

Youth Library Program Honored By President's Committee

BY PORT WASHINGTON NEWS STAFF
PORTWASHINGTON@ANTONMEDIAGROUP.COM

Port Washington Public Library's (PWPL) Creative Readers program was honored as a 2017 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program (NAHYP) Award Finalist by The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and its partner agencies, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

"This program strives to provide an avenue to the joy of literature for all readers," said Nancy Curtin, director of the PWPL. "Literacy, community

inclusion and engaging in the arts creates an atmosphere where kids can soar."

Creative Readers' primary goal is literary enrichment to increase the joy of reading for elementary students by turning books into a multi-sensory experience, offering all learners the ability to be challenged, motivated and successful. Its secondary goal, of no less importance, is to offer a space for unique learners of all kinds, some of whom are schooled outside the district, to socialize and work together creatively.

"This truly is an exciting honor," said Creative Readers Program Director Elise May. "Creative Readers is a labor of love where elementary school students of all abilities and high school buddies explore literature through drama, art, music and dance in the inclusive environment the library offers our community. Started as a pilot program in 2012, the library embraced Creative Readers, offering the funds and space to grow it into a full school-year program. This couldn't happen without the library's ongoing funding and staff support as well as that of Port Washington SEPTA, which offers behavioral support and teen outreach. It is a wonderful partnership."



From left: Sheila Bluni, Ann Marie Fitzpatrick, graduating seniors Jenny Byrne and Kelsey Weisburd and Elise May

The benefits of the program are multilayered. The elementary students explore, create and gain confidence and communication skills while performing and socializing with peers and older "buddies." The volunteer buddies discover that everyone has a unique way of learning. High school volunteers have shared what the program means to them in reflection letters that many use for their college essay.

The NAHYP finalist letter stated, "We are highly impressed with the successful work that your organization and the other finalists have accomplished in youth after-school and out-of-school arts and humanities

learning. We reviewed 342 applications from 46 states, the District of Columbia and two U.S. territories, and your program's selection as one of the 50 finalists distinguishes it as one of the top arts-and-humanities-based programs in the country."

Creative Readers meets Saturday mornings from October through April in six-week sessions with two classes each week; kindergarten through second grade and third grade through fifth grade. There is a training session for volunteers in the fall. For more information on the Creative Readers program, applications or teen volunteering, contact creativereadersinport@yahoo.com.



From left: student Gwen, graduating senior Allison Khin and Elise May