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**PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON THE ARTS AND THE HUMANITIES AWARDS
CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE TO VENICE ARTS' ART MENTORING PROGRAM**

Los Angeles, CA – (September 12, 2011) – Venice Arts' Art Mentoring program has been recognized as one of the top programs of its kind in the country by the *President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities*, the White House announced Thursday. Venice Arts is one of only 50 organizations nationwide to be honored as a Finalist for the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards, which promote the creativity of America's young people, celebrating the learning opportunities and chance to contribute to their communities that these arts programs provide.

According to First Lady Michelle Obama, Honorary Chair of the President's Committee, "These outstanding programs are expanding horizons, changing lives, and helping young people fulfill their dreams—across America and around the world. Each of these programs is using achievement in the arts and humanities as a bridge to achievement in life."

According to 16-year-old Jocelyn Ramirez, who has been involved at Venice Arts for over three years, "The turning point in my life was when I signed up for my first film class. As cliché and dramatic as it sounds, it is purely the truth. Venice Arts has opened up numerous opportunities for me, not only in the art region, but also in my education." With the support of her Venice Arts' artist-mentor, Jocelyn received full scholarships to the Lycee Française High School, Idyllwild Arts Camp, and the California State Summer School for the Arts. She also received a coveted placement at NBC's *Law & Order: SVU*, where she shadowed editor Nancy Forner for a week. An Advanced Studies student, Jocelyn has worked as a Venice Arts Youth Art Intern, editing film, assisting in the gallery, and mentoring younger students.

Venice Arts' is celebrating its students and organizational achievements, including this most recent honor, at a Gala Benefit on Sunday, November 6, 2011, from 4–7pm at The William Turner Gallery, Bergamot Station. The afternoon celebration will showcase outstanding student work and honor individuals who have been key to Venice Arts over the years, including Founding Board Member Dr. V. Joy Simmons, Volunteer Artist-Mentor Wynn Miller, and Venice Arts' Supporters Steven Oritt & The Selma Oritt Foundation.

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About Venice Arts

Venice Arts runs education and mentoring programs in documentary photography, filmmaking, and multimedia primarily targeting Los Angeles area low-income youth. Venice Arts also implements regional, statewide, and international projects with both adults and children; runs the Institute for Photographic Empowerment, a collaboration with the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism; presents exhibitions, public programs, and workshops for adults centered around documentary photography and film at the Venice Arts Gallery; and consults on media arts, visual storytelling, and arts education with organizations and groups locally and internationally.

Learn more about Venice Arts at www.venicearts.org.

Hi-Res images available upon request.

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