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Arts-based Community Development Investment for The Port

Community Art Center’s Home Port Public Art Project one of 89 National Endowment for the Arts Our Town projects selected nationwide

(Cambridge, MA) – The Community Art Center, an 80-year old institution providing creative youth development programming in the Port neighborhood of Cambridge, has been recommended for a grant of $100,000 from The National Endowment for the Arts to support their Home Port Public Art Project. NEA Chairman Jane Chu announced 89 awards totaling $6.89 million supporting projects across the nation through the agency’s Our Town program. A competitive process, NEA received 274 eligible applications for Our Town this year and will make grants ranging from $25,000 to $100,000. “The arts reflect the vision, energy, and talent of America’s artists and arts organizations,” said Chu. “The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to support organizations such as The Community Art Center to cultivate vitality in their communities through the arts.”

Eryn Johnson, Executive Director of the Community Art Center for ten years, says “we are honored to receive support from the National Endowment for the Arts Our Town program. This funding validates our ongoing efforts and allows us to implement our Home Port Public Art Project – which celebrates the beauty of the Port neighborhood and helps to ensure that the vitality and diversity of our community is preserved for future generations.”

Home Port is a multi-year initiative that uses pop up events, photojournalism, public art, and story collection to strengthen the Port community, including a new graffiti mural from Boston artist Cedric Douglas (pictured, left) developed in partnership with local teens. Home Port asks that residents also be directly involved in the formation and design of a neighborhood fashion brand, mobile art truck and community gateway kiosk. Says Heather S., a teen member of the Public Art Crew who staffs Vincent van-Go, the new art truck (pictured, below), “the grants we have received help us to bring art to the Port community using our truck. We teach people to screen print their own t-shirt and on it, express what change they want to see in the world. We’re combining social justice and art, and giving people a voice.”

Home Port is guided by a group of neighborhood leaders, carried out by local youth and supported by a team of partners including the City of Cambridge, real estate developers Alexandria Real Estate Equities and Boston Properties and grassroots neighborhood groups. Learn more about the project at www.communityartcenter.org/homeport.
About Our Town and the National Endowment for the Arts

Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America’s rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. For more information, visit www.arts.gov.

*Our Town* is the NEA’s signature creative placemaking program that supports partnerships of artists, arts organizations, and municipal government that work to revitalize neighborhoods. This practice places arts at the table with land-use, transportation, economic development, education, housing, infrastructure, and public safety strategies to address a community’s challenges. Creative placemaking highlights the distinctiveness of a place, encouraging residents to identify and build upon their local creative assets.

About The Community Art Center

The mission of the Community Art Center is to cultivate an engaged community of youth whose powerful artistic voices transform their lives, their neighborhoods, and their worlds. This mission is achieved through intensive, year-round activities for youth ages 5-19 and through youth-led Community Programming that engages local and national audiences in quality artistic experiences. For more information, please visit www.communityartcenter.org.

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