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PROJECT STEP

Music students honored

Fatima Tellez, of Waltham, a violinist and a third-grader at Whittemore Elementary School, is one of 44 Project STEP music students who were recently honored with the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award. The award is the signature program of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

On Nov. 10, at the White House, First Lady Michelle Obama presented Project STEP (Strings Training and Education Program) with the prestigious National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award. Mary Jaffee, Project STEP executive director, and student Ajani Boyd, 11, of Dorchester, were on hand to accept the award on behalf of the music program.

Chosen from a national pool of more than 350 nominations and 50 finalists, Project STEP is one of 12 programs across the country to receive the award, which is the highest honor for such programs in the United States. The award is administered by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

Project STEP was recognized for its rigorous, year-round classical string training program for under-represented minorities that invites them into a world of classical music that might not otherwise be available to them. Project STEP, like programs that receive the award, exemplifies how in-depth, long-term music (and arts) programs increase academic achievement, graduation rates and college enrollment, as well as improve literacy and language abilities, communication and performance skills, and cultural awareness, according to the organization.

"Studying classical music teaches Project STEP students about discipline, commitment, analysis and attention to detail," Jaffee said. "They become astute citizens of the world. More than anything, it teaches them the joy and satisfaction that comes from hard work and achievement."

In addition to the honor of receiving the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, Project STEP will receive \$10,000. For more information about Project STEP, visit projectstep.org.

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