

Music, arts festival in Tempe puts spotlight on mental-health issues for youths

By **Coty Dolores Miranda**

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Riley Gibson isn't the man he used to be five years ago. Now 20, he's the improved, confident version of the teen who sought family in gangs and unsavory friends.

Chairman of MY LIFE — a 5-year-old organization for those 13 to 23 years old who have experience with issues related to mental health, substance abuse, juvenile justice and foster care — Riley is a valued mentor to others because he knows where they're coming from.

On Sunday, at Tempe Beach Park, he and other members of MY LIFE are hosting the family-friendly, sixth annual MY

Fest from noon to 5 p.m.

The free music and arts festival and wellness resource fair is open to the public and includes free food, an array of entertainment, including the Elektrolytes, a Gilbert all-male dance group that last June won the MTV's "America's Best Dance Crew" competition.

MY LIFE stands for Magellan Youth Leaders Inspiring Future Empowerment. Magellan Health Services of Arizona is the Regional Behavioral Health Authority for central Arizona.

MY LIFE is open to any youths that are experiencing challenges.

For Greg Dicharry, youth empowerment director for Magellan Health Services, watching MY LIFE members be-

ing helped and then helping others is inspirational.

"It's extremely inspiring to see the transformations these young people go through," he said. "There is nothing like seeing the light of hope and self-confidence begin to shine in someone's eyes, especially when that person has experienced so much darkness in their lives; and then to see how committed they are in helping other young people in their community."

These are young people who are committed to making positive changes in their lives and encouraging others to do the same," he added.

This year's MY Fest theme is "Creating a Future Free of Bullying and Sui-

cide."

Among Sunday's entertainers are Tempe-based Veragroove, the teen sister-band Ruby City, Phoenix faith-based rap artist Gospel Lee, singer/songwriter Tok-Sik, the Phoenix Oyate Singers, and rapper Joshuan "Big J" Williams, another of the original MY LIFE members.

MY Fest also includes a graffiti-art competition and a dance battle organized by Cyphers — The Center for Urban Arts. A kids area will offer inflatables and crafts.

MY LIFE meets from 6 to 7:30 p.m. the first and third Wednesdays of each month at Community Bridges, 2770 E. Van Buren St., Phoenix.

Information: MagellanofAZ.com.

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