity to stay clean during quarantine
as overdose deaths accelerate**
***Hope Creates shares their stories to inspire others during virtual gala
Saturday, February 27 from 6-6:45 p.m.***

St. Louis, MO (January 26, 2021) – Local youth and young adults who have embraced their artistic creativity to help them stay sober during the COVID pandemic will be celebrated at the Hope Creates Virtual Gala, “Share the Art of Sobriety®: Celebrate Extraordinary Stories of Creative Young Artists in Recovery,” scheduled for Saturday, February 27 from 6 - 6:45 p.m.

“The young people we’re honoring this year have modeled a sober and creative life through the most challenging of times as the disruption to daily life due to COVID hits those with substance use disorder especially hard and makes relapse difficult to avoid,” said Kathie Thomas-Dietz, president of the board and executive director of Hope Creates, an organization she founded to provide teens and young adults with expressive art opportunities to help them sustain sobriety and recovery. “We believe their stories will provide inspiration to other young addicts trying to stay sober as they deal with social isolation.”

The evening will include a live auction featuring a variety of artistic creations from program participants and a range of donations from local supporters, as well as a specially-produced video highlighting individual stories. Model, actor, and two-time Emmy award winning TV personality, Jeffrey Small, will serve as emcee. Small fought drug addiction and is an outspoken voice for others in need of hope, healing, and love.

While overdose deaths were already increasing, the latest numbers suggest an acceleration during the pandemic. Over 81,000 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in the 12 months ending in May 2020, the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period, according to recent provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Local statistics mirror national averages.

The gala will help the organization continue its mission to help addicts and their families fight relapse through its ongoing programs. Since Hope Creates launched in 2017 in St. Louis, it has served more than 250 families in recovery with 80% of the exhibiting artists

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remaining sober. The program recently expanded to Kansas City. Thomas credits its success to both the process of creating meaningful art and the support of the sober and vibrant community.

The online gala is free and open to the public. Registration information, along with watch party, and donation options, can be found online at <https://www.hopecreates.org/2021-virtual-gala>. Sponsor or donate at specified levels and appetizers and dessert will be delivered to your door.

For more information about Hope Creates, visit www.hopecreates.org and on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @hopecreates_org. Stories about young people from both the St. Louis- and Kansas City-area who are involved in Hope Creates can be found online at <https://www.hopecreates.org/creative-advisory-board>.

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