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Glencoe man's youth writing program honored by White House

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Glencoe resident Robert Boone traveled to Washington, D.C. this week to receive a Coming Up Taller award for the organization he founded, Young Chicago Authors.

Boone attended a ceremony at the White House Wednesday, where First Lady Michelle Obama presented him with the award.

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Robert Boone of Glencoe went to the White House this week to accept a Coming Up Taller award for Young Chicago Authors. Boone founded YCA in 1991, a program for inner-city students who have a strong interest in creative writing.
(Submitted photo)

"I am delighted to receive this award," Boone said. "It's nice to be recognized."

Part of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, the Coming Up Taller awards "recognize and support outstanding community arts and humanities programs that celebrate the creativity of America's young people, provide them learning opportunities and chances to contribute to their communities," according to the Committee Website.

YCA is one of 15 organizations in the United States receiving a \$10,000 award this year.

In 1991, Boone founded YCA, a Saturday program for students with a strong interest in creative writing.

Workshops and classes are run by teaching artists -- published poets and short story writers, Boone said.

"I thought it would be interesting to have a program just for city kids that liked to write," Boone said. "Yes, we are interested in talent, but we are more interested in passion."

Students joined the program in the tenth grade and remained through high school, Boone said. In the early years of YCA, students who graduated would receive \$2,000 per year for college.

By 1995, 45 students were taking part in this Saturday program and another fifteen were in college. YCA expanded to year-round activities, including writing classes that met several times during the week in the

summer, readings by poets and novelists, opportunities for performance, trips to theaters, literary events and college campuses, according to the YCA website. Students also have the opportunity to work as teacher aides in summer school classes at local elementary schools.

YCA presently serves 2,500 teens a year through workshops, performance and publication programs, and reaches 30,000 young people and adults through readership of its publications and audiences at its events, Boone said.

"Even though it's a race to the top with (the federal) No Child Left Behind (Act), there is still a strong interest in the arts," Boone said. "I think people appreciate what we are doing for the kids."