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## Reel Works To Be Recognized At White House Ceremony

Pryor Cashman is proud to announce that Reel Works Teen Filmmaking's *The Lab*, Brooklyn's only after-school filmmaking program for at-risk teens, is being nationally recognized as one of eighteen arts and humanities programs to receive the prestigious 2007 Coming Up Taller Award. The award will be presented by First Lady Laura Bush in the East Room of the White House on January 28, 2008.

Pryor Cashman attorney Wilder Knight is Chairman of the Board of Reel Works. In addition, the firm has rendered services on a *pro bono* basis to Reel Works.

Coming Up Taller is an initiative of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH). The President's Committee partners with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to administer the program, which was founded in 1998.

The Coming Up Taller Awards recognize and support outstanding community arts and humanities programs that celebrate the creativity of young people, and provide them with new learning opportunities and a chance to contribute to their communities. The awards also highlight the contributions that historians, scholars, librarians and visual and performing artists make to families and communities by mentoring children. More than 350 nominations were received in 2007.

"Arts and humanities activities have a wonderful way of enabling young people to discover their unique talents and interests while forging a path to success in school and life," said Adair Margo, Chairman of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. "*The Lab* is especially notable for empowering at-risk teenagers, and teaching them how to set goals, persevere, collaborate and produce results – essential skills that will help them through life."

In *The Lab*, a free, semester-long program, participants turn the difficult raw material of their lives into riveting documentaries. Each teen is paired with a professional documentary filmmaker who helps the student choose a topic, shoot it, and shape the footage into a compelling personal story.

"The burdens of their lives often become odd assets within the context of *The Lab* because we're looking for the kids to tell stories," explains Executive Director John C. Williams. "Through the filmmaking process, the teens are able to explore and make sense of their issues, while discovering that their "creative energy can be a greater force than their problems," Williams adds.

Accepting the award for Reel Works will be 16 year old Ryan Bethune. In his film, *Hopeful Home*, Ryan tells the story of his family and the series of events that led them from middle class to a homeless shelter. The message Ryan delivers is that homeless people are not just mentally ill or drug addicts sleeping on the street; many are people just like him. “The film forced me to have a conversation with my mom about our experience,” says Ryan. “I learned about how she felt when we were in that situation. How hard it was for her. How she feels it affected me. I was able to thank my mom for keeping the family together.” Ryan’s mentor, Laura Cardona, is an editor at HBO.

Over two million people have seen Reel Works films, which have been broadcast on PBS, MSNBC, HBO Family and Oprah. A growing number of the films are also being used in classrooms across the country to stimulate discussion on such important issues as race, identity, self esteem and personal choices.