

2008 Coming Up Taller Awardees

YOUTH ENSEMBLE OF ATLANTA

Atlanta, GA

Founded 18 years ago, the YEA enables approximately 80 young people to work with accomplished artists to create musical numbers and vignettes that are woven into full-scale singing and dancing productions. Participation in the program has led many participants to succeed in other areas as well. Since 1996, 100 percent of the ensemble's members have graduated from high school, and since 2002, all participants have gone on to college – including such prestigious institutions as Julliard and the Berklee College of Music – with scholarship assistance from YEA and a local foundation.

ALASKA NATIVE HERITAGE CENTER

Anchorage, AK

Located in Anchorage, the Alaska Native Heritage Center offers an after-school program that utilizes the arts and humanities to teach young people about their cultural heritage. Through the program, area youth work with skilled Alaska Native instructors who share their knowledge of traditional dance and music and Native arts that include carving, mask-making, basketry and more. The participants also attend leadership workshops where they are introduced to high-profile Alaskan leaders. Those who complete 120 hours in the program receive a semester of high school credit, which counts toward graduation. During the summer, the Alaska Native Heritage Center – a museum and cultural site enjoyed by upwards of 100,000 visitors a year – employs approximately 15 percent of the program's participants as dancers, cultural interpreters and visitor service workers.

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE MUSEUM ART AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Santa Fe, NM

The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum launched the Art and Leadership Program in 1998 to nurture leadership skills in artistically-inclined local children from low-income families. For two weeks during the summer, young people attending the tuition-free program are immersed in theater games, role-playing exercises, drawing and portraiture. Leadership development exercises are woven into all of the activities, and help promote each student's ability to set goals, make sound decisions and articulate needs.

SURA ARTS ACADEMY

Dearborn, MI

The Sura Arts Academy is an Arab-American National Museum program that gives Dearborn youth the opportunity to learn and use photography to foster cultural understanding. Its programs are offered to middle school children after school throughout the academic year, and in the summer at a school in southwest Detroit. Instructors from Detroit's College for Creative Studies teach courses in basic camera operation, provide the participants with digital cameras, and then send them into their communities to document topics such as work, food, religion, recreation and family life. The students then discuss their photographs in sessions designed to strengthen cultural awareness among the area's diverse groups of Arab-Americans, African-Americans, Latinos and other groups in primarily lower-income communities.

LATINO ARTS STRINGS PROGRAM

Milwaukee, WI

The Latino Arts Strings Program offers musical training and performance opportunities to area youth. Latino Arts provides instruments, music and lessons to students in grades 1-12. Students from the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music and the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee assist the program faculty. Participants in the program often perform in mariachi bands, youth orchestra and guitar ensembles at community festivals. Among 5th grade Strings Program participants, the average reading GPA increased from 2.81 to 3.45 over a two year period. The program also establishes a strong foundation for students who wish to pursue careers in music. The Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra currently includes 17 Latino Arts Strings participants.

WORD JOURNEYS

Tucson, AZ

Created through a partnership between the Pima County Public Library and the Amphitheatre School District, Word Journeys utilizes the library as a learning space for children from racially diverse and economically challenged Tucson neighborhoods. Its workshops typically begin with a reading from a children's book on a particular theme. The youth then engage in craft and writing exercises that encourage children to reflect on the theme and relate it to their own lives. Each workshop also includes a short "treasure hunt" to familiarize students with library resources.

QUEENS TEENS

New York, NY

Developed by the Queens Museum of Art, Queens Teens is an initiative that engages area youth as museum docents, providing them with a glimpse of careers in the art world and the tools to succeed in the real world. Through weekly after-school workshops with museum staff and both emerging and established artists, the teens learn about the Museum's collections and exhibitions and develop the skills to interpret various forms of art. The training leads to paid assignments that include conducting weekend art workshops and public tours and serving as summer art camp counselors.

AMERICA SCORES

New York, NY

America Scores combines soccer, community service and the study and performance of poetry to give young people an opportunity for physical activity and creative expression. The program is overseen by teachers at 200 public schools in 15 cities. For two afternoons a week during the fall, young people study the works of poets ranging from Emily Dickinson to Robert Louis Stevenson to Nikki Giovanni to understand the creative diversity of various styles. They are simultaneously given the opportunity to express their feelings through their own poems, a process that supports the development of reading and writing skills. On alternate days, they enjoy physical exercise and learn about the importance of teamwork by playing soccer

TADA! RESIDENT YOUTH ENSEMBLE

New York, New York

The TADA! Resident Youth Ensemble engages youth in rigorous musical theater training and performance activities. The program publicizes open auditions in underserved areas, and provides to those who are accepted into it free after-school and summer training in music, voice, dance and acting. Under the tutelage of directors, choreographers and musicians with extensive regional and Broadway credits, the participants learn to strive for excellence as they develop an understanding of teamwork and self-discipline. These skills translate directly to success in school; for the past five years, 100 percent of the program's high school seniors have graduated and enrolled into college.

SUMMER ARTS FOR YOUTH

Indianapolis, IN

Created by Young Audiences of Indiana, Summer Arts for Youth summer camps take place at eight sites in lower-income communities in Indianapolis. Participants work with teams of accomplished artists, who lead lessons built around high quality children's books. The instructors act as storytellers who engage the young people in arts activities such as drawing, sculpture, music and dance as a way to bring the subject matter in the books to life. Each creative activity is enriched with exercises that build and strengthen reading skills while school is out of session, so that students use vacation time to build a foundation for success in the coming school year.

JOURNEY: THE AJA PROJECT

San Diego, CA

The AjA Project's Journey program is a San Diego-based initiative that offers immigrant and refugee youth photography-based educational programs to illustrate and reflect on their experiences of migration and resettlement. Participants in the AjA Project are youth who have recently arrived to the U.S. from countries all over the world. They meet twice a week during the school year to learn photography basics and create digital photo essays on themes that reflect their transition from their home countries to their new lives in the U.S. Students explore cultural issues through the lens of the camera as well as additional activities such as documentation of oral histories, group discussions and writing projects.

SIMPSON STREET FREE PRESS

Madison, WI

Simpson Street Free Press is a newspaper written and produced by a diverse group of Madison, Wisconsin youth. It was founded in 1992 to help struggling students overcome writing deficiencies and support academic success among local young people. The Simpson Street Free Press has since grown into a widely respected community newspaper with an overall circulation of 23,000. Free Press publications are distributed free of charge in schools, neighborhood centers, public libraries, and retail outlets throughout Madison and the surrounding area.

BERKLEE CITY MUSIC PROGRAM

Boston, MA

Created by Berklee College of Music in 1991, City Music invites young people from low-income communities to audition and interview for a place in the program. Although candidates must have some background in music, passion and drive are the qualities that are most important. The lessons take place on the Berklee campus, giving the young people an opportunity to envision their own futures in higher education. More than 90 percent of participants stay in the program throughout high school.

PROJECT JERICHO

Springfield, OH

Project Jericho is a collaborative program of Clark State Community College Performing Arts Center and Job and Family Services of Clark County in southwest Ohio that enables at-risk students to tap their own creativity to forge a path to productive lives. The program utilizes several art forms, including photography, theatre and dance to foster positive social interactions among its participants, who are encouraged to apply the skills and discipline earned through the arts to their daily lives. Recognizing the role of healthy family dynamics in leading young people away from at-risk behaviors, Project Jericho also sponsors the Family Connections Program for clients of the Department of Job and Family Services, through which young people and their families collaborate on art-based projects to strengthen bonds and improve communication.

FULTON YOUTHEATRE PROGRAM

Lancaster, PA

From a rehearsal space at Lancaster's historic Fulton Opera House, the Fulton Youtheatre Program welcomes youth who have faced significant challenges, including those who have been referred from social service, juvenile justice and other agencies. The participating teens learn to write, produce and perform plays that reflect experiences relevant to their lives, enabling them to share their feelings with others while building self-confidence and preparedness for successful futures. The plays are developed over a two-year period, progressing from a workshop production the first summer to a fully staged production the second year.

BOYS AND GIRLS TO THE RESCUE OF CULTURAL ROOTS

Villahermosa, Tabasco, Mexico

To preserve centuries-old art forms and deepen young peoples' connection with their ancestors, the Chontal Indigenous Community Cultural Group has been offering intensive workshops on various aspects of Chontal culture for youth from Guaytalpa Nacajuca and nearby communities since 2002. The program operates three days a week after school and on weekends and introduces the young people to music and dance forms and offers instruction in the Chontal ancestral tongue. Participants in the program have gained recognition in local, regional and international competitions.

CHILDREN'S MARIMBA WORKSHOPS, MINISTRY OF CULTURE, STATE OF OAXACA

Oaxaca, Oaxaca, Mexico

The Ministry of Culture of the State of Oaxaca, along Mexico's southern coast, offers highly structured marimba instruction at cultural centers throughout the state. Students spend five hours a week learning about marimba history, technique and repertoire, music composition and how to care for the instrument. Seven students from each workshop are selected to form a local marimba band, and the program currently boasts 11 marimba bands in 11 communities.

AMATEUR ACTOR TRAINING CLASS OF SHAANXI QIN QIANG OPERA

Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, PRC

The Shaanxi Opera and Drama Research Institute, which is the largest arts group in Shaanxi Province formed the Amateur Actor Training Class to preserve and revitalize regional Chinese opera. Teens participating in the program study voice, drama and literature. Most of the students come from underdeveloped agrarian villages, and after five years of training many are able to master three full-length plays and more than 40 highlights from opera styles. They also have the opportunity to entertain diverse audiences in various centers and opera festivals in the city of Xi'an and surrounding areas.

FRIDAY WORKSHOPS FOR WORKING CHILDREN TOWNHOUSE GALLERY OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Cairo, Egypt

The Friday Workshops at the Townhouse Gallery of Contemporary Art utilize the arts to offer child laborers from Cairo, Egypt a new vision of themselves and of their world. The workshops introduce participants to a range of arts disciplines, including various forms of visual arts, theater and animation. . Teaching residents and visiting artists, workshop leaders and trained social workers collaborate to support and offer professional mentorship to the students throughout the process.