

PlatteForum, Denver's premier nonprofit arts and youth organization, is seeking 15 individuals, businesses or group of individuals to donate \$1500 each to support 15 ArtLab youth involved with PlatteForum.

ArtLab Makes a Difference

Among the challenges ArtLab youth face are homelessness, teenage parenthood, recent refugees, family violence, substance abuse, gang membership, cultural clashes and being wards of the state. The students come from low-income families (80% free and reduced lunch) and are enrolled in low performing, unsatisfactory-progress high schools. ArtLab uses the creative process as a means for youth to rise above these challenges.

It can be said without a doubt: the youth involved in the ArtLab program personally grow by leaps and bounds. They gain an understanding of their *sense of self, enhance their life skills, learn critical thinking* and experience a tremendous *growth in personal assets*. ArtLab students learn to value a depth of character comprised of *integrity, rigor and consistency*. They know from their shared experience at PlatteForum they can always *strive higher, farther and deeper* than they have in the past. They see each other as true comrades in every sense of the word and become a *family*. An understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses enables them to rise above and accomplish more than they ever thought possible. PlatteForum encourages student success through a multitude of projects completed over the year. ArtLab students acknowledge they experience invaluable changes because of the program.

When ArtLab students discuss what it is like to walk through the doors of PlatteForum, they say it is like walking into their own safe haven.

A Critical Element

ArtLab youth are paid a *stipend* during the school year and wages in the summer intensive. *They would not be able to participate without this income support*. ArtLab youth must help contribute to expenses at home. This is a reason youth drop out of school and do not see college as a possibility. In addition, communities of color and those living in poverty are bearing the brunt of high unemployment. It is critical to keep kids in school and provide them with personal and professional development opportunities.

Grad Nation (Feb 2008) reports that compared to high school graduates, high school dropouts are eight times more likely to be in jail or prison and twice as likely to slip into poverty. Of all 50 states, Colorado has the highest achievement gap. Students of color and high-need are least likely to graduate from high school. A 2008 study ranks the dropout rate in *Denver Public Schools as one of the worst in the nation with 47% graduating on time (America's Promise Alliance)*.

At PlatteForum, ArtLab youth are hungry for every opportunity to help achieve their dreams. **Through your support you can make a profound impact on their lives.**

To donate contact:

Trish Thibodo, Executive Director,
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Donate directly online at www.platteforum.org, click "Donate Now."

Please consider a re-occurring donation.



ArtLab fosters
creativity, diversity,
competence,
asset development,
mentoring, trust,
and teamwork.



ArtLab: Integrated Learning Through the Arts

Based on **best practices** for youth development programs, ArtLab is an innovative year-round out-of-school program for disadvantaged high school youth incorporating the creative arts with academic, personal and professional skill development. As an intensive program, we are limited to 15 students who go through a competitive application and interview process. *Youth do NOT need to have an arts background.* This program is targeted to youth who do not have access to learning through the arts and would benefit from **structured immersion in the creative process.**

ArtLab youth are involved in the creation and presentation of major works, mentored by professional artists, participate in workshops directed by visiting artists, mentor at-risk children during workshops held at PlatteForum and participate in service-learning projects. All projects address **social issues** affecting their generation, which creates opportunities for the youth to give voice to those issues. Each endeavor has clear goals and connections to the real world. This propels youth to become **active members and catalysts for change** in their communities. ArtLab integrates organic and structured activities, with respectful interactions between all. Through individual and group struggles, challenges and obstacles, ArtLab interns **learn to work together as a team, communicate, accept differences and focus on completing a project/goal together.** In the end, ArtLab youth create high quality works of art, experience a sense of accomplishment, pride and shared purpose.

Our goal is that 100% of ArtLab interns successfully **graduate from high school and go on to post-secondary education.** Therefore, we also offer a *College Access Mentoring Program* which provides an 18-month adult mentor trained in the college application and admission process to working individually with an ArtLab mentee.

ArtLab involves
immersion in the creative process,
sequential learning,
facilitated conversations
and group activities to address today's
issues facing young people.



ArtLab 2009 met for over 350 hours:

One-two times per week during the academic year.

During the summer, youth meet for 20 hrs/week for nine weeks.

In addition they have activities on weekends and evenings such as attending plays, involved with service learning projects or attending special events.

2010 ArtLab Collaborators

MCA Denver

Kempe Foundation

Metro State College of Denver

Design Ignites Change

CHUN People's Fair

University of Colorado-Denver

Denver Film Society

Educational Media Organization

LoDo Alley Cats Arts Festival

Why does ArtLab matter?

ArtLab is a well-designed program that nourishes at-risk youth and gives them the opportunity to acquire professional and life skills, gain work experience and help them succeed in life. Youth participating in ArtLab report that because of their involvement with ArtLab, they **feel better about themselves, have a stronger sense of self, are better at taking responsibility for their actions and feel better about their future.** They find PlatteForum to be a **safe, trusting and supportive environment** where they experience meaningful activities.

Why help is urgently needed.

We begin the ArtLab Summer Intensive in June. Fifteen ArtLab youth will be meeting for 20 hours/week for nine weeks. With the downturn in the economy, funding for our intensive summer programs is less than anticipated and **we need your help.** ArtLab youth are hired as interns and work with us for 20 hours per week for nine weeks. A key component of this youth development program is our ability to **provide stipends and wages for the youth.** As you know, the importance of youth wages cannot be emphasized enough. The sense of pride, accomplishment and self-worth that comes from earning one's own money – which is also a **necessity for these youth** – is invaluable. Being paid a stipend/wage coupled with learning workable job skills and arts education makes for a powerful combination as youth transition to adulthood. As a small nonprofit, any loss of funding greatly impacts our programming. **Without your help we will have to cut back our Summer ArtLab program. Your donation will directly support the youth.**

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Current ArtLab Demographics

40% Latino, 21% Black/African American,

27% Caucasian,

6% Asian/Pacific Islander,

6% Native American and

50/50 Male/Female.

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2009 ArtLab Achievements



1

“I.Am.Here.” ArtLab’s original play gets fully produced by the University of Colorado-Denver. During summer 2009, ArtLab students wrote their original play, “I.Am.Here.”, a unique alternative high school musical, based on the lives of the youth. In the Fall, this work culminated with a full production as part of UC-Denver’s stage production season. ArtLab youth performed the play side by side onstage with university students. The theatrical production of “I.Am.Here.” was performed at University of Colorado-Denver’s Eugenia Rawls Courtyard Theatre, a premier space that is only one of three theatres of its kind in the world. *“The students of ArtLab often come from cultures that breed failure and success is frowned upon. Stepping on the stage at the Eugene Rawls Courtyard Theatre in the King Center allowed those students success, which was previously unimaginable.”* (Meagan Brncick, Education Director, PlatteForum)



2

ArtLab participated in the national project **“Create! Don’t Hate.”** This design mentoring partnership between senior undergraduate students in the Communication Design program at Metro State and students at PlatteForum’s ArtLab was a hit from the beginning. Six teams were formed at the start

of summer. Students and faculty leaders met weekly throughout the summer at the Metro State design studio. Students spent additional time after the close of the experience in mounting an exhibition of their work, which was a terrific success. Lamar Outdoor Advertising prominently displayed the billboards at busy Denver intersections.



3

First Place Winner for the mural “Oh Bombs of Change”: ArtLab was invited to participate in the CHUN People’s Fair Mural Project. This team mural painting competition takes place on-site at the People’s Fair (one of the largest two-day festival in Denver), with the goal of giving local youth a creative outlet for self-expression. ArtLab spent a month conceptualizing the perfect design based on the year’s theme: “change.” The teams had one full day to paint their mural, and gave a presentation to the jury of professional artists. The mural was exhibited in the Art District on Santa Fe Drive in September.



4

Service Learning Project Kudos: ArtLab worked with a group called Birthday Smiles, which coordinates monthly birthday parties for homeless children living in a local shelter. ArtLab planned and implemented the December party. *“I usually start by telling you how many children we had at our 6th party, 12/19 at the Samaritan House, but I can honestly say.....I DON’ T KNOW! We were so busy that nobody counted. We know there were 51 at the shelter but some did not make it because they were sick (we still made sure they got their gifts). This party, and I know I say this a lot, was truly amazing because of all the community support. PlatteForum’s ArtLab sent some immensely talented teens that airbrushed T-Shirts, did spin-art, made cards and produced reusable canvas murals that were extraordinary.”* (Rise Justice, Coordinator, Birthday Smiles.)



Meet the 2010 ArtLab Youth

Saira Apodaca – Junior at North High School

Saira has a strong and genuine personality. She wants to be an actress and acted in *I.Am. Here* . and has a **passion for the stage**. She is fun-loving and is always ready to laugh. She lives with her Grandmother and on the weekends can be found in the mountains as she is a part of the **Snowboard Club** at North High School. Saira was matched with a mentor through our CAMP program. She was extremely excited when we gave her a bike for Christmas, as she takes the bus or walks everywhere and now she can use her pink huffy! She will be the **first in her family to attend college**.



Josh Tucci – Senior at East High School

Josh is always **drawing** and **designing** something. It is hard to find him without a piece of paper & pencil in his hand. His favorite color is **red** and he loves wearing his crazy red and black plaid pants. He is a great **musician** and his band won **The Battle of the Bands** among Denver high schools. Josh is an aspiring screenwriter and currently looking at universities on the East Coast.



Haña Lucero-Colin – Senior at East High School

Haña is bright, thoughtful and has a creative mind. She has no fear of the unknown and loves a challenge. Haña is an incredible **musician** and has a **great presence on stage**. She **composed** the theme song for *I.Am. Here*. and acted in it as well. She was the student **director** for the play, *The Producers*, at East High School. Haña was recently accepted to **Seattle University** and awarded one of the school's highest **merit scholarships**.



Miles LaGree – Junior at East High School

Miles is a sweet, amazing and determined young man. He is extremely accountable and always on time. He is a **poet** and loves to **rap**. He loves to write and listen to **music**. He will always lend a helping hand and go the extra mile. Miles has a strong voice and shows **leadership** in ArtLab. He will be the second person in his family to go to college after his sister and also has a mentor through our CAMP program. For college, Miles is looking at conservatories such as **Julliard** or **Boston**.



Kate Rempel – Senior at South High School

A very strong girl, Kate is a **ballroom dancer** and has competed for many years. She works hard in school and is enrolled in several Advance Placement classes. She also works a second job outside of ArtLab and plays **tennis**. Kate is a great **writer** and a talented young woman. She knows how to work hard and have fun while she does it.



Josejuan Cruz – Junior at Bruce Randolph High School

Josejuan is our **businessman!** He loves ArtLab because it challenges his creative side. He always meets people with a strong handshake and is not afraid to start a conversation. He has been apart of **Youth Biz** for many years and last year his school principal elected him to deliver the Pledge of Allegiance when **President Obama** signed the stimulus bill. He is an **analytical thinker** and brings a great perspective to the group. He will be the **first person in his family to go to college** and he also has a mentor through our CAMP program.



Allison Grybowski – Junior at William Smith High School

Allison loves **philosophy** and talking about **world issues**. She is a small girl with a big bite. She first came to PlatteForum through Learning Labs with Creative Resident, Homare Ikeda, and hasn't left since. She is a bright young girl and **aspires to go to college out of state**. Allison is matched with a mentor in the CAMP program.



Sal Flores – Senior at East High School

Mr. Charisma! Salvador is an incredible young man with a magnetic personality. He is an incredible **actor** and did a great job in *I.Am.Here.*, which was his first-time acting on stage. He is working hard to graduate from East High School. Last summer, Sal created and **directed a powerful short film about his life**. Sal is an avid **soccer player** and dreams of playing for Chivas some day.



Brenda Ontiveros – Senior at East High School

Brenda is a great dancer! She loves **filmmaking** and **editing** and has worked on projects involving both at school. Brenda is a sweet, smart and passionate young woman who enjoys being a part of ArtLab and experiencing the new artists. She works hard and is looking forward to this summer because she loves the opportunities that PlatteForum provides.



Rajeana Vassel – Junior at Florence Crittenton High School

Rajeana is the **mother** of a 2-year-old boy. She is proud of her son and has a great outlook on life. Rajeana is optimistic and the **twinkle in her eye** tells you that she has so much ahead of her in life. Rajeana has immense **potential** and she is not going to let it go to waste. She wants to be the first person in her family to gain an education after high school. Rajeana has a creative mind, **mature spirit and a caring heart** that makes everyone around want to get to know her more.



Jonathan Astorga – Joan Farley Academy GED program

Jonathan is 17 years old and very interested in the arts but has **never had any formal arts education**. Jonathan lives in a boy's home and can't wait to get his degree and move on to **bigger and better opportunities**. He is talented in **drawing** and is amazed at the different types of art he is exposed to now he is an intern with ArtLab.



Dayveontay Pedraza – Junior at Contemporary Learning Center

A soulful young man with charisma, a lot like Sal! He is a **creative thinker** and is always willing to go the extra mile. His passion is **rap...** and he is good. Just give him a beat and he is ready to go. Dayveontay is a **skilled and talented** young man who plans on being a superstar.



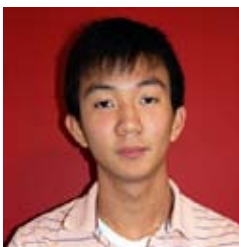
Hajia Muya – Junior at South High School

Hajia moved to the United States in 2004 after living in the **refugee camps in Kenya** since she was a baby when her family fled **Somalia**. She has worked hard to learn English and wants to **change the world** – which we believe she will! She is **poetic** and talks about her struggle of living in **two worlds and cultures** – Somalia and the U.S.



Amity Dover – Sophomore at North High School

The youngest of the group, Amity recently moved from **Pueblo** and is just getting to know the Denver scene. While she is quick at making friends, she was looking for more when she applied to the ArtLab program. Amity is a **thoughtful, compassionate and imaginative** young woman who is a perfect fit for ArtLab because she is **always ready to dive deep into the creative process**.



Phuc Ngyuyen – Junior at South High School

Phuc is from **Vietnam** and **moved to the United States 3 years ago**. He has learned English very quickly and we are continually impressed with his **humor** and fun-loving attitude. Phuc brings a smile to everyone's face when he is at ArtLab. Phuc is witty and **intelligent**, with a creative mind. He loves working in **black and white...**no colors please.