

NEWS RELEASE

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First Lady Recognizes New York Transit Museum's Subway Sleuths After-School Program at The White House

*Presented with nation's highest honor for
creative youth-development programs*

NEW YORK – November 15, 2016 – The New York Transit Museum and its Subway Sleuths program were honored at the White House today by First Lady Michelle Obama for their effectiveness in promoting learning and life skills in young people by engaging them in creative youth-development programs. The after-school program received the 2016 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, the nation's highest honor for these programs.

Now in its sixth year, Subway Sleuths is a 10-session after-school program that helps children in grades 2-5 that are on the autism spectrum enhance their social skills. 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, leveraging their shared enthusiasm for trains and the transit system to introduce opportunities to interact with peers and other children. Each class is facilitated by a special education teacher and a speech-language pathologist, both of whom are trained in Autism Spectrum Disorder support, as well as a Transit Museum educator.

The award recognizes the country's best after-school and out-of-school-time creative youth-development programs for using engagement in the arts and the humanities to increase academic achievement, graduation rates, and college enrollment. The 12 awardees – chosen from a pool of more than 251 nominations and 50 finalists – were also recognized for improving literacy and language abilities, communication and performance skills, and cultural awareness.

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).

"Subway Sleuths has been a genuine labor of love for our staff and educators. This program demonstrates the Transit Museum's continued commitment to serve our diverse audience with meaningful experiences through the rich history of New York City's transit system," said Deputy Director Regina Asborn. "What makes winning this award especially gratifying is the possibility of reaching new museum communities who may be interested in building on what we've created with our Subway Sleuths programs."

The award was celebrated by a number of its long-time partners and supporters, including parents of the program's young participants.

“Subway Sleuths is a wonderful program for kids on the spectrum. Because of this program my son has gained social skills improvement, which he would not otherwise have gained in school. He is able to connect with his peers in and outside of school and is more confident in communicating with others,” said Subway Sleuths Parent Zena Moore. “I strongly recommend this program to parents who are looking for alternative and affordable programs for a child on the spectrum.”

New York Transit Museum Educator Katherine Reeves added, “It has been amazing to see how much the kids can grow from even one week to the next. This program has such a positive impact on the kids who participate.”

In addition to the national recognition bestowed by receipt of the prestigious award, the New York Transit Museum will also receive \$10,000 to support its programming and engage more young people from the community.

“This program is a step outside the classroom and into a true learning experience where the children feel comfortable in their atmosphere to grow and explore friendships while sharing in a passion for transit,” said Amanda Franquinha, Autism Specialist and Subway Sleuths Educator.

The National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award is the nation's highest honor for after-school arts and humanities programs. The award recognizes and supports 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, on weekends, and during the evenings for children and youth in some of our country's most at-risk urban and rural settings.

“These amazing programs prove how effective creative youth development can be in changing lives and communities,” said Megan Beyer, Executive Director of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. “They're improving academic achievement and contributing to high school graduation rates, and they're providing the opportunity for young people to build the 21st-century skills they need to succeed in school and in life.”

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 – the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) – as well as with 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. Obama, like other first ladies before her, serves as Honorary Chairman of the committee, which comprises both private and public members.

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 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.

For more information about the New York Transit Museum and the Subway Sleuths after-school program, please visit nytransitmuseum.org/SubwaySleuths or stop by Brooklyn, New York, to visit the museum in person.

For more information about the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards, visit www.pcah.gov.

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PHOTOS

Photos and photo captions from the White House ceremony will be available for download via Flickr by 7 p.m. ET on November 15, 2016. To access the photo album (organized by awardee name), use this link: https://www.flickr.com/photos/pcah_nahyp/

The 2016 Awardees

AileyCamp Miami

Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County
Miami, Fla.

Baranov Museum Youth History & Film Summer Intensive

Kodiak Historical Society
Kodiak, Alaska

IBA's Youth Development Program

Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción
Boston, Mass.

Next Gen

Bay Area Video Coalition
San Francisco, Calif.

Screen It!

Mexic-Arte Museum
Austin, Texas

Sphinx Overture

Sphinx Organization
Detroit, Mich.

St. Louis ArtWorks

St. Louis, Mo.

Subway Sleuths

New York Transit Museum
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Teen Arts + Tech Program

West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology (WMCAT)
Grand Rapids, Mich.

The Reading Road Show – Gus Bus

Office on Children & Youth, Institute for Innovation in Health & Human Services, James Madison
University
Harrisonburg, Va.

Tribal Youth Ambassadors

California Indian Museum and Cultural Center
Santa Rosa, Calif.

True Colors: Out Youth Theater

The Theater Offensive
Boston, Mass.

International Spotlight Award

Creative Youth Development in Cuba
Represented by Liza Alfonso Dance Cuba School