



TADA! Receives COMING UP TALLER Award

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by BWW News Desk



Three New York based programs that have successfully guided thousands of young people toward productive lives will receive the prestigious 2008 Coming Up Taller Award.

Queens Museum of Art's Queens Teens, 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;

America SCORES, which combines soccer, community service and the study and performance of poetry to give young people an opportunity for physical activity and creative expression; and,

The TADA! Resident Youth Ensemble, which engages youth in rigorous musical theater training and performance activities.

Youth and adult representatives of the programs will travel to Washington, D.C., for an award ceremony on November 14, where they will accept the award.

Coming Up Taller is an initiative of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH). The President's Committee partners with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to administer the program, which was founded in 1998.

The Coming Up Taller Awards recognize and support outstanding community arts and humanities programs that celebrate the creativity of America's young people, and provide them with new learning opportunities and a chance to contribute to their communities. The awards also highlight the contributions that historians, scholars, librarians and visual and performing arts make to families and communities by mentoring children. More than 320 nominations were received by the program in 2008.

As an art museum as deeply committed to the communities that exist outside its walls as they are to the work that hangs within, the Queens Museum of Art has always created innovative initiatives to engage their various constituencies. The Queens Museum of Art's Queens Teens program works with two area high schools and recruits students who have an interest in the arts or education, and who can benefit from a structured, nurturing after-school environment. 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. The program also offers guidance on effective interaction with the museum's diverse publics, and demonstrates the potential for careers related to the arts.

Through the experience, the teens earn valuable self-confidence and gain a deeper understanding of their potential as students and productive citizens. Since its inception in 2001, more than 150 students have participated in the Queens Teens program, with more than 85 percent of the program's graduates enrolling in college, and a high percentage pursuing careers in art, design or fashion.

"With each new school year, the Queens Museum of Art is energized by a group of fresh-faced yet streetwise young adults with endless untapped potential," said Tom Finkelppearl, the museum's Executive Director. "At that first



session in September, the Queens Teens are shy teenagers, but week by week, they become surer of themselves, more confident in their artistic abilities, and increasingly encouraged by their futures - be they in the arts or elsewhere. Seeing them blossom is one more indication of the positive power of the arts. The fact that we can employ the Queens Teens in the galleries is an extra bonus for the museum, the Teens, and the public who is able to interact with these fantastic young adults."

America SCORES was created by a Washington, D.C. teacher who believed that a combination of soccer and poetry could effectively engage at-risk students on a physical and intellectual level. Today, 200 public schools in 15 cities offer the program, which is overseen by public school teachers who are selected and trained by America SCORES representatives. 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.

In the fall, students perform their poetry for family members and others in their communities, and enjoy the satisfaction of seeing their work published in Kicker!, an America SCORES magazine with a national circulation of 15,000. During the spring, the poetry component is replaced by community service projects, which provide a venue for civic engagement, leadership and self-esteem. A recent evaluation found that participants improved their fitness, strengthened their writing skills and gained self-confidence.

The America SCORES philosophy is to start with arts and humanities activities to allow students to develop an appreciation for language, discover their talents, and find their voices," said Paul Caccamo, President of America SCORES. "We combine that with complementary activities promoting physical activity, health education, and social skills. The end result is students who believe that they can do anything when they set their minds to it."

Known to audiences and theater critics for its outstanding musical theater productions, TADA! Youth Theater created the TADA! Resident Youth Ensemble to engage young people in musical theater training as a venue for tapping strengths that support their success in school and life. 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. And although the program's key focus is to engage the young people in productive activities that enhance their understanding of the values of collaboration and creativity, some do go on to careers on stage and screen. Actor and talk show host [Ricki Lake](#) and actor [Kerry Washington](#) are among the program's alums.

"I am so thrilled that TADA! is receiving the Coming Up Taller Award. Making the experience of growing up in New York City easier by providing kids with a second home where they feel safe, accepted for who they are and challenged to reach their potential and fulfill their dreams is my passion. And this award couldn't come at a better time than the eve of our 25th Anniversary Celebration Season that starts this summer," said Janine Nina Trevens, Executive and Artistic Director, TADA! Youth Theater.

The Queens Museum of Art's Queens Teens, America SCORES and TADA! Resident Youth Ensemble will celebrate their Coming Up Taller awards at a joint event in New York during the Winter of 2008/2009. Past and present participants, their families, staff members, elected officials and key partners will be treated to an evening of performances and fun. Date and venue TBD.

"Arts and humanities activities have a wonderful way of enabling young people to discover their unique talents and Coming Up Taller programs help light the fires of curiosity and creativity in young people, using the discipline that arts and humanities require to learn about themselves and explore the world around them interests while forging a path to success in school and life," said Adair Margo, Chairman of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. "The Queens Museum of Art's Queens Teens, America SCORES and TADA! demonstrate a breadth and depth of opportunity for youth striving to be their very best."

The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities bridges the interests of federal agencies and the private sector, supports special projects that increase participation, and helps incorporate the humanities and the arts into White House objectives. The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts, both new and established; bringing the arts to all Americans; and providing leadership in arts education. Because democracy demands wisdom, the National Endowment for the Humanities serves and strengthens our Republic by promoting excellence in the humanities and conveying the lessons of history to all Americans. The Institute of Museum and Library Services is an independent federal grant making agency dedicated to creating and sustaining a nation of learners.

