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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Mural Unveiling in Greenpoint**

**Art-ivism in Greenpoint:**

**Youth Muralists Celebrate Environmental Justice Activism**

**And Promote Watershed Stewardship**

**Mural Dedication Ceremony:** Tuesday, September 2 at 11am

**Location:** 424 Leonard Street, Greenpoint, Brooklyn NY 11222

**NEW YORK, NY** – Groundswell, in partnership with The Greenpoint Chamber of Commerce and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), is pleased to unveil a monumental public mural, entitled “Our Journey to Clean Water,” celebrating Greenpoint’s history of environmental justice activism and highlighting the importance of watershed stewardship at this critical moment in the neighborhood’s trajectory.

This summer, 24 teen participants in Groundswell’s Summer Leadership Institute (SLI) worked with Lead Artist Yana Dimitrova and Assistant Artist Ruth Hofheimer to research, design, and fabricate this 30’ by 60’ mural on the wall of MS 126 Magnet School for Environmental Engineering.

The youth mural team, including seven Greenpoint-based youth, participated in meaningful educational field trips, including a walking tour of Greenpoint highlighting the neighborhood’s history of environmental activism, a canoe trip on Newtown Creek, and a visit to Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park and the East of Hudson Watershed, to deepen youth participants’ understanding of the local watershed system, with an emphasis on the devastating impact of the Newtown Creek oil spill , and an awareness of the New York City Water Supply System.

“The trips were eye-opening,” said youth participant Leslie Valette. “The experience and knowledge gained through the trips were very helpful in developing a full picture of how our activities in general affect the cleanliness of our water.”

Inspired by this hands-on research, the final mural design depicts a woman is pouring herself a pure glass of water, safely stewarded from the Catskills Watershed to her faucet. The water pipes are connected from the mountains, flowing into a revitalized Greenpoint, where local businesses such as an auto repair shop (complete with electric car) and farmer’s market thrive - illustrating how human activities can profoundly impact the local environment. “Our Journey to Clean Water” further urges

viewers to take action and share responsibility for a greener community and to conserve and protect our shared water resources.

“Greenpoint is renowned for its proactive advocacy for environmental justice,” said Jeff Mann, President of The Greenpoint Chamber of Commerce. “Earlier this year, several of our local businesses worked with Groundswell on a mural that depicts the important history of this neighborhood. This new mural seamlessly builds upon the symbols in that earlier work and celebrates our community’s ongoing activism with an educational and civic-minded perspective. Thank you to the Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund, The Office of the NYS Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and our partners Groundswell and the NYC DEP for supporting this important neighborhood project.”

“Through this mural, we hope to inspire the youth participants and local students to learn more about regional watershed conservation and infrastructure, by exploring careers in related environmental sectors,” said NYC DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd. “The mural successfully encourages the viewers to stop, appreciate, and think about what we can all do to contribute to a healthier water cycle.”

“Through the \$19.5 million Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund, my office is partnering with the Greenpoint community to address a legacy of environmental pollution and neglect,” Attorney General Eric Schneiderman said. “This educational mural, ‘Our Journey to Clean Water,’ reflects the youth and spirit of this New York City community. It documents the neighborhood’s industrial past and charts a brighter future. I am proud we were able to dedicate funds to this inspiring project – investing in a greener Greenpoint.”

“This summer has been a rewarding journey for our teen artists. Not only have they had an one-of-a-kind opportunity to learn more about green activism and watershed stewardship, but they have also participated in a highly public form of activism through the creation of public art,” said Groundswell Founder and Executive Director Amy Sananman.

Few New York City neighborhoods have greater environmental justice needs than Greenpoint. Even in the midst of unprecedented citywide revitalization, Greenpoint is plagued by poor air and water quality and a lack of open spaces. Part of Community District One, Greenpoint currently ranks near the bottom of New York City’s open space per capita, with .06 acres per 1,000 residents. The Greenpoint oil spill has the dubious distinction of being one of the largest oil spills ever recorded in the United States. Newtown Creek is home to a federal Superfund site, several State Superfund sites and numerous brownfields that have not yet secured the attention of regulators.

“Our Journey to Clean Water” is made possible with funding provided by the Office of the New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation through the Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund and the Catskill Watershed Corporation. Additional support is provided by New York City Councilmember Stephen Levin and the New York State Office of Public Safety. Additional scholarship supports is provided by ExxonMobil and Roux Associates, Inc.

Major financial support for Groundswell's 2014 Summer Leadership Institute (SLI) is contributed by Altman Foundation, Brooklyn Nets, Charles Lawrence Keith and Clara Miller Foundation, David Rockefeller Fund, Dedalus Foundation, EILEEN FISHER, Ethel and W. George Kennedy Family Foundation, Irene B. Wolt Lifetime Trust, Lambent Foundation, M&T Bank, Pinkerton Foundation, Variety The Children's Charity, and William Randolph Hearst Foundations, in addition to numerous individuals.

SLI is made possible in part by public funds administered by the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Youth and Community Development Summer Youth Employment Program, New York City Department of Education, and New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Groundswell is grateful to the Office of the Mayor of New York City; the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President; New York State Assembly Member Joseph Lentol; and New York City Council Members Brad Lander, Stephen Levin, Carlos Menchaca, and Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito

#### **About Groundswell**

Groundswell, New York City's leading organization dedicated to community public art, brings together youth, artists, and community partners, to make public art that advances social change, for a more just and equitable world. This mural was completed as part of Groundswell's flagship program, the Summer Leadership Institute (SLI), which employs over 140 youth each summer as paid apprentices on mural projects that beautify neighborhoods and give voice to ideas and perspectives that are underrepresented the public dialog. To follow a youth-driven social media campaign highlighting SLI, use #GroundswellNYC. [www.groundswellmural.org](http://www.groundswellmural.org)

#### **About The Greenpoint Chamber of Commerce**

The Greenpoint Chamber of Commerce's mission is to unite and advocate for the varied businesses of North Brooklyn around the shared goal of improving the community's commercial landscape and stimulating the local economy. The Greenpoint Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to supporting local businesses by providing a platform to network, address issues of mutual concern and to market their products and services, leading to increased business for all members. [www.greenpointchamber.com](http://www.greenpointchamber.com)

#### **About the New York City Department of Environmental Protection**

NYC DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. [nyc.gov/dep](http://nyc.gov/dep)