



And the Oscar Goes to...Arts Education

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First Lady Michelle Obama presented the nominees for Best Picture and announced “Argo” as the winning film via satellite.

The big winner at Sunday night’s Academy Awards was arts education. In two key moments, a spotlight was shone on the important role the arts play in children’s lives.

At the end of the broadcast, there was the wonderful statement of support by First Lady Michelle Obama. [She said](#), “They are especially important for young people. Every day they engage in the arts, they learn to open their imaginations and dream just a little bigger and to strive every day to reach those dreams.”

But before the First Lady’s surprise appearance, there was another big moment for arts education during the Best Documentary Short category. The winning film, [Inocente](#), is the story of a 15-year-old girl who refuses to let her dream of becoming an artist be stifled by her life as an undocumented immigrant forced to live homeless for the last nine years.

Inocente was introduced to the arts through a program in San Diego called [ARTS | A Reason To Survive](#), which uses therapeutic arts programming, arts education, and college & career preparation to create pathways to success for youth facing adversity. Founder Matt D’Arrigo is a member of Americans for the Arts and we featured his programs in our December 2012 edition of the [Monthly Wire](#), our member newsletter.

The following video from San Diego’s ABC affiliate shows the arc of events for Inocente—starting homeless, then participating in ARTS’ programs, all the way up to production of the documentary and standing onstage at the Oscars after Americans for the Arts Artists Committee member Kerry Washington revealed her story as the winning documentary:

Kudos to filmmakers Sean Fine and Andrea Nix Fine for the incredible job they did conveying the power of the arts to build resiliency and transform lives.

Thanks to Matt and his team for providing these essential arts programs to youth in San Diego and for sharing this success story with the rest of us!