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Northern NJ Community Foundation's Public Art Build-A-Village for Seniors Opens Community Foundation Week

(Hackensack, New Jersey; November 13, 2018) -- From November 12-18, 2018, the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation (NNJCF) joins more than 780 community foundations across the United States celebrating Community Foundation Week. The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation, a regional nonprofit organization observing its 20th anniversary, continues to serve the area and promote cooperation and civic engagement in the community to address prevailing issues.

Community Foundation Week, an effort created in 1989 by former president George H.W. Bush, has raised awareness about the important role these philanthropic organizations play in fostering local collaboration and innovating solutions to address persistent civic and economic challenges. To observe this special week, the NNJCF launched Build-A-Village during October and early November to address the public health need of senior citizens experiencing loneliness and isolation.

Health Needs of Senior Citizens

Statistics about senior citizens in the area reveal a burgeoning population with specific health issues. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, senior citizens make up nearly 15% of New Jersey residents with 1.292 million people ages 65 years and older. In Bergen County, more than 16% of residents are senior citizens, higher than the national average.

Results from an Age-Friendly Englewood Coalition survey identified social isolation as a critical issue for seniors. To reduce this isolation, they proposed older adults be engaged at home and develop mechanisms for residents to meet

each other regardless of race, religion, age, or geography. According to the American Association of Retired Persons, isolation and the feeling of loneliness is the main reason for anxiety, depression, illness and abuse on seniors, with the impact on people's health, worse than tobacco and obesity.

“The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation’s ArtsBergen initiative appreciates the arts as a valuable tool to address community issues such as isolation. Build-A-Village gives seniors an opportunity to share their voice with one another and the community-at-large through interactive mural-making and publicly showcased work, which instills a sense of connection, encourages civic pride, and beautifies the city of Englewood,” said Danielle De Laurentis, Associate Director, Northern New Jersey Community Foundation.

The NNJCF partnered with Bergen Family Center and the Southeast Senior Center for Independent Living (SESCIL) in Englewood to host the public art project for seniors in the county. Professional teaching artist/muralist Dan Fenelon led the workshops, bringing together participants to explore creating an ideal community through art. Senior citizens used their imagination and connected with others via the arts. Through the series, new friendships developed.

"This has been a very meaningful program for the seniors. The experience provided the seniors with a creative outlet to express themselves, work together on a project, and interact with a professional artist. This gave them another opportunity to socialize," said Liz Corsini, VP-Director of Programs, Bergen Family Center.

"The seniors really enjoyed participating in the Build a Village project! It was well attended and almost everyone stayed for the whole six weeks of the program," said SESCIL Executive Director Scott Reddin.

In early December, the completed murals will be showcased in shadowbox windows next to the Bergen Performing Arts Center leading to ShopRite in Englewood, New Jersey. In the summer, they will be displayed in storefronts in the central shopping district.

Support Future Projects

Individuals and businesses may support this pilot project and its replication with a tax-deductible donation, as permitted by law. Donations may be made online at <http://www.nnjcf.org/donation/> under the tab, The Creative Placemaking Fund. Contributions may also be sent by check made out to 'The

Northern N.J. Community Foundation' with 'Build a Village' entered in the memo line. Send checks to the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation, 1 University Plaza, Suite 128, Hackensack, New Jersey 07601. To date, partial funding for the project is provided by Age-Friendly Englewood. For further information about the NNJCF, call 201-568-5608 or send an e-mail to nnjcf@nnjcf.org.

About NNJCF

The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation (NNJCF), a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization based in Hackensack, New Jersey, focuses primarily on education, public health, civic engagement, philanthropy, the environment, and the arts. NNJCF works with local governments, school districts, businesses, non-profit organizations, and citizen groups in Northern New Jersey to improve community life. The Foundation's partners identify and resolve regional problems and opportunities by talking and learning from each other, by sharing ideas, best practices, services, and resources.

For more information, visit www.nnjcf.org, send an email to nnjcf@nnjcf.org, or call (201) 568-5608. Follow the NNJCF on Facebook at Northern NJ Community Foundation/ArtsBergen and Twitter @NNJCF.

About Northern NJ Community Foundation's ArtsBergen Initiative

ArtsBergen, an initiative of the Northern NJ Community Foundation, is an emerging arts alliance in Bergen County, New Jersey that supports and encourages creative placemaking, the practice of integrating arts and culture into a neighborhood, town, or region to build community and livability and boost local economy. The initiative's mission is to energize and unify artists and arts organizations and connect the Bergen County community to the arts. For more information about the initiative, visit www.nnjcf.org/artsbergen/.

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