

NEW YORK TRANSIT MUSEUM

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Transit Museum's Subway Sleuths Program Announced as 2016 National Arts & Humanities Youth Program Awards Finalist

As Autism Awareness Month comes to a close, the New York Transit Museum is thrilled to announce that Subway Sleuths, a renowned after-school program for children on the autism spectrum, is one of 50 finalists from across the country for the 2016 National Arts & Humanities Youth Program Awards. Chosen from a pool of over 300 nominations from 44 states and the District of Columbia, Subway Sleuths is recognized for its work in providing outstanding after-school arts and humanities learning opportunities that teach new skills, nurture creativity, and build self-confidence. Twelve recipients, to be announced this summer, will receive a \$10,000 one-time grant and an invitation to attend the White House awards ceremony hosted by First Lady Michelle Obama.

Subway Sleuths is an after-school program that uses a shared interest in trains among kids on the autism spectrum as a means to encourage peer-to-peer interaction and develop social skills and confidence over 10 goal-oriented sessions. Using a strength-based approach, participants explore the Transit Museum's decommissioned subway station home, solving transit mysteries, becoming transit experts and sharing that enthusiasm with others. By working in pairs as well as collaborating as a group, "Sleuths" practice different forms of social engagement. Each class is facilitated by a special education teacher and a speech-language pathologist, both trained in ASD support, and a Transit Museum educator.

Since its creation five years ago, the Subway Sleuths program has welcomed almost 100 school children in grades 2 through 5. Subway Sleuths has been widely praised by disability advocates and museum professionals alike. The program was awarded a prestigious Autism Speaks grant in 2012 and the American Alliance of Museums' Excellence in Programming Award in 2016. The Transit Museum has also developed a step-by-step printed guide for other museums and after-school programs looking to implement similar projects.

In addition to Subway Sleuths, the Transit Museum offers many other access programs throughout the year. Since 2012, the Museum has partnered with Extreme Kids & Crew, a local non-profit cooperative, to create Special Day for Special Kids, a day of free admission and fun activities for children with disabilities and their families. Guided school and camp programs are customized to accommodate groups with special needs, and the Travel Training program gives middle and high school students with intellectual or developmental disabilities the chance to practice using mass transit safely and independently in our decommissioned subway station. The Transit Museum is proud to be a resource and haven for people with disabilities.

Subway Sleuths was created with support from Autism Speaks and the Brooklyn Community Foundation. Ongoing support for access programs at the Transit Museum is provided by the FAR Fund, the Joseph LeRoy and Ann C. Warner Fund, the Meringoff Family Foundation, the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, the Tiger Baron Foundation, and generous individual donors, as well as by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ARTS AND HUMANITIES YOUTH PROGRAM:

The [National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award](#) is the Nation's highest honor for out-of-school arts and humanities programs that celebrate the creativity of America's young people, particularly those from underserved communities. This award recognizes and supports excellence in programs that open new pathways to learning, self-discovery, and achievement. Each year, the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards recognize 12 outstanding programs in the United States, from a wide range of urban and rural settings. The National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards initiative is a signature program of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities™ – in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services™ – to showcase cultural excellence and enhance the availability of out-of-school arts and humanities programs to children and young people.

ABOUT THE NEW YORK TRANSIT MUSEUM:

The [New York Transit Museum](#), one of the city's leading cultural institutions, is the largest museum in the United States devoted to urban public transportation history and one of the premier institutions of its kind in the world. The Museum explores the development of the greater New York metropolitan region through the presentation of exhibitions, tours, educational programs and workshops dealing with the cultural, social and technological history of public transportation. Since its inception nearly 40 years ago, the Museum – which is housed in a historic 1936 IND subway station in Downtown Brooklyn – has grown in scope and popularity. The New York Transit Museum operates a Gallery Annex in Grand Central Terminal that presents changing exhibitions. As custodian and interpreter of the region's extensive public transportation networks, the Museum strives to share through its public programs their rich and vibrant history with local, regional, and international audiences.

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