

# SPY HOP

Recognized by First Lady  
at the White House

Nineteen-year-old Kitzia Rodriguez was at the White House in November to receive an award from First Lady Michelle Obama on behalf of Spy Hop, which was recognized for its effectiveness in promoting learning and life skills in young people by mentoring them in the digital media arts, including film, audio, music and design.

Spy Hop's programming received the 2015 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, the nation's highest honor for out-of-school-time programs. The award recognizes the country's best creative

change in their lives, their communities and the world. For more than 16 years, the program has engaged nearly 2,000 young people annually by providing high-quality, safe, out-of-school-time programming for K-12 youth. The program fosters personal and artistic expression through the use of emerging digital technologies and the media arts, and develops 21st century educational and workplace readiness skills.

In addition to the national recognition with the prestigious award, Spy Hop also received \$10,000 to support its programming and engage more young people from the community.

"Spy Hop is thrilled to be acknowledged as one of the nation's most exceptional artistic programs for young people. We're incredibly proud of the students, mentors, supporters, board and staff who made it possible," said Kasandra VerBruggen, executive director of Spy Hop. "We hope this award will draw attention to the fact that programs like Spy Hop are essential investments in the community and the lives of our young people, by helping them find a passion that inspires and motivates them to learn and



youth development programs for using engagement in the arts and the humanities to increase academic achievement, graduation rates, and college enrollment. The awardees—chosen from a pool of more than 350 nominations and 50 finalists—were also recognized for improving literacy and language abilities, communication and performance skills, and cultural awareness.

Kitzia said, "Spy Hop has empowered me with the passion and knowledge to become an engaged producer. The program has made me more confident in myself and has given me the opportunity to develop my talents."

Spy Hop was created to mentor young people in the digital media arts to help them find their voice, tell their stories and be empowered to affect positive

succeed in their lives."

"You can't help but be moved by these kids, who show us the transformative power of the arts and humanities," said Rachel Goslins, executive director of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. "They are staying in school longer, getting better grades, graduating from high school and going on to college at significantly higher rates than their peers. And they're building skills that will last them a lifetime."

FIRST LADY MICHELLE  
OBAMA, SPY HOP STUDENT  
KITZIA RODRIGUEZ, SPY  
HOP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
KASANDRA VERBRUGGHEN