

NEWS RELEASE

November 2, 2011

Embargoed until 3:00 A.M. EST

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**DENVER ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAM HONORED BY
FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA AT THE WHITE HOUSE**

PlatteForum's ArtLab program recognized for positive youth outcomes through the arts

Denver, Colorado – Salvador Flores-Martinez (age 19) of Denver was at the White House today to accept the **2011 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award from First Lady Michelle Obama** on behalf of PlatteForum's ArtLab Program. Recognized for its effectiveness in developing learning and life skills in young people, ArtLab engages them in the creative process through collaboration with master artists from around the world.



Judy Anderson, Founder/ Artistic Director, Salvador Flores-Martinez, student and First Lady Michelle Obama.

Photo by Steven Purcell

Chosen from a pool of more than 471 nominations and 38 finalists, PlatteForum was one of 12 after-school and out-of-school programs across the country to receive the award, which is the highest honor such programs can receive in the U.S. The awards are administered by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH), 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). The award honors community-based arts and humanities programs that make a marked difference in the lives of their participants by improving academic scores and graduation rates, enhancing life skills, developing positive relationships with peers and adults, and expressing themselves creatively.

When Flores-Martinez arrived at PlatteForum at age 16, he didn't see any real possibilities for the future. From a family who did not place importance on education, his chances of graduating from high school were slim. At PlatteForum, Flores-Martinez developed self-respect, found his creative voice, and gained the confidence he needs to succeed in life. He is proud to be the first in his family to graduate from high school and go to college. Flores-Martinez says, *"Without PlatteForum, I know I would be in a dead-end job, on the street slanging drugs. I know it sounds rough but it's the straight up truth. Having the chance to represent my peers in accepting this award from the First Lady of the United States in the White House is an experience I'll never forget. It showed me that programs like ArtLab that can change kids' lives is recognized and valued."*

PlatteForum's ArtLab is a year-round out-of-school program for high schoolers that uses the arts to improve academic, life, and professional skills. It reaches youth who attend low performing schools, have minimal out-of-school involvement, live in low-income communities, lack social support, and are at-risk of not graduating from high school or going on to college. ArtLab's powerful impact is illustrated by the fact that 100 percent of its participants graduate from high school compared to 47–51 percent of their peers who don't attend the program.

This prestigious award was celebrated in Denver by a number of PlatteForum's long-time partners and supporters including the Riverfront Park Community Foundation, Denver Foundation, Scientific and Cultural Facilities District, and the Colorado Creative Industries.

"By engaging and inspiring young people, PlatteForum is giving them not just the vision but the skills to build a new and better life for themselves and their families, and for our community," said Mark Smith, President, East West Partners Denver and founding Board Chair. "These young people are learning how

to use creative thinking to work as a team, to solve problems, and to express themselves constructively—exactly the kinds of skills they need to be able to succeed in school, work and life.”

In addition to the national recognition bestowed by receipt of the prestigious award, PlatteForum 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 proven fact that programs like ours are essential investments not just in the lives of our young people, but in our community, as well,” said Judy Anderson, Founder and Artistic Director of PlatteForum. “We’re incredibly proud of this achievement and of the young people, artists, volunteers, supporters, board, and staff who made it possible.”

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 evenings for children and youth in some of our country’s most at-risk urban and rural settings. For more information, visit www.pcah.gov. For more information about PlatteForum and the ArtLab Program, please visit www.platteforum.org or call 303.893.0791.

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About PlatteForum

At PlatteForum, we believe the creative process nurtures discovery, self-expression, development and growth. The programs at PlatteForum are built upon an interconnection of the creative process and three vital elements—youth, artists and community. The artist-youth relationship is a special opportunity for both, where each Creative Resident creates a body of work during their time at PlatteForum and also closely collaborates with at-risk youth. This relationship impacts the artist, the youth and the community. Artists change their perspective. Youth gain a sense of what they can accomplish. Community grows richer from expansion of the arts and the contributions of youth as they build productive lives. www.platteforum.org