Dear PLUS ME Community,

As our organization gets ready to embark on an ambitious year-long campaign celebrating two milestones, I am proud to share this annual report that highlights the work of our 9th year.

PLUS ME transitioned back into classrooms with students and experienced the largest growth in our organization’s history. We more than doubled the operating budget and staff, while building partnerships with new schools and organizations that allowed us to spend over 1,500 hours with an even more diverse student population.

Two of my personal highlights this year were being recognized at the Super Bowl along with 55 other nonprofits in Los Angeles and receiving the Alumni Social Justice Impact Award from Occidental College. These acknowledgements reminded me of the high-need for this work in our communities and encouraged me to continue to grow the vision for the future of PLUS ME.

Thank you for reading our report and I look forward to engaging you in our 10th year.

Richard Reyes
Founder & Executive Director
About Us

Founded in 2013, PLUS ME is a Los Angeles-based nonprofit that serves middle and high school students.

Stories heal.
Stories inspire.
Stories bring us together.

Everyone has a story that matters. We all have that inner voice, aching to be heard. The voice of the soul. But many young people doubt they have a story to tell or simply have not found a way to unearth it. Our mission is to change that.

Mission: PLUS ME Project activates the art of personal storytelling to increase confidence in youth as they pursue college, career & life goals.
Our Impact

10,000+ Students
1,624 Program Hours
108 Schools & Partners

166 Volunteers
530 Donors

Many of our annual highlights map to the four objectives that drive our work:

- CONFIDENCE IN CHARACTER
- COURAGE TO COMMUNICATE
- COMMITMENT TO COLLEGE & CAREER
- CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY
Creating opportunities to share stories across generations is a key part of our work. This year, PLUS ME offered three chances for adults to craft and share their personal story with students across LA within our 100 Volunteers, 100 Stories campaign: Wisdom Week, Giving Tuesday, and Motivational March. 131 volunteers dedicated themselves to reflecting on their life journeys thus far, finding the lessons in their struggles, and sharing that story with students eager for inspiring role models. The journey to defining your identity looks different for everybody, but is always an empowering process.

"I used [Motivational March] as an opportunity to take a chance on sharing my story. If we are mindful of the outcome, we can realize there is some good in those stories, no matter how dark or painful we feel they may be."

Timiko Madison
Volunteer
This year, PLUS ME published Pandemic Perspectives, a collection of personal stories on our shared struggle navigating COVID-19 written by GEAR UP students and educators. Their stories highlighted experiences that rang true for all of us - memories of loss, resilience, and hope. Each contributor courageously reflected on this tender moment and generously offered their examples of resilience and strength to others. Pandemic Perspectives is a beautiful reminder of the power that stories hold - that we are not alone, that our voices matter, and when we share our stories, we can make a difference in other people’s lives.

“[Pandemic Perspectives] has allowed me to express my feelings about events that I have suppressed and allowed me to learn from them.”

Giselle Peña Velasco
Student
Each year, the PLUS ME community raises funds to adopt classrooms by providing Storytellers workshops and journals at no cost to the school. Teachers apply for their classrooms to be adopted and our network rallies in support by spreading the word and raising funds to make that dream a reality. This year, we raised over $30,000 through individual donations and a roaring silent auction that will allow PLUS ME to reach nearly 1,000 students in the upcoming year.

“Something that is really important to me is having a classroom community that is rooted in care. I feel that storytelling is a powerful element for that.”

Briana Torres
English teacher
The LISTEN 2022 storytelling event was a truly lovely evening in which we celebrated all six My Story Matters scholarship recipients. Each scholar shared their vision for how they will give back to their communities after college or in their career—including developing an app that would allow families to save recyclables on the curb for other low-income families to collect. As an added bonus, PLUS ME was pleased to surprise each scholarship winner with an award for twice the amount they expected!

“[PLUS ME has] instilled a confidence in our students that has helped them realize the power and strength in their story, and to take pride in who they are, where they’ve been, and where they’re going.”

Lois Bramwell
Partner, GEAR UP 4 LA
“The next thing I knew, I was propped on a hospital bed and told that I would need to be placed in a wheelchair. Coming out of the hospital, I faced a new wave of uncertainty as, now, not only did I have to deal with being homeless but also being bound to a wheelchair...”

Jesus Rodriguez
2022 LISTEN scholar

Jesus overcame tremendous obstacles on his journey through high school. Thanks to deep conversations with his mother, Jesus was able to reframe his story, developing self-acceptance and resilience in the process. We are thrilled to announce that he will be enrolling in UCLA this fall!

Watch Jesus share his full story at the LISTEN 2022 scholarship celebration event here.
Financials & Supporters

Revenue: $742,009
- Services - 62%
- Donations - 20%
- Grants - 18%

Expenses: $562,548
- Programs - 80%
- Operations - 15%
- Fundraising - 5%

Foundation & Corporate Sponsors

Ahmanson Foundation
Annenberg Foundation
California Community Foundation

Capacity
Carl & Roberta Deutsch Foundation
Cobalt & Clay
Curren D. Price, Council District 9

DIRECTV
Play Equity Fund
Sheila, Dave, & Sherry Gold Foundation

Storytelling Society Members

Henry Brandt IV
Beth Bythrow
Anais Campa
Rosa Castro
Vivian Chen
Wendy Chodor
Christian Entezari
Pilar Gutierrez
Erin Harless & Charles Barlow
Caleigh & Mike Hu
Jenny Kattlove
Claire Kwon
Christine LaPorte
Shelly Murton Lauck
Cynthia Lundy
Walter Marlowe
Madeleine Martin
Terry Martin
Paco & Alma Medina
Rosita Medina
Kate Motonaga
Tina Patel
Jeremy Presser
Carlos Santini
Angelina Smith
Evan Smith
Nolan Smith
Jenn Surface
Jawaan Wallace
Elysia Whitis

Learn more [here](#)
Team PLUS ME

**Staff**

Bethanee Bryant  
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Karol Curiel-Kozycz  
Erendina Delgadillo  
Christina Dunbar  
Jane Grimes  
Deshe Gully  
Beatriz Herman  
Sean Leston  
Jeffrey Miller  
Joshua Pinkay  
Richard Reyes  
Valeria Sanchez  
Seng So  
Priya Sodha  
Jeffrey Wexler

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Tina Patel  
Jeremy Presser  
Evan Smith  
Nolan Smith  
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