



540 President Street, Suite 1A, Brooklyn, NY 11215 | 718.254.9782 | www.groundswellmural.org

Contact:
Sharon Polli (718) 254 9782
sharon@groundswellmural.org
Madeleine LeMieux (718) 254 9782
madeleine@groundswellmural.org
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 28, 2012

Mural Unveiling in East New York

Youth Artists “Believe In East New York” Through Mural Near Broadway Junction Subway Station

Mural Dedication Ceremony: Thursday, August 30 at 11am
Location: Van Sinderen Avenue and Fulton Street, Brooklyn, NY 11233

NEW YORK, NY - Groundswell, in partnership with the Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit, NYC Parks Department, and Aspirations Diploma Plus High School, is pleased to announce a dedication ceremony to celebrate the unveiling of “Believe in East New York,” a new mural created to help revitalize and empower the East New York community.

This summer, 15 young people participating in Groundswell’s Summer Leadership Institute (SLI) collaborated with artists Frank Parga and Esteban del Valle to research, design, and fabricate this 150 ft wide by 12 ft high mural located prominently near the Broadway Junction Subway station. Youth artists were recruited from throughout New York City, with a particular focus on engaging young people from the immediate neighborhood.

East New York is one of New York City’s most economically-disadvantaged communities; over half of the neighborhood’s population of 90,000 residents lives below the poverty line and receives public assistance. At the same time, East New York is one of the fastest growing neighborhoods in Brooklyn, as many residents priced out of neighboring Crown Heights and Bedford-Stuyvesant relocate to the area in search of affordable rents.

The mural design balances vibrant historical imagery with illustrations of the young people’s aspirations and hopes for the future of their neighborhood. “We Believe In and Love East New York” is written across the expanse of the wall, with a film strip motif and a style inspired by influential East New York graffiti artist DONDI. The mural includes archival imagery uncovered by the youth muralists during an intensive research stage and illustrates the history of transportation and recent revitalization efforts in the area.

As youth artist Maleek Joseph explained, “I am grateful for the opportunity to change a community through a mural. People pass by every day and see young kids who don’t have to be here but who want to work to better their neighborhood. I feel like this is a stepping stone for progress.”

“Art can have a transformative power in communities,” said Community Affairs Unit Commissioner Nazli Parvizi. “Developing partnerships that provide our City’s diverse neighborhoods an opportunity to re-envision and re-connect residents with their surroundings is one of the most important ways we can help improve quality of life for all New Yorkers.”

“Groundswell was thrilled to be invited to create a new work of public art for this highly visible wall outside one of New York City’s busiest transit hubs,” said Groundswell Executive Director Amy Sananman. “The unveiling of this monumental mural will revitalize a once neglected space, transforming the area for East New York residents and hundreds of thousands of commuters each day alike.”

About Groundswell

Groundswell brings together artists, youth, and community organizations to use art as a tool for social change. “Believe in East New York” was completed as part of Groundswell’s flagship program, the Summer Leadership Institute (SLI), which engages nearly 100 youth each summer as paid apprentices on mural projects that beautify neighborhoods and give voice to ideas and perspectives that are underrepresented the public dialog. www.groundswellmural.org

About the Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit

The Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit (CAU) is the direct link between the Mayor and New York’s communities. CAU plays a pivotal role in improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers by working with neighborhood and civic organizations, nonprofits, and various City agencies to tackle large-scale issues and respond to emergency situations. Through Borough Directors assigned to each borough, CAU is also actively involved in carrying forward mayoral initiatives at the community level by maintaining direct contact with community boards and civic associations. www.nyc.gov/cau

About NYC Parks Department

NYC Parks & Recreation is the steward of approximately 29,000 acres of land — 14 percent of New York City — including more than 5,000 individual properties ranging from Coney Island Beach and Central Park to community gardens and Greenstreets. www.nycgovparks.org

“Believe in East New York” is made possible through the generous support of Bloomberg Philanthropies and Winifred Johnson Clive Foundation. Major financial support for Groundswell’s 2012 Summer Leadership Institute (SLI) is also contributed by Altman Foundation, Brooklyn Community Foundation, Catalog for Giving, Charles Lawrence Keith and Clara Miller Foundation, David Rockefeller Fund, Edelman Community Investment, EILEEN FISHER, Ethel and W. George Kennedy Family Foundation, Irene B. Wolt Lifetime Trust, Lambent Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and its Cultural Innovation Fund, Travelers Foundation, and Variety The Children’s Charity, in addition to numerous individuals.

SLI is made possible in part by public funds administered by the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York City Department of Education, and the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development Summer Youth Employment Program.

Groundswell is grateful to the Office of the Mayor of New York City; the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President; and New York City Council Members Sara M. Gonzalez, Letitia James, Brad Lander, Stephen Levin, and Darlene Mealy.

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