



55 Washington Street, Suite 218  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

TEL 718.625.0080  
FAX 718.625.3294

bac@brooklynartscouncil.org  
www.brooklynartscouncil.org

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Press Contact:** Sara DeRose; 718.625.0080; sderose@brooklynartscouncil.org

### ***Brooklyn Arts Council Uses OJJ Grant from Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez to Enhance Arts Curriculum in Six Brooklyn Schools with at-risk Youth***

**BROOKLYN, NY (May 21, 2009)** - On June 12th from 9 - 11am, a 15 week arts education project at PS 15 will come to a close with celebratory performances and a lively presentation at the public unveiling of the school's new community murals designed and painted by 2nd and 5th grade students and Brooklyn Arts Council Teaching Artists titled *Flying Over Red Hook*. This mural project is one of six arts education programs made possible by a \$178,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice awarded to Brooklyn Arts Council in May 2008 by Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez. The federal funds secured by Congresswoman Velazquez are designated for arts education workshops aimed at preventing juvenile delinquency and violence in New York City's underserved communities. Through the hard work and dedication of a team of teaching artists employed through the Council's Arts in Education program over the past year, BAC used the funds to expand students' access to the arts in needy public schools in Bushwick and Red Hook. The community mural project enriched the lives of participating students, school officials, and now the local community who will benefit from a beautified neighborhood.

**Mural Unveiling Celebration**  
**June 12, 9 -11am**  
**PS 15, 71 Sullivan Street, Brooklyn**

"Providing arts opportunities for our children teaches them from a young age that the sky is the limit. It is the foundation on which intellect and imagination are built," Congresswoman Velazquez said. "It is my pleasure to support the Brooklyn Arts Council in their efforts to bring personalized arts experiences to students in Bushwick and Red Hook. The federal funds secured for this program will provide a springboard for our next generation of artists, intellectuals and humanitarians."

A primary goal of the mural-making program was to explore collaborative work as a way of establishing a sense of community ownership and enhancing the self-esteem of the 2nd and 5th grade student participants. The use of artistic expression to beautify the Red Hook community was the interest of teachers, teaching artists and the school's administration. Teaching Artists Tess Korobkin and Phoebe Zinman incorporated the interests of all stakeholders and participating students to guide the project to its tremendous success. The 2nd graders' fascination with the school's very own bird sanctuary, located in a central courtyard, was blended with the 5th graders' intimate

perspectives of their community within and beyond the school's walls. Student drawings and photographic images were cut up, colored, traced and collaged to create a master design that every participant had a hand in creating and painting. The resulting images of birds represented in the sequence of mural panels depict not only avian life but also the flight of students as they change and grow through their education at PS 15.

Research has shown that students who study the arts have significantly higher class attendance rates and are more successful on standardized tests such as the SATs. Despite this, funding cuts have threatened arts programs in schools across the City. In addition to providing classes for students, BAC will train teachers at each school through residencies, will facilitate parent engagement workshops, and present assembly performances, offering the entire school community artistic experiences. Three Brooklyn schools, including PS 15, participated in programming during this school year, and three additional schools (PS 347K, PS 377K & PS 274K) will launch their programs in fall 2009.

“Brooklyn Arts Council is excited about this opportunity to provide a constructive outlet for at-risk youth in six deserving schools in the 12<sup>th</sup> congressional district through its Arts in Education program. This grant will enable BAC to bring much-needed arts programming into schools, which will have a tremendous impact on student’s lives, both personally and academically and give them an opportunity to cultivate an interest in the arts that will last a lifetime,” said Ella J. Weiss, President, Brooklyn Arts Council

#### **ABOUT BAC**

**Brooklyn Arts Council (BAC)**, an arts and services organization founded in 1966, is the umbrella for Brooklyn’s range of cultural groups and individual artists working in the visual, performing, media, and literary arts. BAC helps Brooklyn’s artist population—from the experimental to those preserving and evolving traditions of cultural heritage—create and present their work. **BAC's Arts in Education (AIE)** program strives to offer engaging, instructive, and enthusiastic experiences that enhance learning and appreciation for the arts for everyone involved—students, teachers, administrators, parents, and members of the community.

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