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Onorato Unveils Mural along East Busway

Street festival celebrates National City MLK, Jr. East Busway Community Mural Project

WILKINSBURG — Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato today joined local artist Kyle Holbrook for the unveiling of the National City Martin Luther King, Jr. East Busway Community Mural Project, which features portraits of people, events and structures that have shaped our region's history. The murals are located along portions of Port Authority's busway and in several communities that border the busway.

"This community-centered project is the perfect example of combining young talent with the creative ideas of the residents of each municipality it touches," said Onorato. "Kyle has combined art, education and community beautification in an effort that will instill a sense of civic pride in Wilkesburg, Edgewood, Swissvale and several Pittsburgh neighborhoods."

Holbrook and his company, KH Design, recruited 100 youth interested in pursuing futures in the arts to paint the murals. The students were paired with professional-artist mentors who oversaw work at each site.

"These kids have shown outstanding abilities in art and a real interest in their communities," said Holbrook. "We think it's important to give at-risk kids something positive to do during the summer, which also gives them a voice in their neighborhood and the confidence to pursue their dreams."

The artists displayed some of their work during a street festival in Wilkesburg. Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, Wilkesburg Mayor John Thompson, Strength Inc. founder Pastor Marcus Harvey, Youth Works Executive Director Dara Ware-Allen, representatives from Port Authority and National City Bank Pennsylvania President Todd Moules also attended the event. Port Authority provided access to the busway, and National City Bank is the major corporate sponsor of the project.

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“In the greater Pittsburgh region, National City has provided leadership on community projects for more than 150 years, and we are fortunate and absolutely delighted to help make the Mural Project a reality,” said Moules. “Today’s celebration honors the collaboration of many talented people. The National City Martin Luther King, Jr. East Busway Mural Project provides a unique channel of artistic expression for our youth, while showcasing the rich vibrancy and identity of our neighborhoods and its residents. This project is not only a dramatic reminder of our young people’s potential, but it also comes at a pivotal point in their lives.”

More than 500 students applied for the community art project. Sixty-five will be paid \$1000, and the remaining 35 will earn a stipend for their work. The students are paid by YouthWorks Inc., and the project is funded through donations from several foundations, including: Heinz Endowments; Grabel Foundation; Pittsburgh Foundation; Laurel Foundation; August Wilson Center for African American Culture; Multicultural Arts Initiative; and National City Bank.

“Kyle was also the driving force behind the 1,000-foot-long mural that hung on the Andy Warhol Bridge during the 2006 Major League Baseball All-Star Game, so we know the talent and enthusiasm he brings to each of his projects,” added Onorato. “We’re excited that Kyle’s most recent project will help to beautify and connect the communities along the East Busway.”

The remaining murals are scheduled to be completed by the end of summer.

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