



First Lady Michelle Obama Recognizes Downtown Aurora Visual Arts as Top Creative Youth Development Program

*Local nonprofit honored at the White House for generating positive youth outcomes through its
Job Training in the Arts program*

Aurora, Colo. (November 10, 2014) – Local eighth-grader Boris Cochajil shared the stage with First Lady Michelle Obama today as he accepted a 2014 [National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award](#) (NAHYP Award) on behalf of [Downtown Aurora Visual Arts](#) (DAVA) – a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the Aurora community through the arts, with a primary focus on youth engagement.

Each year, the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award recognizes 12 of the country’s best creative youth development programs for using engagement in the arts and humanities to increase academic achievement, graduation rates, and college enrollment. Chosen from a pool of more than 350 nominations and 50 finalists, DAVA is one of 12 organizations being honored. Specifically, DAVA is receiving this award for its Job Training in the Arts program. Youth in this program learn art, design, and computer fundamentals in addition to life skills, such as teamwork, responsibility, critical thinking, and practical problem solving.

“It is an incredible honor to be recognized for this award, and we are proud to bring it home to our community,” remarked Susan Jenson, executive director of DAVA. “This recognition validates our efforts over the last 20 plus years to impact the economic vitality of Aurora by engaging youth in the arts and opening their eyes to a future of possibilities.”

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).

“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.”

In addition to their recognition at the White House, DAVA will receive a \$10,000 award and a year of communications and capacity-building support from the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

To learn more about DAVA and creative arts programming, visit www.davarts.org. And to arrange for an interview with a representative from DAVA, including a young person positively impacted by the organization’s Job Training in the Arts program, contact Barefoot PR at 720.515.4282.

2014 NAHYP Award Winners

Job Training in the Arts
Downtown Aurora Visual Arts
Aurora, CO

iCity Arts! Community AfterSchool Program
Providence iCity 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

Workshop Houston
Middle School Program
Houston, TX

New Ballet Ensemble
Memphis, TN

New Vic 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

About Downtown Aurora Visual Arts

Founded in 1993, Downtown Aurora Visual Arts (DAVA) has been building community through the arts for over two decades. By providing a safe learning environment for youth ages three to 17, DAVA programs reinforce 21st century life skills, build self-esteem, and connect youth to the community. DAVA represents a unique combination of arts education and youth development, demonstrating how quality arts programming during after-school hours form a critical framework for long-term youth success. Each year, DAVA programs impact approximately 1,400 young people, and support the programming of partner organizations. DAVA is an anchor in the Aurora community, contributing to the development of a creative workforce and preparing young people for lifelong success. www.davarts.org

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. www.nahyp.org

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