



COMING UP TALLER

“There is no way to fast forward and know how the kids will look back on this,
but I have seen the joy in their eyes and have heard it in their voices and
I have watched them take a bow and
COME UP TALLER.”

--Willie Reale, Founder, The 52nd Street Project, NYC

What is Coming Up Taller?

Coming Up Taller is a unique national initiative that recognizes and supports outstanding after-school arts and humanities programs, especially those that reach underserved children and youth.

Coming Up Taller is an initiative of the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities that made its first awards in 1998. The President’s Committee partners with the Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Endowment for the Arts, and National Endowment for the Humanities to administer the program.



What is unique about Coming Up Taller?

Because it involves the First Lady and is sponsored by the President’s Committee and the three national cultural agencies, *Coming Up Taller* makes a highly visible and powerful national statement about the value of community-based youth arts and humanities learning.



What is the value of youth arts and humanities learning for children?

Anyone who has seen the light in the eyes of a child at the end of a performance or seen the dedication of young people finishing a community mural, knows the power of the arts to engage young people.

Studies show arts and humanities programs enrich and even change children’s lives. They strengthen academic performance, contribute to their technological know-how, encourage children to integrate information, “think outside the box,” and contribute to civic awareness and competence.



These community programs can redirect and even save lives. Chicago’s Street Level Youth Media (1998) organization is a good example. Teens Alfonso and Miguel often got into mischief and sometimes into the back of a squad car, failed school and surrounded themselves with people who sold drugs. In short, they were headed in a dangerous direction. Today, they are not in gangs, do not take drugs, have graduated from high school and work for the very arts organization that took them off the streets. Through this program, these young men discovered their passion for creativity, telling stories and making videos, an experience that redirected their lives.

This is an outcome repeated by young people in hundreds of communities around the country because of local arts and humanities programs. While learning about themselves and the world through painting, writing, singing, transforming public spaces, and documenting their family



histories, they are also mastering skills they were unable to get at home or in school. They learn to take responsibility, connect with adults, resolve conflicts, and budget time and money. Above all, they begin to believe that they have the ability to transport themselves beyond the boundaries that circumstances seem to prescribe.

What does Coming Up Taller do?

Each year, it presents awards to exemplary programs in a ceremony at the White House or on Capitol Hill. It broadly disseminates information about these programs through the media, strategic dissemination of an annual publication, and a *Coming Up Taller* Web site.

It provides information to other related initiatives and foundations investing in this field.

How many awards of what amount are given each year?

Each year, 15 national awards of \$10,000 are presented to U.S. organizations. Since 2002, Coming Up Taller has also recognized programs in Mexico and in for 2007, programs in China. In addition, 35 programs receive certificates of excellence for their work.

How does Coming Up Taller help community programs that invest in children?

The financial support of a *Coming Up Taller* award allows programs to expand the number of children they reach and the scope of their activities. While modest compared to need, for most recipients the \$10,000 award represents a rare, tangible infusion. Usually this figure exceeds ten percent of the program's annual budget.

Receiving a *Coming Up Taller* award is regarded as testament to the importance and quality of the work of the recipients. This national endorsement adds significantly to the credibility of award recipients and allows them to increase their visibility, funding support, and impact.

Most of these organizations work primarily on their own. *Coming Up Taller* connects them with each other to share ideas and mutual inspiration.

How does Coming Up Taller support the field of youth arts and humanities learning?

These awards honor artists, historians, and writers who have chosen to devote their lives to sharing the creative experience with young people. *Coming Up Taller* makes an important national statement about the value of out-of-school cultural learning opportunities for children that benefits everyone working in this field.

How is Coming Up Taller supported?

A broad range of donors have participated in support of this initiative over the last decade, including: Charles Butt, Cherner Lincoln, Mercury, Isuzu, and Kia, Cranium, Inc., GMAC Financial Services, MetLife Foundation, Robert T. and Ruby N. Priddy Donor Advised Fund, Wichita Falls Area Community Foundation, Charles Vincent Prothro Family Fund of The Dallas Foundation, Vin and Caren Prothro Foundation, Surdna Foundation Ministry of Culture—People's Republic of China, The U.S.–Mexico Foundation for Culture, with special support from Televisa and The Coca-Cola Company, Time Warner Inc., and others.