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Local Arts School Artistic Director Receives Humanitarian Award

Baldwin Park – Founder and Artistic Director of Creative Planet School of the Arts, Billy Rugh, of Duarte, has been awarded the David Chow Humanitarian Award from the Foundation holding the same name, an organization that pays tribute to those who give to help others.

The Foundation goes beyond existing programs to honor Los Angeles-area residents who dedicate their lives helping others in need. For seven years, the Foundation selects uncommon individuals whose acts of compassion and unselfishness have contributed to bettering the lives of others and whose devotion might otherwise have gone unnoticed. The Foundation was conceived and founded by David Chow, a Chinese immigrant who came to the US in his teens and completed his Masters degree by the age of 19. He became a successful entrepreneur and businessman, economist, kung fu and judo champion. The Foundation's medallion will be engraved with the hand/heart symbol. Its meaning – I give you my heart; I give you my strength – symbolizes the qualities by which the recipients give of themselves to help others. The selection committee was made up of civic, community and business people representing a wide spectrum of professions.

This year, the award is being given to Rugh who founded Creative Planet School of the Arts 7 years ago. As artistic director and principal, he operates the school on a shoestring budget, puts in 60 hour work weeks, while earning less than each of his employees to insure that the needs of the school are met first. Through his school, "Mr. Billy" provides local children a place where they can channel their energies and creativity. He gives them a safe place to explore many different artistic avenues which while doing so helps them improve their grades, become more in tune to the needs of others and learn the responsibility of giving back to the community or to more urgent causes. His students learn that through arts education they gain a higher grade point average, self esteem and the determination to achieve any and all their dreams.

Not only does Mr. Billy help his students learn how to become better students, artists and performers, he has taught his children how to help other children in greater need by using their art. In 2006, the students of CPSOA performed, "Mapambano," (Swahili for "the struggle") an hour long production he created depicting the lives of Tanzanian AIDS orphans and how these African children's lives are affected by the AIDS crisis through dance and song. Mr. Billy regularly takes his students to perform at Children's Hospital Los Angeles and have raised money for the children's CD library in the cancer wing.