



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mural Unveiling at West Brooklyn Community High School

Shaped by Challenges, High School Students

Celebrate Freedom through Creativity

Mural Dedication Ceremony: Friday, May 15 at 3 pm

Location: 1053 41st St, Brooklyn, NY 11219

NEW YORK, NY – Groundswell, in partnership with West Brooklyn Community High School (WBCHS) and Councilmember Brad Lander, is pleased to announce a dedication ceremony highlighting the unveiling of a new mural, entitled “Jaguar’s Quest.” This monumental mural illustrates the transformative impact WBCHS makes on its students, empowering them with the inspiration and knowledge necessary to achieve success.

To create this mural, high school students at West Brooklyn Community High School participated in an intensive Cultural Afterschool Adventures (CASA) Program in partnership with Lead Artist Raul Ayala and Assistant Artist Ifeatuanya Chiejina. Together, the team collaboratively researched, designed, and fabricated this mural at 1053 41st Street, Brooklyn, NY 11219.

First opened in 2006, WBCHS is a transfer school committed to helping students who have been excessively truant or have dropped out of school after enrolling in 9th grade at a high school. Operated in partnership with Good Shepherd Services, the school provides opportunities for young people to explore their leadership potential in a supportive environment. Since first opening its doors, WBCHS has enabled hundreds of students to graduate and developed lasting relationships with a once resistant neighborhood through its commitment to meaningful community-based connections.

Through a series of hands-on design workshops, the students created imagery to illustrate WBCHS’s commitment to transformation and empowerment. During an intensive research and design phase, the mural team interviewed the school administration, their fellow students, and WBCHS alumni. The youth artists reflected on the struggles they have undergone within their own educational experience and focused on the need to overcome fears, alienation, and oppression in order to find freedom.

“The mural has four main concepts: power, inspiration, freedom, and knowledge,” said Lead Artist Raul Ayala. “We used a main character, represented by the jaguar, to build the narrative. The jaguar is an important symbol in many American (the continent) cultures. It represents the power to face fear. Together, we explored how this character is shaped by the challenges it faces.”

“Through the Cultural Afterschool Adventures (CASA) program, I am thrilled to have helped support the talented young artists at WBCHS with a high-quality afterschool arts experience,” said Council Member Brad Lander. “It is a pleasure to celebrate their hard work and dedication together with Groundswell and the WBCHS family as we unveil this powerful mural together.”

“Our talented youth artists have created a vibrant visual manifestation of the journey experienced by students when they come to WBCHS – who they are when they enter and who they have become when they leave,” said Principal Gloria Wallace. “It sends a powerful message to our students, staff, and visitors that they belong here, that we belong in this community, and that our students possess valuable talents, skills, and perspectives to offer society at large.”

“This stunning mural exemplifies Groundswell’s commitment to the creation of high-quality public artwork that elevates the voices and visions of underrepresented voices,” said Groundswell Executive Director Amy Sananman. “These extraordinary young people have told a very personal story of awakening and self-discovery through rich art historical references and symbolism from diverse cultural traditions, from Incan cosmogony to Ancestral Pueblo culture.

“Jaguar’s Quest” is made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the New York City Council. Special thanks to New York City Councilmember Brad Lander.

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. Our projects beautify neighborhoods, engage youth in societal and personal transformation, and give expression to ideas and perspectives that are underrepresented in the public dialogue. www.groundswell.nyc

About West Brooklyn Community High School

West Brooklyn Community High School is a partnership between Good Shepherd Services (GSS) and the NYC Department of Education (DOE). WBCHS serves students ages 16-20 who have chosen to reengage in school to achieve a high school diploma and develop a post-secondary plan. Each student is supported in this process by an Advocate Counselor and a team of dedicated teachers who work with students to develop skills and relationships to prepare for life after high school. Its small classroom size and student-centered instruction works to create an individualized learning environment for each student. www.wbchs.org

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