

# Port Washington Public Library Wins National Award

BY PORT WASHINGTON NEWS STAFF

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Creative Readers (CR) Program Director Elise May and CR participant Jackson Hristoforatos were in the nation's capital on Nov. 9 to receive an award from all three federal arts and culture agencies on behalf of CR, an inclusion program at the Port Washington Public Library (PWPL). The program received the 2017 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program (NAHYP) Award, the nation's highest honor for programs offering creative youth development in after-school or community settings. CR, which receives valuable support from Port Washington SEPTA (Special Education Parent Teacher Association), was recognized for its effectiveness in engaging and promoting learning and life skills in young people of all abilities.

"We hope this award will draw attention to the fact that inclusion programs like ours are essential investments not just in the lives of people with disabilities, but in our community as well," said May. "We're incredibly proud of this achievement and grateful to the students, volunteers, supporters, boards and staff of both PWPL and SEPTA who made it possible."

The NAHYP award recognizes the country's best creative youth development programs for using engagement in the arts and the humanities to generate a wide range of positive outcomes, such as increases in academic achievement and social-emotional development. The 12 awardees, chosen from a pool of 350 nominations



**Elise May, program director and developer of Creative Readers, and nine-year-old Jackson Timoleon Hristoforatos accept the 2017 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award from Paula Gangopadhyay, deputy director of the Office of Museum Services for the Institute of Museum and Library Services. (Photo by Steven E. Purcell)**

and 50 finalists, were also recognized for improving literacy and language abilities, communication and performance skills and cultural awareness.

First presented in 1998, the 2017 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards were presented through a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), in cooperation with the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA).

"These 12 creative youth development programs represent the best of the best," said Pam Breau, president and chief executive officer of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. "They are living proof of the power of the arts and the humanities to build the skills young people need to succeed in school and in life."

In addition to the national recognition bestowed by receipt of the prestigious award, the Port Washington Public Library will receive \$10,000 to support CR and engage more young people from the community.

CR, an arts and literacy inclusion program, turns books into a multi-sensory experience for kindergarten through fifth grade students offering all learners (both neurotypical and students with disabilities) the ability to be challenged, motivated and successful. Using theater, art, movement and music, each lesson enables participants to bring a book to life and increase their love of literature. The program also offers a space for unique learners (some of whom are not schooled with their community peers due to their disability) to socialize and work together creatively. High school volunteers are trained and paired with participants to model behavior and socialization skills offering social, emotional and academic growth for all.

"PWPL was founded in 1892 as a center for literature and the cultural arts," said Nancy Curtin, director of the Port Washington Public Library. "Creative Readers brings these to life for young people who have not had this outlet before. We have seen children break free of their inhibitions and immerse themselves in story, theatre and art in amazing ways. We consider Creative Readers an essential offering at PWPL and are delighted to be recognized by the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award."

For more information about Creative Readers, visit [www.pwpl.org/childrensroom/creative-readers](http://www.pwpl.org/childrensroom/creative-readers). For more information about the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards, visit [www.nahyp.org](http://www.nahyp.org).