



+ME PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT '21-'22

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Letter from Executive Director

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**



Confidence in Character

The capacity to find empowerment in their identity



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."

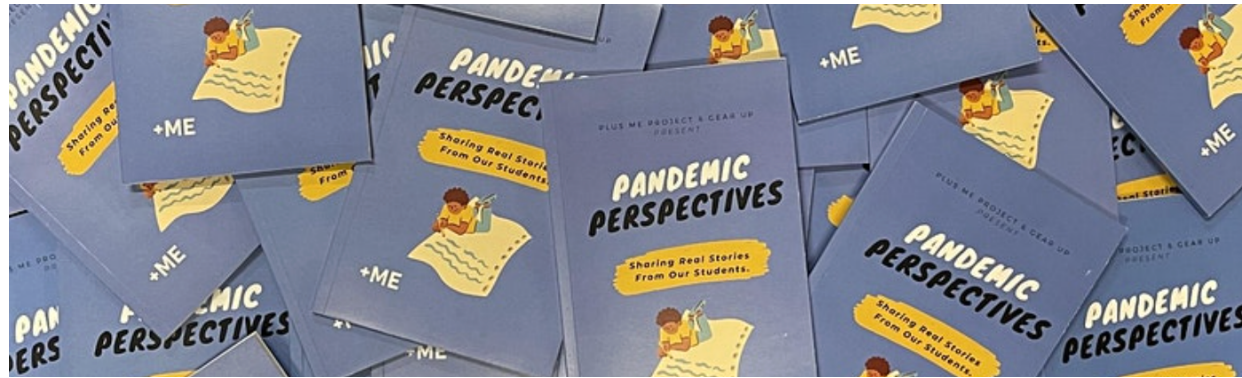
Timiko Madison
Volunteer





Courage to Communicate

The strength to voice their experiences



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





Connection to Community

The skills to empathize with others



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





Commitment to College & Career

The motivation to achieve their dreams



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





Student Story

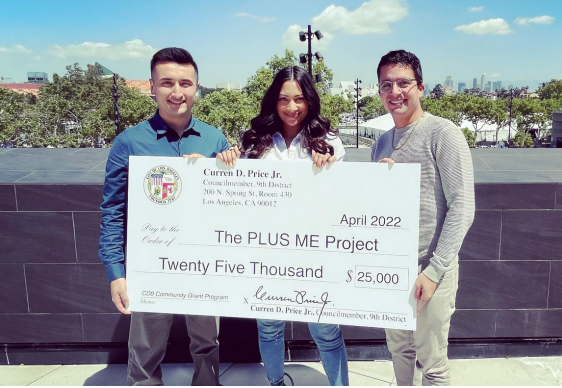
Jesus Rodriguez is a 2022 My Story Matters scholar. Read an excerpt of Jesus' story recounting his profound and inspiring path to college below:

"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

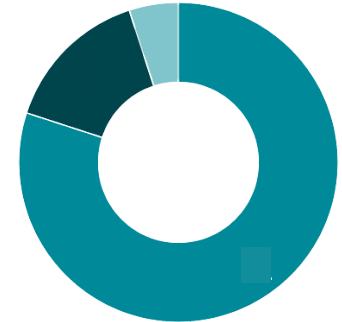
Revenue: \$742,009

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

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