



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 30, 2014

Contact: Sharon Polli (718) 254-9782
Sharon@groundswellmural.org
Vanessa Hadox (718) 254-9782
Vanessa@groundswellmural.org

Groundswell, the New York City Department of Probation, and the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District Unveil Two Monumental Public Artworks

Artwork Dedication Ceremony: Monday, June 30 at 4:30 pm

Location: 1788 Pitkin Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11212

***Murals created as part of “Transform/Restore: Brownsville,”
a two-year participatory public art project in Brownsville, Brooklyn***

NEW YORK, NY – Groundswell, the New York City Department of Probation (NYC DOP), and the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District (BID) announce the unveiling of two monumental public artworks along historic Pitkin Avenue. These artworks were created as part of “*Transform/Restore: Brownsville*,” a two-year participatory public art project focused on the transformation of vandalized walls into painted murals by young adults on probation.

Launched with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) through its national Our Town initiative, “*Transform/Restore: Brownsville*” is designed to engage young adult probation clients, local businesses, and community members in supporting the creation of visible and permanent change in Brownsville, Brooklyn. Additional support for the project is provided by Governor Cuomo’s Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Initiative.

Since the start of project, Groundswell has worked with young adults identified by the Department of Probation to conduct community interviews and surveys that reveal Brownsville's hidden strengths and then translate their findings into visual imagery for large-scale murals.

The first mural to be unveiled on June 30 is entitled “Moving Forward” and is located at 1788 Pitkin Avenue at the intersection of Mother Gaston Boulevard. Created by 17 young adult artists in collaboration with Lead Artist Chris Soria and Assistant Artist Ramiro Davaro-Comas, the mural helps to create an inviting gateway at the entryway to this historic Brooklyn neighborhood. The text-based image captures the cross-sector dynamism present within the neighborhood and reads “Brownsville Moving Forward.” Important community figures are highlighted throughout the mural, including renowned activist and educator Rosetta “Mother” Gaston, who founded local hidden treasure Heritage House, housed on the second floor of the Stone Avenue Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library.

The second mural, “Hidden Treasures of Brownsville,” to be unveiled is located one block away from the first at 1747 Pitkin Avenue at the corner of Osborn Street. Inspired by the theme of hidden treasures, nine young people continued to work with artists Soria and Davaro-Comas to complete an intensive mural research and design process, which included a field trip to the Brooklyn Museum. Through this process, the youth artists discovered one of the most important assets within the community – themselves. The resulting artwork invites other neighborhood young people and residents to discover new connections with one another as they celebrate the talents and treasures hidden within their own hearts and minds.

“As a model, *“Transform/Restore: Brownsville”* demonstrates how public art, business, and criminal justice can be aligned to support long-term community change,” said Groundswell Executive Director Amy Sananman. “Over the course of the two-year project, Groundswell looks forward to engaging as many as 40 young adults on probation to complete five large-scale public art projects to be enjoyed by Brownsville’s 116,000 residents.”

“When NYC DOP launched the Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON) in Brownsville three years ago,” said NYC DOP Commissioner Ana Bermúdez, “we hoped to connect probation clients to a rich array of community-based opportunities and resources to both improve public safety and improve the lives of our clients. Our collaboration with Groundswell and the Pitkin Avenue BID has meaningfully furthered this goal, enabling our clients to become agents of positive change in their neighborhood and enhance the vibrancy of one of Brooklyn’s historic shopping districts.”

“The Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District is pleased to continue our collaboration with our partners Groundswell and the City of New York on this project to transform the physical landscape of Brownsville’s main commercial street,” said Pitkin Avenue BID Executive Director Daniel Murphy. “The BID’s mission is to create spaces where Brooklyn residents can feel a sense of safety, ownership, and a positive connection with their neighborhood. Having young people from our community take the lead on these transformative art projects furthers our shared vision to create more beautiful, livable streets in the heart of Brownsville, a place that our residents can be truly proud of.”

This project is made possible through the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts, through its national Our Town initiative; New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Council on the Arts, through the Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Initiative; and the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District.

Groundswell brings together youth, artists, and community partners to make public art that advances social change for a more just and equitable world. Our projects beautify neighborhoods, engage youth in societal and personal transformation, and give expression to ideas and perspectives that are underrepresented in the public dialog. Groundswell is now celebrating our 18th anniversary as New York's leading organization dedicated to community public art. www.groundswellmural.org.

The New York City Department of Probation helps build stronger and safer communities by working with and supervising people on probation, fostering positive change in their decision-making and behavior, and expanding opportunities for them to move out of the criminal and juvenile justice systems through meaningful education, employment, health services, family engagement and civic participation. www.nyc.gov/html/prob/

The Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District is an organization dedicated to creating and maintaining a clean, safe, vibrant and thoroughly liveable space within Brownsville Brooklyn's Main Street. The BID supplies supplemental sanitation services, helps maintain public safety, creates and implements public space beautification projects, stages special events, works to attract new and diverse retail, and promotes local retailers. The Pitkin Avenue BID was founded in 1996. Pitkin Avenue has been one of Brooklyn's most popular shopping destinations since 1896. www.pitkinbid.org

Contact:

Sharon Polli – Groundswell (718) 254-9782

Daniel Murphy – Pitkin Ave BID (718) 922-9600

###