



30 YEARS

OF CREATIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT





Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the past year, I am both proud and grateful to share with you the highlights and achievements of SAY Sí. In 2024, SAY Sí celebrated our 30th anniversary, with a focus on values-driven sustainability. This year has demonstrated our resilience and commitment to our mission as we navigated challenges and celebrated numerous successes.

We remain committed to our core studio model, offering studio programs for middle and high school students, providing each student over 250 hours of arts education led by accomplished teaching artists. In May, SAY Sí celebrated our graduating seniors with their thesis exhibition—*Transcendence*—and a graduation ceremony where we heard from students and teaching artists about the incredible impact of their time together. Our 100% graduation rate remains a testament to the power of arts education to bolster achievement for our students in all areas where success is determined by emotional intelligence, creativity, and perseverance.

New to our programs, SAY Sí piloted Summer Studio Intensives, a model offering deeper engagement and uninterrupted studio time. These programs are designed to help mitigate summer isolation, providing positive social engagement, leadership skill-building, and artistic growth for students during the summer break. We also expanded our programs as our teaching artists led workshops in visual arts, photography, puppet theatre, and narrative game design for students ages 6-13 through partnerships with the Ella Austin Community Center and Empower House. Both organizations are located on San Antonio's East Side and this was an opportunity to collaborate with aligned organizations and expand our reach through offsite classes serving elementary school students.

In 2024, we achieved several milestones that furthered our long term stability, none as visible as the completion of Phase 2 of our capital improvement plan with the completion of work on critical infrastructure (a new roof!) and the exterior renovation, including landscaping using native plants that welcome pollinators to our campus. We are moving forward with agreements to provide tenants with lease spaces and celebrating the potential for growing our earned revenue while building a space for nonprofits, small businesses and individual practitioners sharing both a campus and a vision for community.

Our welcoming facilities have provided fertile ground for partnerships and resource sharing, most notably a month-long collaboration between SAY Sí's ALAS Youth Theatre and Guadalupe Cultural Arts' Grupo *Ánimo*. We also produced a diverse range of public events, including four student exhibitions, performances, film screenings, alumni projects, our second annual haunted house, a spring block party and community art-making days.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the opportunities that 2025 holds. Our goals include increasing enrollment while sustaining the quality of our studio programs, and expanding community engagement at home in 78207 and beyond.

None of this would be possible without the unwavering support of our stakeholders, staff, and community of students, family and alumni. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who showed up in support of SAY Sí this year. Your contributions and engagement have been invaluable to our success.

I invite you to read through the full annual report. We welcome your feedback and look forward to your continued support as we embark on another promising year.

Stephanie LaFroschia
Executive Director

SAY Sí ignites the creative power of young people as forces of positive change. We value artists, empower marginalized communities and advance culture.



SAY Sí STAFF

Stephanie LaFroschia **Executive Director**
Jessica Beall **Communications and Marketing Associate**
Lindsay Byrne **Operations Manager**
Michael Guerra Foerster **Interim Visual Arts Studio Director**
Solstíz Ibarra-Campos **Theater Studio Assistant**
Jackson Lundquist **Media Arts Teaching Artist**
Ned Meneses **New Media Teaching Artist**
Lilith Tijerina **Theater Arts Teaching Artist**
Alex Ramirez **Media Arts Studio Director**
Amalia Ortiz **Theater Arts Studio Director**
Stevan Živadinović **New Media Studio Director**

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SAY SÍ BY THE NUMBERS

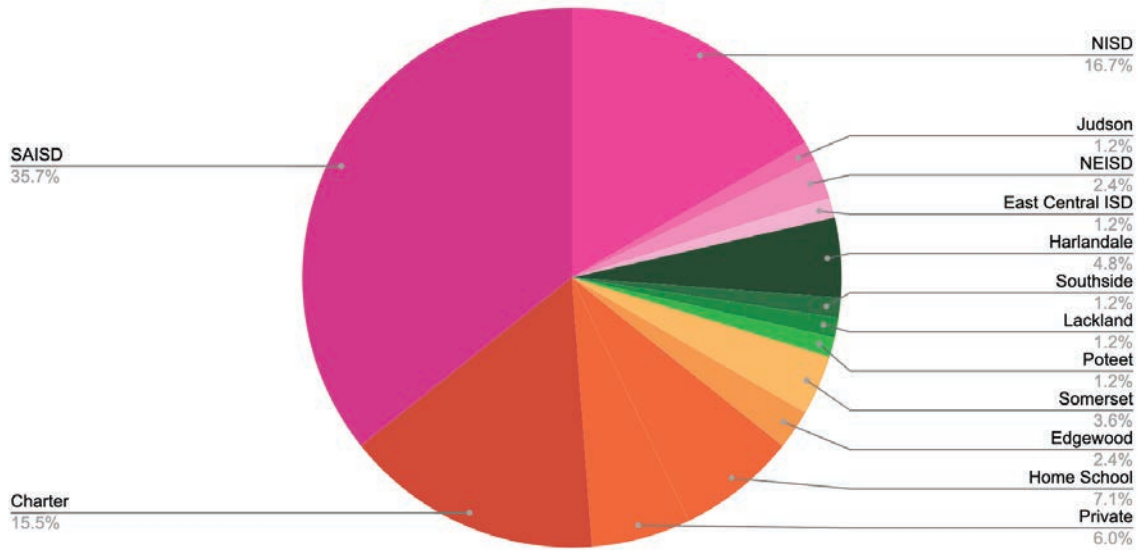
SAY Sí began in 1994 with 12 students from Brackenridge High School. Since that time, SAY Sí has steadily grown to serve students of all ages through community and studio programs at our home on San Antonio's Westside.

30 years later, SAY Sí continues our commitment to ensuring that all young people have equitable access to opportunities to develop their creative potential and critical thinking skills, empowering them to become active contributors to their communities.



1996 SAY Sí Class Picture

IN 2024 SAY SÍ SERVED 180 STUDENTS IN 48 SCHOOLS



DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

31 weeks

X

2.5 hours a day

X

2 days a week

DURING THE SUMMER

4 weeks

X

5 hours a day

X

5 days a week

250+
STUDIO HOURS
PER STUDENT

100%
GRADUATION

STUDENT INTERVIEW

CHRISTOPHER RUBIO

ALAS THEATER ARTS STUDENT CLASS OF 2026

Christopher is a high school sophomore in the ALAS Theater Arts program. He started coming to SAY Sí in the eighth grade as part of the middle school WAM program. Since joining, he has acted in numerous theater productions, such as *Surviving Unity High* and our annual Haunted House. In November of 2023, Christopher wrote and read an original poem dedicated to a passed loved one in front of the Texas Capitol for the Texas Civil Rights Project's Dia De Muertos event. This year, he led a special project where he connected peers from his high school with SAY Sí to create this year's community altar.

What is your favorite SAY Sí memory? My favorite SAY Sí memory is acting in *Surviving Unity High*. This experience taught me how to work well with others and helped me express my feelings about situation that needed to be discussed.

"Be unforgivably yourself and nobody else, because that's how true art is made."

What has SAY Sí helped you learn about yourself?

SAY Sí has helped me learn that I am more than the labels people put on me for being gay, Latino, and from the "not best parts of San Antonio." I grew up always believing it was okay to be myself and not care about what others say, and bringing this mindset to SAY Sí has helped me accomplish many things and strive to be my best. One thing I've learned from SAY Sí, and I thank Amalia, Sol, and Lilith [ALAS Theater Teaching Artists] for this, is to be "unforgivably yourself and nobody else, because that's how true art is made."

"...the comunidad I've found here has been invaluable."



Christopher and ALAS Theater students at rehearsal

Are there experiences or lessons learned at SAY Sí that you use to help you outside of SAY Sí? SAY Sí has helped shape me into the person I am today - unapologetically me. Mental health has been something I've struggled with for a while, but the comunidad I've found here has been invaluable. Whether it's Amalia telling me the honest truth (which I sometimes hate to hear but need to), Lilith helping me through times when I felt like I was nothing, or the admin team, Jessica and Stephanie, always being there for me in my best and worst moments—these powerful women have helped a boy from the south side who felt like he had nobody believe he could conquer it all. I choose to keep going because I have these people pushing me forward.



Christopher and Executive Director Stephanie LaFroschia



HIVE New Media Student Ian immersed in the Chamber of Reflection installation

Stories Seldom Told: Echoes of the Past

Stories Seldom Told is SAY Sí's student-led interdisciplinary research project that combines installation and performance art to address important student-selected topics.

With a focus on highlighting student voice, the decision-making process begins with selected high school students and studio liaisons from each studio (Visual Arts, Media Arts, New Media, and Theater Arts) meeting weekly to discuss and pare down the topics their peers are interested in, ending in a student-wide vote on that year's subject. This year, students explored themes around nostalgia and how memories from the past can shape the future.

Chamber of Reflection, an immersive video-based installation created by the high school **Visual Arts** class, examined the power of nostalgia and how the past can represent a source of comfort while simultaneously acting as a form of avoidance for the present. The installation invited visitors into a secluded room where projections covered the walls, creating an atmosphere of reflective introspection. While waiting for their turn to play the iconic video game *Snake* - a beloved relic of digital nostalgia - viewers experience a space where the familiar



Stories Seldom Told attendees sit and watch the 2000's 'Crash Pad' short

past mingled with the present, inviting them to question what memories they hold onto and why.

Meanwhile, the high school **Theater Arts** class showcased *The Amazing Phenomenal Tremendously Terrific Wonderful Mysterious Auction of Oddities*. In an interactive performance, students auctioned off objects with the highest nostalgic value, as determined by the audience. Students explored ideas of value and memory through distorted auction items whose proportions were exaggerated and material properties altered, like a giant, two-tiered birthday cake created out of cardboard.

Similarly, the high school **HIVE New Media** studio created a cardboard sculpture of the Cavendish banana, titled, *Born to Die*. Through this piece, students addressed the fragility of the banana and our environment, confronting the real threat of extinction that affects many of the things we know and love today. They sought to answer the question: *What if all of the things you enjoy most vanished completely?*



ALAS Theater student Enzo with the banana on opening night

Filmed in the style of MTV's Cribs, the high school **Media Arts** project *Crash Pad* is a multigenerational reality TV show that showcases the pop culture, accessories, and vibes of past eras. During the opening reception, viewers were invited to rock out in the 80's with Enzo, check out the bold fashion and fly attitude of the 90's with Devon or check out Zulma's 2000's-inspired room.



Students Gabriel and Clara help auction off a large-scale cassette tape in 'The Amazing Phenomenal Tremendously Terrific Wonderful Mysterious Auction of Oddities'



MIDDLE SCHOOL HIGHLIGHT

Self-Portraits: A Long Standing Tradition

Each year, the middle school students participate in the beloved SAY Sí tradition of creating self-portraits, a project that allows them to explore their identities and artistic skills. Using the gridding method, students carefully draw their portraits and then transfer their designs onto wood panels. They complete their portraits with acrylic paint, challenging them to develop their technical abilities and attention to detail.

For the students creating self-portraits for their first time, bold pop art colors are used to introduce them to the fundamentals of color theory and artistic expression. Returning students working on their second self-portrait focus on more realistic color schemes, deepening their understanding of shading and tone. By the time students create their third self-portrait, they are given the option to choose between the pop art style or realistic colors, allowing them to make a personal artistic decision based on their own growth and evolving style.

After the exhibition concludes, these portraits will join the extensive 'WAM Wall' at SAY Sí, a collection that spans over a decade of student portrait work, showcasing the progression of talent, creativity, and individuality among each student. This wall not only honors the artistic growth within each student but also serves as a powerful visual representation of the program's lasting impact on the community.

The WAM Program: Fostering Peer Mentorship

Working Artists and Mentors, often referred to as 'WAM,' is SAY Si's year-round, multidisciplinary middle school program, where students participate in two of our four studios. The WAM program employs current junior and senior high school students to work as student instructors, allowing for reciprocally beneficial peer-to-peer mentoring.

The mentorship between our high school and middle school students is a unique aspect of this program. It provides middle school students the opportunity to learn from advanced high school students while giving the high school students valuable real-world job skills and experience. Through this program, students work on projects that develop cognitive skills such as problem-solving, reasoning, decision-making, and interpersonal skills, including communication, teamwork, and self-fulfillment.



Middle school student Rios working diligently on their yarn painting project

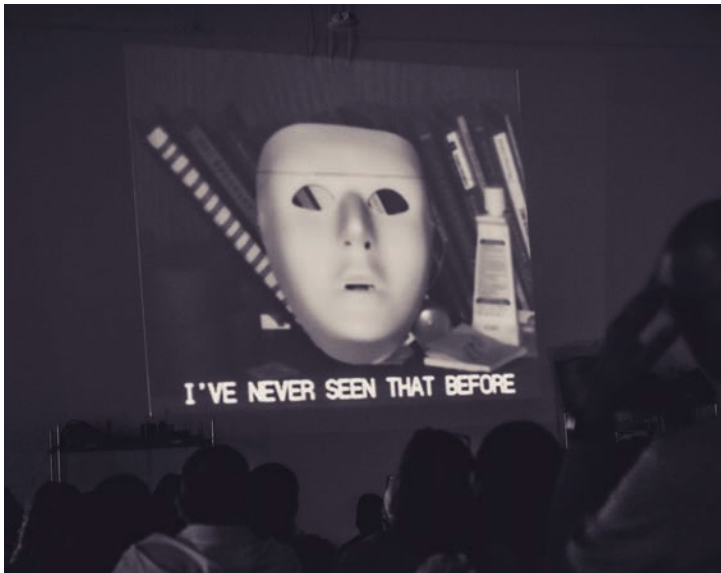


Visual Arts WAM Mentor Cora working with middle school students on their technique, inspired by Huichol yarn art.

Exploring New Genres in our Summer Studio Intensives

SAY Sí students spent over 50 hours in our studios in June during our Studio Intensives — a new model piloted in 2024 to allow for deeper engagement and uninterrupted studio time.

Students spent five hours a day, Monday-Friday, in one of our four studios: Visual Arts, Media Arts, HIVE New Media, and ALAS Theater. Each studio worked with visiting artists, attended site visits to relevant organizations and cultural spaces, and spent considerable time developing their own body of work under the guidance of our experienced teaching staff. The summer program culminated with an open studio exhibition and film screening attended by over 100 students.



SAY Sí Horror Film Jam screening

Photo courtesy of Hector Hugo Garza



'IRATA' game logo created during the HIVE New Media summer intensive



'Cage Free' by high school Visual Arts student DJ

The Visual Arts studio focused on fiber arts and three-dimensional forms using a felting method taught by visiting artist Leticia Rocha, a Mexican-born fiber artist based in San Antonio. At the end of the intensive, students presented their works, demonstrating an advanced understanding of natural forms and deft approach to the material.

HIVE New Media students took their skills in creative coding to a new level. Working in small groups, students conceived and produced short illustrated adventure games using the Ink interactive fiction editor used by many professional games to handle all the complexities of interactive narrative.

Our Media Arts 2-week intensive focused on the horror genre, which allows for a unique experimentation with lighting, make-up, set design, and special-effects. Visiting artists included SAY Sí Media Arts alum and local filmmaker Grace Goen and James Rodriguez of Austin arts non-profit *St. Primo*. Students wrote, produced, cast actors, and edited fully realized horror shorts to showcase at a public screening.



Grupo Ánimo and ALAS Theater Students

Photo courtesy of Hector Hugo Garza

Promoting Youth Theater in the Westside Cultural District

Youth theater companies from the *Guadalupe Cultural Arts* and *SAY Sí* worked together over four weeks to write and produce original plays. The theater Studio Intensive served 40 students from *SAY Sí's* ALAS Theatre Company and *Guadalupe's* Grupo Ánimo - our largest theater cohort to date!

Students worked with renowned Chicano actors Tony Plana (*Ugly Betty*) and Jesse Borrego (*Blood In, Blood Out*) and learned about challenges and successes of professional actors in film and TV. The culminating performance opened to a standing-room only audience in *SAY Sí's* black box theater.



Program from the *My Time, My Story: Youth from Yanaguana* performance

About The Westside Cultural District: El Mero Weso

El Mero Weso is home to thriving cultural organizations recognized nationally for their impact on the arts and community; investment in neighborhood infrastructure guided by equitable community development; and a growing number of small businesses catering to lifelong residents and first time visitors.

Through support from the **Texas Commission on the Arts**, cultural organizations in **El Mero Weso** collaborate to celebrate our neighborhood's cultural legacy and sustain the Westside as a place where arts and culture thrive.

Expanding workshops to the Eastside

In July, our teaching artists provided daily workshops in visual arts, photography, puppet theater and narrative game design to students ages 6–13 through a partnership with the Ella Austin Community Center and Empower House.

Together, we shared our resources including staff, materials and program space, to serve children and families from the surrounding neighborhood — and had a lot of fun!



Ella Austin student working with a Canon DSLR camera



Block Party attendee holding SAY Sí mascot, Simón the Paleta

Welcoming our Neighbors to Summer Saturdays

SAY Sí kicked off our free summer community programs with a Block Party where our families and neighbors enjoyed art-making hosted by SAY Sí and San Anto Cultural Arts, danced to the young DJs of The AM Project, and shopped at our art market featuring vendors from SAY Sí's alumni and The Maestro Entrepreneur Center. The Block Party fostered connections between our neighbors and cultural community, launching a season of free artmaking programs on Saturdays at SAY Sí.

Our Summer Saturdays opened up SAY Sí to the whole community, inviting families of all ages to join themed, art-making days, each paired with a family-friendly film. These activities helped broaden our reach beyond our regular middle and high school programs, creating space for families to connect and create together. Themes like 'My Family' and 'My Plate' offered chances for portraiture and crafting favorite foods from found objects.



Staff and community from San Antonio River Foundation and SAY Sí join Manuel Davila alongside his Xicanx month art installation

Xicanx Celebration with San Antonio Area Foundation

In honor of Xicanx month, **SAY Sí** and the **San Antonio River Foundation** collaborated to create an open call for an alumni-led installation at Brazos Pocket Park on Apache Creek, across from SAY Sí. This partnership provides a transformative platform for SAY Sí artists and the broader community, amplifying the creativity and voices of our students and alumni. By incorporating these perspectives into the spaces surrounding Apache Creek and the San Antonio River, we foster an engaging dialogue on Xicanx heritage, environmental awareness, and community connection.

This collaboration not only empowers emerging artists with professional experience and support but also enriches our shared spaces with creative expressions that honor our history and envision a collective future.

WAM alumni **Manuel Davila** designed an interactive art installation: a five-sided cube showcasing imagery from the 78207 and 78237 area codes, celebrating Xicanx identity. By day, viewers admired the artwork on the canvases; by night, the cube glowed from within, revealing a striking back-lit perspective.

LORI HERNANDEZ

VISUAL ARTS CLASS OF 2007

Lori is the owner of Oh Yeah Cakes in Southtown, where she loves serving her customers and being a part of their life celebrations. She continues to support SAY Sí as a small business partner and advocate for the arts.

When were you a student at SAY Sí? I graduated in 2007 and was in the program for three years, from my sophomore to senior year.

How do you continue to make space for creativity and art in your life?

I still make time to paint and create art, although it can be tough to find the time while running a business 50+ hours a week. I love getting to be creative at work, designing and decorating cakes. I also have a small space in the shop called *Oh Yeah Gallery*, where I exhibit art and host First Friday openings. Ashley Perez [*Visual Arts Alum and Former Visual Arts Studio Director*] curates the space, and we often feature other SAY Sí alumni!

What is a favorite memory from your time at SAY Sí? Making art with friends! Rummaging through the closet for materials and inspiration, learning new techniques from my teachers to bring my vision to life, and then showing my artwork at First Friday. When people bought my art, it empowered and inspired me to create more.

What did your time at SAY Sí help you learn about yourself? About your place in the world?

SAY Sí helped me understand the concept of building community and supporting young people through art. Nicole Amri [*Visual Arts Alum and Former SAY Sí Co-Executive Director*] was my mentor. With her guidance, I learned about the true healing power of art.

“My time [at SAY Sí] helped me understand the concept of building community and supporting young people through art.”

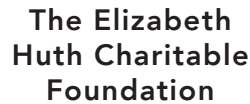


“Community is everything, I learned that at SAY Sí” -Lori Hernandez

Lori Hernandez (middle) with Oh Yeah Cakes Staff, including sister and Media Arts alum Esmeralda Hernandez (to the right of Lori) and ALAS Theater Alum Sarah Tijerina (far right)

Photo courtesy of Lori Hernandez

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