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Project STEP Receives National Endowment for the Arts Grant of \$50,000 Grant to support Black and Latino string instrument students at Project STEP

BOSTON — Project STEP (String Training and Education Program) is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Art Works grant of \$50,000 to support its talented, motivated Black and Latino music students for the year 2015-2016. The award is for its intensive music training program, which begins in kindergarten and continues through grade 12. Nationwide, 919 nonprofit organizations received funding from the NEA for all genres of art and arts education.

"I'm pleased to be able to share the news of our support through Art Works including the award to Project STEP," says NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "The arts foster value, connection, creativity and innovation for the American people and these recommended grants demonstrate those attributes and affirm that the arts are part of our everyday lives."

"We are overjoyed to have this strong support from the National Endowment for the Arts, this country's standard-bearer for art creation and engagement," says Mary Jaffee, Project STEP's executive director. "The NEA holds its awardees to high standards, and provides valuable – indeed indispensable – support for the work we do."

Art Works grants support the creation of art, public engagement with art, lifelong learning in the arts, and enhancement of the livability of communities through the arts. The NEA received 1,474 eligible applications under the Art Works category, requesting more than \$75 million in funding. Of those applications, 919 are recommended for grants for a total of \$26.6 million. The average award in this cycle was close to \$29,000.

For more information about Project STEP, visit projectstep.org, or call (617) 267-5777.

About Project STEP

Prompted by concern over the persistent under-representation of minority musicians in the field of classical music, Project STEP (String Training and Education Program, or STEP) was formed in 1982 to provide talented, young string players of color with a comprehensive, long-term music training program that would prepare them to enter the field. Since its founding, Project STEP has provided Black and Latino youth with the training and support that create opportunities and lifelong interests, and change the course of children's lives. Project STEP finds children who are interested in music but lack access and resources that could help them develop their interest, and provides them the means to fulfill their potential. Project STEP students come primarily from families facing longstanding economic and social hardship. They want to play music – and music becomes their avenue for change.

The rigorous core program gives students essential skills for productive lives, beginning with the experiences of personal achievement and success. The program sets high standards for each student and provides a multi-layered network of support that helps them succeed. Parents, part of that network from the beginning, learn how to help their children succeed at Project STEP. Sixty percent of students go on to perform and/or teach music professionally; others use the personal skills they have developed to pursue other professions. Since the beginning, 100 percent of graduates have gone on to college or conservatory.

Project STEP is a recipient of the 2014 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, the nation's highest honor recognizing community-based arts and humanities youth programs in the United States, presented by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

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