

CALDERA: Program mentors youth over several years

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highest honor for creative youth programs, recognizing the country’s best programs as well as highlighting the positive role that arts and humanities play in youth academic achievement, graduation rates and college enrollment. The awardees — chosen from a pool of more than 285 nominations and 50 finalists from 50 states — were also recognized for improving literacy,



PHOTO PROVIDED

An unforgettable moment.

language abilities, communication, performance skills, and cultural awareness.

“As I’ve said many times before, arts education is not a luxury, it is a necessity,” said Mrs. Obama at the ceremony. “It’s really the air many of these kids breathe. It’s how we get kids excited about getting up and going to school in the morning. It’s how we get them to take ownership of their future. And that’s why these programs are so important. We have to keep shining a light on them. We have to keep encouraging these kids because they are the next generation of fabulous.”

For Alena, the whole experience was pretty fabulous in and of itself.

“Everything there was absolutely gorgeous,” she told *The Nugget*. “Michelle Obama was gorgeous; the White House was gorgeous.”

But more important than the beauty and glamour of the occasion was the honor of representing her many peers in the Caldera program in receiving the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award.

“I know I was taking everyone with me when I accepted it,” she said.

She also appreciated the opportunity to meet and interact with other students in other programs that were

honored that night.

Nore has been involved with Caldera for the past six years and has seen her confidence and artistic talent blossom with the year-round mentorship that starts with the Caldera Discovery Summer Camp.

“It becomes a lot more than a summer camp,” she said. “It becomes this family that you make.”

She is happy to see the program gain this kind of national recognition.

“My experience with Caldera has been life-changing,” she said. “It’s exciting to see that programs like this are recognized and valued, because I know there are many more young people who need the kind of mentoring I benefitted from.”

Oregon Governor Kate Brown expressed her enthusiastic support for Caldera: “By engaging and inspiring young people, Caldera is giving them not just the vision but the skills to build a new and better life for themselves, for their families, and for our community. These young people are learning how to use creative thinking to work as a team, to solve problems and to express themselves constructively. These are exactly the kinds of skills we want them to have to be able to succeed in school, in work,



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Alena Nore and Caldera Executive Director Tricia Snell accepted the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award from Michelle Obama.

and in life.”

Alena is applying her experience at Caldera toward her chosen professional path.

She is planning to attend college with a major in psychology and either a double major or minor in studio art, with an eye toward pursuing a career in arts therapy counseling.

She believes as passionately as Michelle Obama or Kate Brown in the importance of arts education.

“It’s something that’s so necessary for the proper development of young people,” she said.

The arts teach young people to solve problems creatively — and they help young people understand themselves

and their world and provide a positive way to express themselves at a time that can be fraught with tension, uncertainty and frustration.

She believes that self-expression is at the core of success, and that material “success” is not a measure of a person.

“When people are able to convey those emotions, that’s when they find their true value,” she said.

Wherever the path that she stepped out upon six years ago may lead, she is certain of one thing:

“I’ll definitely be coming back to Caldera.”

For more information about Caldera’s programs, visit www.calderaarts.org.

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