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Office of the Associate to the Superintendent

Contact: Todd Jaeger
(520) 696-5155

Amphi High Students Benefit from Program Lauded By President Bush

Tucson, AZ -- Word Journeys, a Pima County Public Library program that was created through a partnership with the Amphitheater School District, builds on popular children's books to engage Tucson area youth in creative learning and development and, as of last week, has been nationally recognized as one of 18 youth arts and humanities programs to receive the prestigious 2008 *Coming Up Taller Award*. *The Coming Up Taller Award* recognizes and supports outstanding community arts and humanities programs that celebrate the creativity of America's young people, and provide them with new learning opportunities and a chance to contribute to their communities.

Last week, First Lady Laura Bush presented the award to Amphi High School student Jennifer Ngo, Word Journeys Director Marge Pellegrino, and Katherine Berger, board member of Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

Since 2001, high school and elementary students from the Amphitheater Public Schools have met after school at the Woods Memorial Branch Library as a part of the Word Journeys program. Word Journeys utilizes the library as a learning space for children from racially diverse and economically challenged Tucson neighborhoods. For the past eight years, the program has hired and trained Amphi High Students to serve as the teen mentors for the program. Last year, the program served students from Prince and Holaway Elementary Schools and this year it is serving students from Prince and Rio Vista Elementary Schools.

"This is my second year as a mentor in the program and I find it to be a very rewarding experience. I am learning how to work with other people in a variety of situations and connecting with the kids is a great time for all of us," says Jennifer Ngo, Amphitheater High Student and Word Journeys Mentor. "I have even considered teaching as a profession now that I have some experience with the little children."

"This program has proven to be extremely beneficial for our students. The kids are not only learning but they are also connecting with their mentors on a level that is different from the one with their teachers. The elementary students look up to the high school mentors and some of the actually aspire to become mentors themselves," said Tassi Call, Principal, Prince Elementary School.

The Amphitheater School District is comprised of 22 sites in Northwest Tucson and Oro Valley. The District covers 109 square miles and supports the educational needs of nearly 16,000 of the areas young minds.

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