



Local Youth Transform Vacant Properties Through Art Via Community Partnerships

Murals created by student artists to be installed at several locations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 8, 2019

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Local community partners Albany Center Gallery, Albany County Land Bank Corporation, and 4th Family Inc have joined together to help transform vacant properties in the South End and Arbor Hill into places for creative expression through the Corner Canvas program with local youths.

Corner Canvas provides resources for creativity and empowerment to the community and by utilizing the rich cultural assets in the region. This program gives an opportunity for the youth in the community to share their creative imagination and capabilities, through the restructure of vacant buildings and sparse lots. They come together to foster positive change through leading by example, creative expression, and the power of collaboration.

Jahkeen Hoke, Chief Development Officer & Co-Founder of 4th Family, states, “Corner Canvas is a key to unlocking the untapped potential of our Region...our youth. The platform created by this program gives our youth the ability to curate and take agency within their surroundings. It is my hope to retain this talent in our Region and cultivate a community of inclusive and culturally responsive art enthusiasts to sustain and propel these future artists.”

Corner Canvas is a new and innovative partnership that combines community development and locally-based art. Under the program, local students work with artist mentors to create murals that reimagine vacant buildings and spaces to create vibrant pieces of public art for their neighborhoods.

“The Corner Canvas program is a great example of how local partners can come together to transform vacant properties into something positive, said **Adam Zaranko, Executive Director of the Albany County Land Bank**. “Thank you to all of the partners, sponsor and artists who made it possible to transform these vacant spaces into more vibrant places.”

In the culmination of the first year of the program, three murals will be installed on vacant properties provided by the Albany County Land Bank. Each mural was created by participating neighborhood students, mentored by artist Eugene O’Neill, to combine positivity and their creative expression. One of



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the young artists, **Darielys, Grade: 8 Age: 14**, shares her insight, “I believe that this program will add to better our community and I’m glad to be a part of it.”

Tony Iadicicco, Executive Director of Albany Center Gallery, “This project is really focusing on the importance of art and youth -- giving people the opportunities to create in their neighborhoods. It is a platform where their work can be seen by hundreds of thousands of people. It is inspirational and a chance for them to have their work larger than life. The creative person has the power to create positive change, and we want them to know this. Art allows them to connect with themselves and each other. The cool part is that they can feel ownership and sense of place through their artwork—these murals.”

Murals will be installed at the following locations in the City of Albany on **May 10, 2019**:

- 337 Clinton Avenue (vacant building)
- 123 Henry Johnson Boulevard (vacant building)
- 325 South Pearl Street (vacant lot)

Corner Canvas was also made possible in part by: Arbor Hill Development Corp., AVillage Inc, CDPHP, Curtis Lumber of Delmar, Honest Weight Food Co-op, Made in Truth, M&T Charitable Foundation, Tech Valley Transportation, The South End Improvement Corp., Stewart's Holiday Match, and over 24 individual donors.

To see photos and learn more about Corner Canvas, please visit:

<https://albanycentergallery.org/events/corner-canvas>

About Albany Center Gallery:

At Albany Center Gallery (ACG), we believe that art should be accessible to everyone. This includes creating, admiring, and supporting creative works. ACG is a non-profit art space dedicated to exhibiting skillful contemporary art of the Mohawk Hudson region and to building a strong, knowledgeable audience for the visual arts. The mission of Albany Center Gallery is to promote and exhibit contemporary visual art produced by emerging and established artists living primarily in the region and to inspire interest and provide enjoyment to an increasingly diverse audience.

About 4th Family:

4th Family is a Social Venture (non-profit) based out of Albany NY, with a mission to assist, empower, and educate those in the community who strive for success. We envision a community that is empowered by working together to improve outcomes for its youth. At 4th Family we seek to redevelop the community network within urban environments. The purpose of this network is to provide a platform for talented individuals to take agency and make a positive impact within their community. This platform approach allows 4th Family to address a diverse set of challenges facing the inner city. The 4th Family slogan “It takes a community” is intentionally open to interpretation so that that platform can be adapted to changing needs in the community. Currently, the initiatives of focus are centered on social responsibility, economic mobility, entrepreneurship, and racial justice.



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About the Albany County Land Bank Corporation

The Albany County Land Bank was established in 2014 by Albany County to facilitate the process of acquiring, improving, and redistributing tax-foreclosed, vacant or abandoned properties. The Land Bank is a nonprofit organization committed to revitalizing neighborhoods and strengthening communities throughout Albany County. The Albany County Land Bank uses funding from the Office of the New York State Attorney General, Albany County and the City of Albany to support property demolitions, acquisitions, stabilizations, lot improvements and renovation projects. The Albany County Land Bank works in partnership with local and state government, non-profits, residents, community groups, and responsible developers and investors to return properties to productive use and support community development.

To learn more about the Albany County Land Bank please visit: www.albanycountylandbank.org.

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