

ARMORY

**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
November 12, 2015

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FIRST LADY TO RECOGNIZE ARMORY CENTER FOR THE ARTS AT THE WHITE HOUSE

To be presented with nation's highest honor for creative youth development programs

(PASADENA, CA) – Aspiring teen photographer Dalon Poole, 17, of Pasadena will be at the White House on November 17 to receive an award from First Lady Michelle Obama. Dalon will accept the country's highest honor for after-school arts programs on behalf of Armory Center for the Arts' "Art High" program, which will be recognized for its effectiveness in promoting learning and life skills in young people by engaging them in creative youth development programs. The Armory's Art High Program has won the 2015 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award—the nation's highest honor for these programs.

The award recognizes the country's best creative youth development programs for using engagement in the arts and the humanities to increase academic achievement, graduation rates, and college enrollment. The awardees—chosen from a pool of more than 350 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).

"Having the chance to represent Pasadena and accept this award from the First Lady in the White House is incredible. I'll never forget this experience," said Dalon Poole. "I want to be a photographer someday. The Armory's given me the opportunities to make that happen."

Since 2006, the Armory's Art High program has made after school art classes and mentorship opportunities readily accessible to teens at parks and community centers throughout the region. Art High demonstrates the Armory's deep commitment to bringing the power of art into the lives of teens living in neighborhoods facing challenges like drugs, gangs, poverty, and racial divisions. Art High brings teens together that share a common interest in the arts and provides over 1,000 hours of free, fine arts and media arts classes to over 700 teens each year, including painting, drawing, silk screening, photography, filmmaking, graphic design, animation, and more.

Before he enrolled in free Armory photography classes two years ago at Pasadena's La Pintoresca Teen Education Center, Dalon Poole took pictures with the only camera he had — his phone. At La Pintoresca, he learned how to operate a real camera for the first time, and he was mentored by a professional artist for the first time, Armory Teaching Artist Joe Sanchez. In addition to photography, Dalon began taking free Armory graphic design classes at La Pintoresca. In 2015, the Armory nominated Dalon for the Pasadena Art Council's Young Artist Award, which he won. Dalon used part of the \$1,000 award to buy his first real camera, which he used as a paid Summer intern taking photos for Pasadena's Parks Department. Today, Dalon is a paid Armory Teen Apprentice — an initiative of Art High that identifies and trains youth mentors to assist Armory Teaching Artists at parks and community centers throughout the region.

“Even just in terms of career opportunities, LA is the creative capital of the world. These young people are learning how to use creative thinking to work as a team, to solve problems, and to express themselves constructively,” said Jon Lapointe, Armory Communications Director. “The Armory’s Art High program gives teens not only the vision, but the skills to build a future for themselves, their families, and their community.”

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

“We hope this award will draw attention to the documented fact that programs like ours are essential investments not just in the lives of our young people, but in our community, as well,” said Scott Ward, Armory Executive Director “We’re incredibly proud of this achievement and of the young people, volunteers, supporters, board and staff who made it possible.”

The Armory's Art High program is made possible thanks to the continued support of public and private donors, including the Rose Hills Foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and Sony Pictures Entertainment — the program's longest and most generous corporate supporter. Sony Pictures Entertainment's Corporate Giving program looks to develop the next generation’s creative workforce and leadership, and is committed to supporting arts in the community. Art High initiatives is also made possible with significant gifts from the James Irvine Foundation, Eisner Foundation, Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, W.M. Keck Foundation, Ann Peppers Foundation, The Michael J. Connell Foundation, The Green Foundation, Z Clark Branson Foundation, Mericos Foundation, Capital Group Companies, Opus Bank, Wells Fargo Private Bank – Pasadena, East West Bank, California Arts Council, City of Pasadena Human Services Endowment Fund, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, and the Los Angeles County Arts Commission.

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.

"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."

For more information about Armory Center for the Arts, please visit www.armoryarts.org
For more information about the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards, visit www.pcah.gov.

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PHOTOS

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/136659263@N02/>

(photos of award ceremony posted by 7 p.m. EST, 11/17)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/armoryarts/albums/72157661113247741>

(photos of Armory Art High programs in action, available now)