

AIM Youth Mental Health

2025 Annual Report

We AIM for a world of mentally healthy youth.

BUILDING TRUST

Youth-Led Research

44.3%

of youth (ages 13-19) know where to find mental health resources, but feel hesitant to access them due to concerns about confidentiality.



Youth-Led Solutions

- * Create confidential, judgment-free spaces where youth can discuss mental health with trusted, empathetic listeners.
- * Offer anonymous pathways for young people to seek support privately, ensuring that youth feel safe sharing their experiences and accessing mental health resources without fear of exposure.

Findings from 2025 AIM Youth Mental Health Ideas Lab (N = 1623 high school students in CA)



AIM bridges the gap between youth mental health research and access to care by **finding, funding, and implementing evidence-based treatments and empowering youth to discover their own mental health solutions.**

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Dear AIM Community,

At the core of everything we do at AIM is a commitment to supporting young people's mental health. We do that through our two program pillars:

- engaging young people as mental health researchers, advocates, and change-makers through AIM Youth Programs, and
- partnering with leading scientists to accelerate evidence-based solutions reaching the communities that need them most through the AIM Research Impact Fund.

In 2026, we are deepening both pillars, expanding their reach and strengthening the impact they can have for young people.

AIM Youth Programs: AIM Ideas Lab is growing. Participation has tripled in California since 2024, accessibility has expanded through the translation of program materials into Spanish, and we have launched a Youth Ambassador follow-on program in which young people commit to another year to deepen their skills and lead youth-designed solutions in their schools and communities. In fall 2026, we will expand AIM Ideas Lab to Arizona with pilot cohorts in Phoenix. Young people consistently tell us that AIM strengthens their sense of agency, belonging, and hope. Seeing them transform those feelings into action, contributing to their schools and communities while strengthening their own wellbeing, is one of the most inspiring parts of this work.

AIM Research Impact Fund: Our partnerships with leading scientists are driving real impact on youth suicide, depression, and anxiety. Collaborations with Clinical Science Fellows and established researchers are accelerating work across prevention, early intervention, and crisis intervention — including cutting-edge suicide prevention research at a children's hospital in Chicago that represents exactly the kind of rigorous, implementation-focused work that defines AIM's approach. We are also building a rigorous program evaluation infrastructure so that our case for support will be built on data.

At the intersection of these two pillars, AIM Youth Ambassadors are serving as co-researchers in our scientific partners' labs, launching podcasts, and presenting at national conferences. We are opening real pathways for young people into mental health research, clinical work, policy, and education — and embedding youth voices in the spaces that need to hear them most.

In 2026, AIM is on the rise, and none of it is possible without you. Thank you for being part of this work.

With gratitude,
Jolie Delja
Jolie Delja, Executive Director



Youth Ambassadors Nahira S. (left) and Lali S. (right) attend the 11th Annual AIM Gala with Executive Director Jolie Delja (center)

75% of lifetime mental health conditions begin before age 24.

What Young People Are Telling Us

The 2025 AIM Ideas Lab findings highlight the challenges many young people face today:

72%

of teens identified anxiety as a top mental health concern

63%

of teens reported feeling overwhelmed at least once a week



These aren't just statistics to AIM.

They're youth-led findings from our AIM Ideas Lab, surfaced by teens in communities across California.

That's the difference: when young people investigate the problem, they're also positioned to shape the solutions in their schools and communities. Our job is to give them the tools, the training, and the platform to do it.



AIM's **Scientific Advisory Board** brings together leading researchers and clinicians at the forefront of youth mental health research. Their collective expertise helps identify the most promising evidence-based research and emerging approaches, guiding AIM's support toward opportunities with the **greatest potential to improve the lives of young people.**

Rinad Beidas, PhD
Northwestern University
Implementation Science

Hilary P. Blumberg, MD
Yale School of Medicine
Mood Disorders

David M. Clark, CBE
University of Oxford
Panic Disorder, Social Phobia, PTSD

Edward Craighead, PhD, MBA
Emory University
Depression, Bipolar Disorder

Damien Fair, PhD
University of Minnesota
Developmental Neuroscience

Kate Fitzgerald, MD
Columbia University
Depression, Bipolar Disorder

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UCSF, Neuroscape
Digital Medicine, ADHD

Benjamin Goldstein, MD, PhD
University of Toronto
Mood Disorders

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Developmental Psychopathology

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Stanford University
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UCSD
Eating Disorders

Patrick McGorry, MD, PhD
University of Melbourne
Access to Treatment

David Miklowitz, PhD
UCLA
Bipolar Disorder

John Piacentini, PhD, ABPP
UCLA
Anxiety, OCD, Tics

Mark Hyman Rapaport, MD
President, APA
Anxiety, Depression

Marilu Gorno Tempini, MD, PhD
UCSF
Dyslexia, Neurodevelopment

John Weisz, PhD, ABPP
Harvard
Anxiety, Depression

AIM funds promising research, and the researchers behind it, focused on prevention, early intervention, and crisis intervention in youth mental health.

Through the **AIM Research Impact Fund**, AIM invests in novel interventions and scalable solutions that improve outcomes for young people. At the center of the Fund are the **AIM Clinical Science Fellowships**, supporting postdoctoral researchers developing new therapies, diagnostic tools, and mental health solutions built for real-world impact.

2025 AIM Clinical Science Fellows



Reducing Cultural & Structural Barriers to Youth Mental Health
Wendy Chu, PhD, Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

Dr. Chu is developing a culturally-responsive tool to keep marginalized youth engaged in their mental health care by enabling therapists to address barriers that often lead teens to drop out of therapy.

Improving Teen Depression Outcomes Through a Digital Intervention
Carter Funkhouser, PhD, Columbia University

Dr. Funkhouser is evaluating a brief intervention for teens who screen positive for depression online, teaching interpersonal skills to address relationship challenges that often contribute to depression.



Reducing Sleep and Emotional Regulation for Youth with Bipolar Disorder
Delainey Wescott, PhD, University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Wescott is piloting the TERRA program (Targeting Emotion & Rhythm Regulation in Adolescents), designed to improve sleep and emotion regulation in youth with bipolar spectrum disorders.

Youth as Co-Researchers in AIM Clinical Science Fellowship Labs

In 2025, AIM launched an innovative new model for youth engagement in research by placing **six AIM Youth Ambassadors as youth co-researchers within AIM Clinical Science Fellowship labs**. Working alongside early-career scientists, these youth co-researchers participate in ongoing research discussions and provide critical youth perspectives on study design, research questions, and findings.

By embedding youth voice directly into the research process, AIM is helping ensure that the next generation of mental health solutions is informed by both scientific expertise and the lived experiences of the young people it is designed to serve.



AIM Youth Ambassadors Zoe W. and Nahira S. meeting as youth co-researchers with AIM Clinical Science Fellow Delainey Wescott, PhD

AIM empowers young people to shape the future of youth mental health through **research, advocacy, and art**. By centering youth voice and lived experience, AIM ensures young people are not only represented in mental health conversations, **but actively driving solutions**.

AIM Ideas Lab

AIM Ideas Lab is a Youth Participatory Action Research program that equips high school students with the tools to research youth mental health in their communities and develop data-driven solutions. The program generates unique, youth-led data that can inform educators, policymakers, researchers, and community leaders—offering actionable insights into youth mental health that are both evidence-based and youth-informed.



AIM Ideas Lab Youth Researcher Spotlight

In 2025, 153 AIM Ideas Lab youth researchers across California conducted youth mental health research with 1,623 peers and made recommendations to address the youth mental health crisis in their communities. They contributed more than 1,500 hours of community service across the state.



"I've watched those I love struggle in silence, as I have too, due to the stigma and lack of understanding in my community. Taking part in AIM Ideas Lab inspired me to take action, and helped me realize I want to pursue a career in public policy so I can keep advocating for mental health support in underserved communities like my own."

– Alexander O.
Soledad High School,
Monterey County



"In my county, our team of student researchers used peer-to-peer survey data to suggest mental health solutions from our own perspective. I feel like my own mental health is stronger after joining AIM because I am with people who care about me and who are willing to talk openly about youth mental health challenges and solutions."

– Saisha P.
Dougherty Valley High
School, Contra Costa County

/ 2026 AIM Ideas Lab Preview

In spring 2026, 279 California high schools students participated in AIM Ideas Lab as youth researchers and surveyed 3,911 teens across the state.

For the full 2026 AIM Ideas Lab Report, scan the QR code here:



AIM Youth Ambassadors are high school students who have completed AIM Ideas Lab and continue turning research into action. Having gathered real evidence about the mental health challenges facing their peers, they work to implement youth-led solutions in their schools and communities.

Each AIM Youth Ambassador engages with researchers, school leaders, and other professionals through a chosen pathway: public leadership, mental health communications, co-leading AIM Ideas Lab, or placement in a research lab as a youth co-researcher. Together, these experiences empower Youth Ambassadors to promote awareness, reduce stigma, and ensure youth voice remains central in research, policy, school programs, and beyond.



AIM Youth Ambassadors Nahira S. and Lali S. speaking at the 11th Annual AIM Gala

Panels, Conferences & Public Leadership

AIM Youth Ambassadors partner with schools, districts, and community organizations to help shape youth mental health policy and practice. By working directly with school and district leaders, Youth Ambassadors bring youth voice into the rooms where decisions get made, advocating for mental health supports that work for students.

Through speaking engagements, conferences, and community events, Youth Ambassadors elevate youth perspectives in conversations about mental health, connecting research, policy, and lived experience.



/ SPOTLIGHT

Behavioral Health Tech Conference

At the 2025 Behavioral Health Tech Conference, AIM Youth Ambassadors presented their findings and youth-led solutions from AIM Ideas Lab to attendees at one of the industry's largest gatherings. Ambassadors Sophie C., Mia F., and Harshini P. also took the stage alongside 2023 AIM Clinical Science Fellow Dr. Sylvanna Vargas for a panel on mental health and AI, sharing their perspectives on how thoughtful design and safety practices can produce technology that better reflects the needs, experiences, and preferences of the young people it is intended to serve.

This is AIM's model in action: youth trained as researchers, now shaping the tools being built for them, alongside a scientist AIM supported early in her career.



AIM Youth Ambassadors presenting at the 2025 Behavioral Health Tech Conference

Mental Health Communications

AIM Youth Ambassadors help shape conversations about youth mental health through storytelling, digital media, and public education. Through podcasts, blogs, social media, and other communications opportunities, Youth Ambassadors engage broader audiences while helping make youth mental health research more accessible and relevant to young people.

AIM-plified Podcast

AIM-plified is a youth-led interview series hosted by AIM Youth Ambassadors, putting young people in direct conversation with researchers and policymakers shaping youth mental health today.

Each episode is an intergenerational dialogue: youth hosts bring their own perspective and invite experts to speak directly to the next generation, passing the baton from those shaping the field now to those who will lead it in the future.



AIM Youth Ambassadors Aerin C. and Saisha P. sit down with AIM Scientific Advisory Board Member John Piacentini, PhD, for an episode of the AIM-plified podcast, streaming on YouTube and Spotify

AIM Ideas Lab Youth Co-Mentors: From Participant to Leader

Youth Ambassadors can return to AIM Ideas Lab as youth co-mentors, peer leaders who co-facilitate sessions and guide the next cohort of youth researchers through the same experience that shaped them. For many, it is a first step into the youth mental health workforce, opening pathways to careers in mental health, education, research, and policy.

In this role, Youth Co-Mentors sharpen their skills in facilitation, leadership, and mental health advocacy while supporting newer participants to do their best work.

School & Community Partnerships

AIM's programs reach young people through partnerships with schools, districts, county offices of education, and community organizations.

In 2025, AIM deepened its work with Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District, Rancho Cielo in partnership with John Muir Charter Schools, Alameda County District 1 high schools in partnership with Supervisor David Haubert, and the Monterey County Office of Education. Each partnership puts youth-led research in front of the adults positioned to act on it, from school administrators to county leaders.

To see what student leadership looks like inside the AIM and Rancho Cielo partnership in Monterey County, scan the QR code here:



AIM for Awareness Art & Design Challenge

AIM invites young people into the conversation about youth mental health through participatory arts. The **AIM for Awareness Art & Design Challenge** encourages students to express their experiences, perspectives, and hopes through creative expression. In 2025, more than 200 students from across California and beyond shared their voices through art.

Their work does what statistics alone cannot. It captures attention, sparks conversation, and offers an honest glimpse into what young people are carrying, what they need, and what they want adults to understand.



All or Nothing by Stephanie C.

"What people show externally may not reflect what they are feeling internally. Through the contrast between a poker face and hidden emotions, "All or Nothing" encourages us to look beyond appearances and recognize the fears, anxiety, and struggles that can exist beneath the surface."

-Stephanie C., 11th Grade
1st Place Art & Design Challenge Winner



Monterey County student artists celebrating their award-winning entries

11th Annual AIM Youth Mental Health Gala

The **11th Annual AIM Youth Mental Health Gala** brought together an extraordinary community of supporters, researchers, advocates, and community leaders, united in a shared commitment to transforming youth mental health.

The evening raised more than \$525,000 to support AIM's two pillars of impact: advancing innovative research through the Research Impact Fund and empowering young people as leaders, researchers, and advocates through AIM Ideas Lab and Youth Ambassadors.



Our Supporters

AIM Youth Mental Health believes young people shouldn't just benefit from mental health research — they should shape it. The donors who make this work possible are investing in a different kind of youth mental health organization, one where science and youth insight drive each other forward.

Every gift advances that work: the research, the advocacy, and the next generation of young people leading both.

Institutional Funders

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 Manitou Fund
 Monterey County Gives!
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 Kathy and Joe Mele

/ SPOTLIGHT

Born This Way Foundation

In December 2025, AIM was selected for Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation Kindness in Community Fund, joining a global cohort of organizations advancing youth mental health through compassion, connection, and community-driven solutions.

The Foundation's two-year, \$100,000 investment – AIM's first multi-year grant – reflects a shared commitment to building pathways to mental health support rooted in evidence and lived experience. This support will help AIM deepen its impact in the communities it serves.



The 2025 AIM Art & Design Challenge Reception

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Susan and Mark Stilwell
Taylor Farms
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Amy Roth and Jack Van Valkenburgh

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Mason Weidner-Holland
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Rhonda Williams
Susan Wolfe

We thank the 167 donors who gave gifts of \$5–\$99, with special recognition for the 111 young donors who supported AIM through Monterey County Gives! — earning AIM the 2025 Young Donors Award.



AIM Youth Ambassador Sophie C. speaking at the 2025 Behavioral Health Tech Conference

/ SPOTLIGHT

Charity Marathon & Half-Marathon Runners

In 2025, AIM participated as an official charity partner in the **TCS New York City Marathon** and the **Los Angeles Marathon**, raising more than **\$50,000** to support AIM’s work. We are grateful to each runner for championing youth mental health, and to their families, friends, and supporters whose generosity helped make this impact possible.



NYC

Eliza Jacobs, in honor of Emily Sue
Brandon Perez
Emily Quinn
George Sakopoulos
Eleanor Still
Jake Zolina

Ultra Marathoner
Will Stevens

Los Angeles

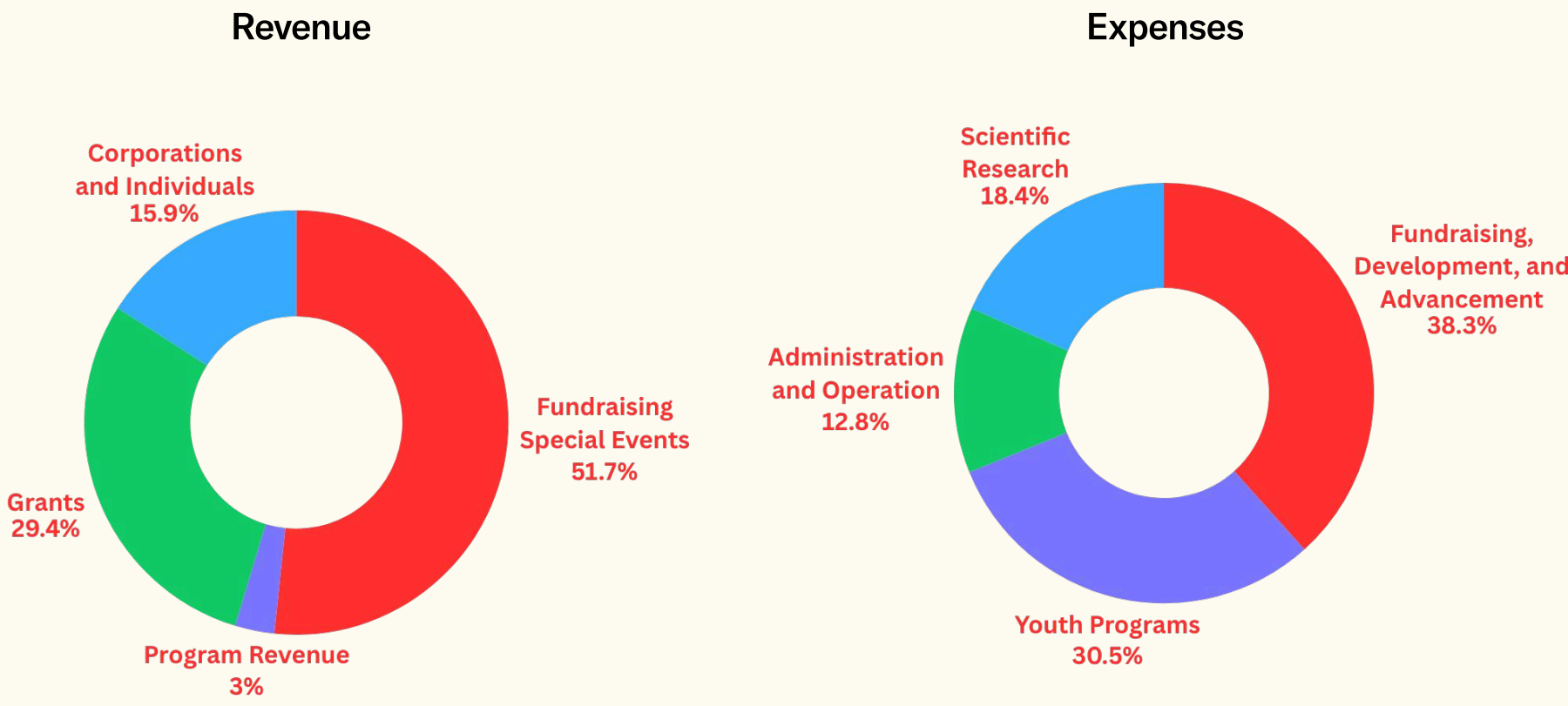
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- Round Pond Estate
- Scheid Family Wines
- Signworks
- Stilwell Hotel
- Tira Nanza Wines
- Wrath Wines

AIM Youth Mental Health experienced a strong financial year in 2025 marked by steady growth in program funding and donor engagement. We strategically invested in core operations and expanded our capacity to reach more young people through research partnerships and youth programs.

We remain deeply grateful to our supporters, partners, and community members who make our work possible. Their continued generosity fuels our commitment to creating meaningful, measurable change in youth mental health outcomes.





Donate



[AIMymh.org/donate](https://aimymh.org/donate)

Support the future of youth mental health.
Your gift helps AIM advance innovative research and empower young people to lead the future of mental health.

Scan the QR code to donate today.

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Stay connected with AIM.

Follow, subscribe, and share to help amplify youth voices, discover evidence-based mental health resources, and be part of a growing community committed to improving youth mental health.



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