



For Immediate Release

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Sadie Nash Leadership Project Receives National Award For Excellence in Summer Learning Programming

Program Builds Leadership Skills in Girls from New York City and Newark

Editor's Note: Ron Fairchild, CEO of the National Summer Learning Association, is available for phone interviews about the Sadie Nash Leadership Project. To interview Fairchild, reporters can call Kate Shatzkin at 410-856-1370, ext. 208

Baltimore—The Sadie Nash Leadership Project, which provides a leadership development program for low-income high school girls in New York City and Newark, has been recognized as one of America's best summer learning programs. The National Summer Learning Association has named Sadie Nash one of two winners of the 2010 Excellence in Summer Learning Awards.

The annual award recognizes summer programs that demonstrate excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development for young people. Sadie Nash, based in Brooklyn, was selected out of dozens of applications from across the country.

"Sadie Nash is an exemplary summer learning program that provides dynamic and enriching experiences for young women, to develop leadership skills and help prepare and motivate them for future academic and career success," says Ron Fairchild, CEO of the National Summer Learning Association.

The program, founded in 2002, provides classes, college and career preparation workshops, and enrichment activities primarily for low-income girls of color aimed at developing their self-esteem and helping them find a voice against a backdrop of racism and class discrimination. Sadie Nash views positive self image as critical to effective learning and leadership, and empowers participants by offering peer and adult role modeling, relationship building, and education for social change.

Over the six-week, full-day program, nearly 100 public school students, ages 14 to 18, take leadership courses that look deeply at the role of women and examines how society's traditional power structure impacts disenfranchised communities. This summer's academic offering "Behind the Label," for example, explores the garment

industry and the related issues of labor exploitation and the environmental impact of manufacturing. Participants also choose from creative courses in theater, writing, photography, and dance. The program also includes weekly discussions with successful women leaders and field trips to colleges and workplaces.

The program—aimed primarily at girls from families who could not otherwise afford high-quality summer programs—is free and provides stipends to cover travel and meals for participants. Instructors are drawn from area organizations, universities and businesses, and college students are hired to staff the program.

Sadie Nash officials have gathered preliminary survey data from participants and teachers at their public schools and last year’s results, for example, showed:

- 91 percent of participants have expanded their perception of who leaders can be
- 92 percent feel more excited about or interested in going to college
- 85 percent feel they are now better able to express their ideas verbally
- 100 percent feel more confident

Sadie Nash officials are working on ways to further quantify the program’s impact on students’ academic achievement. They want to gauge, for example, if Sadie Nash participants are speaking out in class more, engaging with peers, developing healthy relationships and taking on leadership roles at school.

“We intuitively know and have heard anecdotally that the young women’s experience at school shifts after our summer program,” says Founder and Executive Director Cecilia Clarke, who named the Sadie Nash Leadership Project after her great-grandmother, a community leader whose small but audacious action models the need to set an example and brush convention aside to help those most in need. ([The story can be found on SNLP website.](#)) “We’ve been told by schools that these young women change the life of a classroom and are now challenging what they should be expecting from their education.”

Earlier this year, the Sadie Nash Leadership Project also received the Gold Prize for Overall Management Excellence from the New York Times Company, winning the top award out of 89 area nonprofits.

Research shows that without high-quality learning opportunities in the summer months, low-income students in particular tend to fall behind in reading and math.

The National Summer Learning Association based in Baltimore seeks to find and draw national attention to exemplary programs which provide and expand access to high-quality summer learning experiences for all young people.

Sadie Nash officials are currently studying the potential for expanding the program to allow more girls to participate, or helping other organizations serving young women to adopt a similar model, although Clarke said scaling up will be done slowly and carefully.

“It would be my dream that as many low-income women around the United States as possible would have access to the kind of programming we are doing,” says Clarke. “We know we’re having an impact and it’s unique and we know we want to share it.”

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The mission of the National Summer Learning Association is to connect and equip schools and community organizations to deliver quality summer learning programs to our nation's youth to help close the achievement gap and support healthy development. The organization serves as a network hub for thousands of summer learning program providers and stakeholders across the country, providing tools, resources, and expertise to improve program quality, generate support, and increase youth access and participation. For more information, visit www.summerlearning.org.