



2026-27 GEM ART CONTEST GUIDELINES

Prompt:

Create artwork that promotes the importance of mental well-being and works to end the stigma surrounding mental health and suicide.

Questions that may help you follow this prompt:

- When did you last catch yourself judging someone based on a label?
- What inner beliefs make it hard for you to ask for help?
- How do you listen to a friend going through a hard time without judging or trying to fix the problem?
- What is one myth about counseling, therapy, or psychiatry you used to believe?
- How can you encourage others to treat a brain illness the same way you would treat a broken bone or diabetes?

Eligibility:

1. Students in Grades 6 – 12 who live or attend school in the Greater Dayton region (Montgomery and its surrounding counties: Clark, Greene, Warren, Butler, Preble, Darke, and Miami) are eligible to apply.
2. Artwork must follow all rules stated below.

Rules:

1. **Artwork must be original and completed solely by the entrant.**
 - a. **AI-generated artwork is not allowed.**
 - a. **If entrant is inspired by artwork created by another artist, the entrant must reference the artist and their artwork.**
2. Artwork must be 2-D.
3. Artwork should send an impactful message that prompts conversation with its viewers or encourages those who struggle with their mental health to reach out for help.
4. Entrants must submit an artist's statement that includes the message they want to give to the viewer, their reasons for entering the contest, and/or any other information they want to share about their submission.
5. Artwork may be oriented in landscape or portrait format.
6. GEM Project Dayton has the sole right to refuse submissions based on poor quality of the image, personal/identifying markers on the artwork (i.e., **no signatures or school mascots**), failure to meet contest requirements, poor craftsmanship, inappropriateness of content, and/or concerns regarding copyright infringement in the original work.
7. Entries are limited to one per person.
8. Submissions must be visible, clear, and in focus; submitted in **high-res JPEG format** and feature only the artwork with **no superfluous background, people in the image, or hands or clips holding the artwork.**
9. **Submissions must be made through the website: gemprojectdayton.org**

Judging:

Artwork submitted to the contest will be judged by the following criteria with scoring guidelines detailed in the rubric:

- Relevance to Theme
- Impact
- Creativity
- Design & Craftmanship
- Artist's Statement (a succinct 125-character summary of the idea that inspired your artwork)
- Tips for writing an artist statement
 - Cover the "why," "what," and "how" of your art.
 - Keep your statement as short as possible. To save words, do not start with "I created this piece because it shows...." Instead, begin with what follows that phrase, such as "a helping hand can mean a lot to someone who is having a bad day."
 - Keep your entry anonymous—do not include your name, school, or any identifying information.
 - Use active rather than passive voice. For example: "Listening shows you are there for your friend" rather than "listening is a way to show you are there for your friend."

Awards:

1. The winners of the contest will be rewarded with cash prizes ranging from \$50 to \$1,000.
2. The top awards will be based on scores in five categories defined in the contest rubric.
3. Entrants can win only one cash prize per calendar year.
4. All participating schools will have at least one award winner. Homeschooled students are combined as one school.
5. Accepted artwork that meets all contest criteria for submission will be eligible for use in prevention materials, PSAs, presentations, and public art installations.

Other Information:

1. Contest will launch on World Mental Health Awareness Day, October 10, 2026.
2. All participants are encouraged to read through all the rules and **understand the theme of the contest** before creating a submission.
3. By submitting artwork to this contest, you (and your parent if you are under 18 years of age) are agreeing with GEM Project Dayton's Terms & Conditions.
4. All artwork submitted to the contest will be used by GEM Project Dayton for marketing, promotional, educational, and display purposes at the discretion of GEM Project Dayton.
5. All artists relinquish the rights to their contest submissions to GEM Project Dayton.
- 6. Deadline for submissions: January 13, 2027.**
- 7. Award ceremony will be held on the afternoon of February 28, 2027. Participants must be present to accept awards.**



GEM



ART CONTEST FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Categories	Exceeding 14 - 20 points	Meeting 8 - 13 points	Emerging 0 - 7 points
Relevance to Theme 20%	Shows a full understanding of the contest theme and guidelines	Shows a partial understanding of the contest theme and guidelines	Shows a lack of understanding of the contest theme; imagery may confuse or frighten the viewer
Impact 20%	Creates a strong impact and encourages conversation about mental health, addiction, or suicide	Creates a slight impact and partially encourages conversation about mental health, addiction, or suicide	Lacks impact and does not encourage conversation about mental health, addiction, or suicide
Creativity 20%	Uses unique, imaginative imagery AND has innovative combinations or formations with the art media	Uses somewhat unique imagery and has an interesting formation with the art media	Uses common imagery and nothing unique in the formation of the art media
Design/ Craftsmanship 20%	Shows imagery that is well-planned and executed; fills the space effectively with excellent balance of art elements (color, linework, form, shape, space); exhibits outstanding craftsmanship	Shows imagery with average design skills; fills the space adequately; exhibits average craftsmanship	Shows inattention to the finished design; exhibits below average craftsmanship
Artist's Statement 20%	Illustrates the contest theme clearly and directly reflects the ideas in the imagery	Illustrates the contest theme somewhat and/or reflects some ideas in the imagery	Illustrates an idea different from the contest theme or does not align with the imagery submitted

IMPORTANT: Entries must NOT include signatures, mascots, or other identifying markers to allow for anonymous judging.