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FIRST LADY RECOGNIZES TOP CREATIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

*12 after-school programs honored at the White House
for positive youth outcomes*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) Twelve young people from across the country shared the stage with First Lady Michelle Obama today as they accepted the 2014 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award on behalf of the after-school programs that have changed their lives.

The award recognizes the country's best creative youth development programs for using engagement in the arts and the humanities to increase academic achievement, graduation rates, and college enrollment. The awardees—chosen from a pool of more than 350 nominations and 50 finalists—are also recognized for improving literacy and language abilities, communication and performance skills, and cultural awareness.

“You teach kids more than just skills in the arts and humanities – you light a fire in them; you help them grow emotionally and socially,” said Mrs. Obama at the award ceremony. “And as all of you know, that has an impact on our kids not just their success in the arts and in the humanities but on their success in school and in life.”

First presented in 1998, the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award is the signature program of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH). The awards are presented annually in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

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The 12 students receiving awards from Mrs. Obama today represent a broad range of creative youth development programs, including:

- a program that provides mentoring and tutoring of young adults ages 16-21 by trained library staff that is significantly reducing high school drop-out rates (TeenSpace Circle of Mentoring, Santa Ana, CA);
- a program that brings together students from diverse racial, socio-economic and religious backgrounds to build self-confidence, leadership and academic success—and heal a community divided by race—through dance (New Ballet Ensemble, Memphis, TN);
- a program that takes students facing economic and social hardship who have an interest in music and uses long-term music education to build their skills as musicians while also promoting academics and personal growth (Project STEP, Boston, MA);
- two work-based learning programs that encourage teens to develop key professional skills and build self-confidence as paid part-time employees of the Missouri History Museum (Teens Make History, St. Louis, MO) and The New Victory Theater (New Victory Usher Corps, New York, NY); and
- a middle school program that builds academic, creative and technical skills through hands-on activities like welding and metal fabrication, fashion and graphic design, and music production/recording (Workshop Houston, Houston, TX).

“You can’t help but be moved by these kids, who show us the transformative power of the arts and humanities,” said Rachel Goslins, executive director of the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. “They are staying in school longer, getting better grades, graduating from high school and going on to college at significantly higher rates than their peers. And they’re building skills that will last them a lifetime.”

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The East Room ceremony featured a performance by one of this year's awardees, the Delta Blues Museum Arts and Education Program Band of Clarksdale, Miss. The band featured five performers ranging in age from 8 to 15 years old. The ceremony also included remarks by 16-year-old high school student Jennifer Guadalupe Gonzalez, who spoke about her experiences over the last two years with CPS Shakespeare! of Chicago.

The International Spotlight Award was presented to Salaam Baalak Trust, a nonprofit organization that supports and protects street and working children in the inner cities of New Delhi and Mumbai. Their work engages children in street plays, staged theater, dance, and puppetry, helping to provide opportunities for these children living on the margins of society to express themselves and gain self-confidence.

The corporate sponsor for this year's awards program is the NAMM Foundation, which advances active participation in music making across the lifespan by supporting scientific research, philanthropic giving and public service programs. A supporting organization of the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM), the NAMM Foundation is funded by NAMM Members through trade association activities and private donations.

In addition to their recognition at the White House, each of the 12 community-based programs will receive \$10,000 and a year of communications and capacity-building support from the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. For more information about the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards, visit www.pcah.gov.

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About the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards

The National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award is the nation's highest honor for after-school arts and humanities programs. The awards recognize and support outstanding programs that lay new pathways to creativity, expression, and achievement outside of the regular school day. These programs excite and engage a range of students, cultivating imagination, collaboration, discipline and academic success, with demonstrable results. They also provide safe harbors after-school, weekends and evenings for children and youth in some of our country's most at-risk urban and rural settings.

About the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities

Created in 1982 by Executive Order, the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) is an advisory committee to the White House on cultural issues. The PCAH works directly with the Administration and the three primary cultural agencies—National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)—as well as other federal partners and the private sector, to address policy questions in the arts and humanities, to initiate and support key programs in those disciplines, and to recognize excellence in the field. Its core areas of focus are arts and humanities education, cultural exchange, and community revitalization. Mrs. Michelle Obama, like other first ladies before her, serves as honorary chairman of the committee, which is composed of both private and public members. For more information, visit: www.pcah.gov.

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The 2014 awardees are:

¡City Arts! Community AfterSchool Program

Providence ¡City Arts for Youth!, Inc.
Providence, RI

CPS Shakespeare!

Chicago Shakespeare Theater
Chicago, IL

Delta Blues Museum Arts and Education Program

Clarksdale, MS

everybody dance! after-school program

The Gabriella Foundation
Los Angeles, CA

Project STEP, Inc.

Intensive String Training Program for Black and Latino Young People
Boston, MA

Job Training in the Arts

Downtown Aurora Visual Arts
Aurora, CO

Workshop Houston

Middle School Program
Houston, TX

New Ballet Ensemble

Memphis, TN

New Victory Usher Corps

The New Victory Theatre
New York, NY

Publicolor, Inc.

Continuum of Design-based Programs
New York, NY

Teens Make History

Missouri History Museum
Saint Louis, MO

TeenSpace Circle of Mentoring

Santa Ana Public Library
Santa Ana, CA

International Spotlight Award

Salaam Baalak Trust

New Delhi and Mumbai, India

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