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ARTSNOW PARTNERS WITH OHIO & ERIE CANALWAY COALITION TO TRANSFORM PARK EAST TENNIS COURTS WITH LOCAL ARTISTS

AKRON, OH – Aug. 29, 2018 – Seeking to leverage the arts to energize neighborhoods, ArtsNow recently announced their partnership with Akron Civic Commons and the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition (OECC) to transform the Park East tennis courts with a grant from Mural Arts Institute. The team is thrilled to announce two local artists, Nichole Epps and Ace Epps, who were chosen to gain insight into what the community wants for the development of the space.

Akron's Park East neighborhood was one of the three cities, along with Memphis and Detroit, to be selected by Mural Arts Philadelphia (the largest public art nonprofit in the nation) to receive a grant from the Mural Arts Institute.

"We believe that the arts have the power to galvanize communities and help them thrive, but the effort must be authentic to the desires and needs of the community," says Nicole Mullet, Executive Director of ArtsNow. "We're thrilled to work with local artists, Nichole and Ace, along with OECC and Mural Arts Philadelphia to develop these processes in Summit County and support our local artists."

Seeking to support and engage residents, Phase One of the project strives to inform and empower local artists to create engaging and authentic work with the help of the community. Phase One is focused on using creative interventions to engage community members in a thoughtful imaginative effort relative to the tennis courts. This is an extension of work undertaken by Akron Civic Commons, part of Reimagining the Civic Commons, a three-year, national initiative to revitalize civic assets supported by four funders: The JPB Foundation, Knight Foundation, Kresge Foundation, and Rockefeller Foundation. The Akron collaboration is led by Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, which earlier this summer, facilitated multiple town meetings to begin to determine what the neighborhood wanted to see in their neighborhood.

Established in 1989, OECC is a private, non-profit organization has worked to develop the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail and National Heritage Area in Summit, Stark and Tuscarawas Counties.

"During these meetings, we learned what residents really want are simple – a place(s) to sit, shaded areas, exercise space, among other things," said Dan Rice, President and CEO, of OECC. "That's what we're giving them, as we're currently working to install furniture and are even testing a rock wall in the park."

The transformation in Park East will be completed over the course of two phases, extending into July of 2019. Phase One of the transformation will begin in September 2018 and is set to

conclude by the end of February 2019. Phase Two will begin shortly after and is set to extend into July of 2019 with a more permanent installation.

Lead artists for the project state:

"I'm looking forward to interacting with the community," states artist Nichole Epps. "I appreciate the fact that the space created will be a direct reflection from the input of those who live, work, and play in the area, and I'm excited to create an area that's socially, economically, and culturally responsible."

"I have an overwhelming amount of appreciation and gratitude in being selected as artist in residents for the Park East project," states artist Ace Epps. "Being able to use art as a tool for building stronger communities has always been a personal passion of mine, and I can't wait to engage with local residence to gain a perspective of how they see the present and future of their neighborhood."

A huge thank you to the team of committee members overseeing this project including neighbors, civic leaders, and a representative from Mural Arts Philadelphia.

As the team works to create better tomorrow's in the Park East neighborhood, community members are encouraged to attend the free Two-Day Mural Making Workshop with Mural Arts Philadelphia on Sept. 17 and 18: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/two-day-mural-making-workshop-with-mural-arts-philadelphia-tickets-48875301342>.

For more information on ArtsNow, please visit ArtsNow.org or contact Nicole Mullet at Nicole@ArtsNow.org.

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ArtsNow is an innovative non-profit which connects arts, culture, and community. An outcome of the GAR and Knight Foundation funded Arts and Culture Landscape Study, ArtsNow seeks to connect, collaborate, and support the incredible creative sector in Summit County. For more information, please visit artsnow.org.