

## **PRESS CONTACT**

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**Local Youth and Young Adults in Recovery  
Showcase Their Creativity at Expressive Arts Exhibition**  
*Exhibitors Use Art to Fight the War Against Drug and Alcohol Addiction*

**ST. LOUIS, Mo., Sept. 25, 2018** — Local teens and young adults will gather Sunday, Oct. 21, at [ZACK](#) to display their artistic talents, ranging from paintings and metal smithing to pottery and original music. Besides their wares, these budding artists also hope to promote a message they've all come to believe: creating art is more fun than addiction.

The art show participants are all recovering addicts, once bound by the opioid, drug and alcohol epidemic that is sweeping the country. The statistics are staggering. According to NCADA, in 2017 nearly 760 people died due to opioids in the St. Louis region, a 5% increase over the previous year.

In response to this crisis, Kathie Thomas — a local businesswoman and artist — founded [Hope Creates](#), a nonprofit organization that combines art, occupational therapy principles and entrepreneurial skills to support youth and young adults who are in recovery from addiction. Her personal experience compelled her to take action.

“I am the mother of a young adult addict,” Kathie explained. “My artwork became a form of therapy as I faced the daily struggles that come with navigating through the horrors of addiction. My daughter is in recovery. Art helped me heal and I wanted to find ways to help my daughter and her peers discover that there are other highs in life that are safe, genuine and legitimate.”

Through [Hope Creates](#), teens and young adults with at least one year of sobriety create original pieces, receive one-on-one coaching, and then host local gallery shows and concerts. The October exhibition is the group's third Expressive Arts Event. Participation has increased from seven exhibitors in the spring of 2018 to more than 30 exhibitors for the upcoming show.

Initial results of the organization's efforts are promising. Over the last 17 months, only two out of 30 artists have relapsed.

“Our young people express that they value our community of sober and enthusiastic artists who come together to be creative and constructive, not destructive,” Thomas added. “They find self-worth, support, laughter and screaming fun as they explore different artistic mediums.”

## **EVENT DETAILS**

**WHAT:** Hope Creates Expressive Arts Exhibition

**WHERE:** [ZACK](#), 3224 Locust, 63103

**WHEN:** Sunday, Oct. 21 at 3 p.m.

**MISC:** The art exhibition is from 3-5:45 p.m. Gallery admission is free and open to the general public. In addition to youth and young adult participants, exhibitors will include the co-founders of the [Crossroads Program](#), an enthusiastic sobriety program for young people and their families. A concert featuring event exhibitors and two sober bands – Sensor Shake and Pink Freud (the Crossroads band) – is from 6-8 p.m. Concert admission is \$22. Tickets are available at all MetroTix outlets and at the door. All proceeds go to [Hope Creates](#) to help fund future programs and events.

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## **ABOUT HOPE CREATES**

[Hope Creates](#) was founded in April 2017. Its mission is to improve the lives of youth and young adults in recovery from addiction through the engagement of expressive arts and occupational therapy principles, and the development of basic professional skills. [Hope Creates](#) focuses on positive self-expression, building and maintaining self-worth, giving participants relevant business training, and making sobriety more fun and attractive than using mind-altering chemicals. The organization recently won Washington University's Social Enterprise and Innovation Competition (SEIC) for the Youth division. The SEIC is run through the university's Brown School.