

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LIVING WITH HOPE

A live performance about the impact of addiction on San Diegans

Who: Playwrights Project, San Diego State University, R. J. Donovan Correctional Facility, SAY San Diego, and the US Attorney's Office

What: LIVING WITH HOPE ~ Performance by SDSU Theatre students, featuring:
Other People's Kids by Mabelle Reynoso
Finding Our Way by a group of playwrights at R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility

When: Thurs-Sat, March 16-18, 2017 at 7:30 PM; and Sun, March 19, 2017 at 2:00 PM

Where: Experimental Theatre, San Diego State University

Tickets: No Charge ~ Reservations are strongly recommended.

How: Contact Playwrights Project (858) 384-2970 or write@playwrightsproject.org

LIVING WITH HOPE ~ In response to the influx of arrests for methamphetamine related crimes in San Diego, the former U.S. Attorney Laura Duffy initiated the "Do Something about Meth" campaign to activate the community to find solutions and increase awareness of the meth epidemic. As part of the campaign, the U.S. Attorney's Office partnered with Social Advocates for Youth San Diego (SAY San Diego) and Playwrights Project to commission the play ***Other People's Kids***, by **Mabelle Reynoso**. The play was developed in partnership with numerous organizations and individuals who volunteered stories of meth's impact on their lives, from youth in juvenile hall, adults in prisons and reentry programs, parents of those struggling with addiction, counselors, law enforcement, and service providers. In the play, four teenagers become entangled with meth and their lives and families are changed forever.

As a companion piece to the play, a group of **playwrights incarcerated at Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility (RJD)** created the play, ***Finding Our Way***. Personal reflections explore the cycle of addiction in a kaleidoscopic view of recovery, from first time use through the spiraling journey of recovery. The men developed the play in Playwrights Project's *Out of the Yard* program at RJD, conducted by teaching artists James Pillar, Mabelle Reynoso, and Cecelia Kouma (Playwrights Project's Executive Director). The program is provided in partnership with the William James Association, with support from the California Arts Council and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Co-produced by Playwrights Project and San Diego State University's School of Theatre, Television and Film (SDSU TTF), the plays will be performed as staged readings by student actors, directed by Peter Cirino, Associate Professor SDSU TTF.

Each performance will include the two short plays, *Other People's Kids* and *Finding Our Way*, and will be followed by a talk back with a panel of experts. Different experts will serve as panelists after each performance, including: Warden Daniel Paramo and Community Resource Manager Robert Brown of RJD; Alana Robinson, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California; Jason Druxman, Division Chief of Adult Investigations Division of the San Diego County Probation Department; and Nancy Gannon Hornberger, President and CEO of SAY San Diego.

Artwork created by inmates involved in visual arts programs at Donovan conducted by Project PAINT (projectpaint.org), founded by Dr. Laura Pecenco, will be featured at the performance.

Acting U.S. Attorney Alana Robinson noted that “meth and heroin addiction have become increasingly serious problems in San Diego County. As SANDAG recently reported, about half of adults arrested in 2015 tested positive for meth at the time of their arrest, and heroin treatment admissions have risen every year in San Diego County since 2011. My office is actively working with enforcement partners to investigate and charge federal drug cases, but we recognize that enforcement is one aspect of an extremely challenging problem. We are also committed to working with partners across many disciplines to increase education, engage in prevention, facilitate successful reentry, and spread the word about treatment. Toward that end, it is helpful to hear new and creative voices that give addiction a human face and offer hope for the future.”

With support from the James Irvine Foundation, Playwrights Project developed Out of the Yard in 2014 to voice the stories of individuals who have been incarcerated. Recognizing that we are all capable of redemption, the program supports individuals in creating fictional plays that examine hardships, explore positive peaceful solutions, and reflect on the impact of choices and actions. Through this exploration, participants gain new insights and literacy skills, practice social skills such as communication, problem solving, patience and compromise, and further their rehabilitation.

This is the fifth year of collaboration between Playwrights Project and SDSU. The partnership, which unites departments on campus and engages community partners, has been developed with SDSU Theatre Faculty: Peter Cirino, D.J. Hopkins, Randy Reinholz, and Playwrights Project Executive Director Cecelia Kouma. The program has deepened SDSU students’ understanding of community issues, connections to professional theatre artists, and skills in new play development with a focus on devising work from the community.

Support for this program is provided by: McAlister Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, The William James Association Prison Arts Project, California Arts Council, City of San Diego Commission for Arts & Culture, and the State of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.



Living with Hope ~ About the Partners

Playwrights Project is a nonprofit corporation advancing literacy, creativity and communication by empowering individuals to voice their stories through playwriting programs and theatre productions. *Out of the Yard* helps current and former offenders develop fictional plays that examine hardships, explore positive solutions, and redefine individuals beyond the labels imposed by past choices. <http://www.playwrightsproject.org/>
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The SDSU School of Theatre, Television, and Film provides high quality education for undergraduate and graduate students. The school's faculty help students realize their creative potential as artists, scholars, leaders, and global citizens who celebrate cultural diversity and promote social equality through theoretical explorations and practical experience in Theatre, Television, and Film. Courses combine concept and craft to lead students from critical analysis to production. <http://theatre.sdsu.edu/>
Peter Cirino, Associate Professor, (619) 729-5549, pcirino@mail.sdsu.edu

SAY San Diego's mission is to partner with youth, adults, families, and communities to reach their full potential by focusing on: child and youth development; youth, adult, and family wellness; and community engagement. Its partnerships and services address the comprehensive needs of the entire individual or family rather than focusing on one symptom or problem. SAY engages the community to work collaboratively and works with systems such as law enforcement, schools, and local government to create positive change.

<https://www.saysandiego.org/>

Mary Baum, Sr. Director, Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drug Prevention, mbaum@saysandiego.org

U.S. Attorney's Office of the Southern District of California handles federal criminal prosecutions and defends civil actions against federal officials and agencies in San Diego and Imperial Counties. With two of the three busiest land ports of entry on the Southwest Border, the Southern District of California is a major corridor for illicit drug trafficking. The San Ysidro Port of Entry, 15 miles south of downtown San Diego, is the busiest land border crossing in the world, with more than 100 million persons and 25 million vehicles crossing the port annually.

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdca/district-history>

Cindy Cipriani, Outreach/Engagement Director, cindy.cipriani@usdoj.gov

Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility provides housing and supervision for inmates classified as minimum - high custody, encompassed in a Minimum Support Facility. Designed as a training and work-oriented facility, the RJDCF provides vocational, academic, and industrial programs. http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Facilities_Locator/RJD.html

Robert Brown, Community Resource Manager, (619) 661-6500, robert.p.brown@cdcr.ca.gov

William James Association promotes work service in the arts, environment, education, and community development. They focus on transformative arts experiences in nontraditional settings, working with prisoners, high-risk youth, and parolees. The Prison Arts Project contracts with professional artists to provide in-depth, long-term arts experiences for men and women in California state prison facilities, and establishes Artist-In-Residence programs for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. <http://williamjamesassociation.org/>

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