



For Immediate Release

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National Endowment for the Arts Announces 2013 Our Town Grant Recipients *City of Asylum/Pittsburgh one of 59 projects selected nationwide*

PITTSBURGH, PA – July 17, 2013 **The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)** announced 59 Our Town grant awards totaling \$4.725 million and reaching 34 states in the Our Town program's third year of funding. **City of Asylum/Pittsburgh** is one of those grantees and will receive \$100,000 to produce a series of community-based artist residencies at the **Alphabet City** literary center and on the **Artway Connector**.

Through Our Town, the NEA supports creative placemaking projects that help transform communities into lively, beautiful, and sustainable places with the arts at their core. The grantee projects will encourage creative activity, create community identity and a sense of place, and help revitalize local economies. All Our Town grant awards were made to partnerships that consisted of at least one nonprofit organization and a local government entity.

City of Asylum's project activities include the creation of new community-based performances by artists in residence, in which artists collaborate with and respond to community input. Participating artists include Oliver Lake, Allstar Refjudzi Band/Archa Theater, Cave Canem Poets, and jazz musician Susie Ibarra; plans are also being made to include spoken-word performers, writers of children's literature, and more. Artists-in-residence live nearby in COAP housing in the residential core of the community, and will perform at Alphabet City as well as other sites along the Artway Connector and in the Alphabet Garden (the organization's previously-announced new initiatives in the Central Northside). An ongoing series of temporary installations of text-based artworks, and one permanent artwork, are also included in the project.

"This is an exciting time to announce the Our Town grants as a national conversation around creative placemaking advances and deepens," said **NEA Acting Chairman Joan Shigekawa**. "The NEA leads on this topic not only through our funding but through webinars, publications, and research. With these resources, we will help to ensure that the field of creative placemaking continues to mature, enhancing the quality of life for communities across the country."

"COAP's placemaking strategy has been to engage our community by activating public streets, vacant lots, gardens, homes, and community spaces," said **Henry Reese, co-founder and President of City of Asylum/Pittsburgh**. "And now we will activate it through Alphabet City as well, with the goal of creating a neighborhood where artists and the arts are everyday, living presences."

Morton Brown, Public Art Manager for the City of Pittsburgh, stated, "The City of Pittsburgh has supported and recognized City of Asylum as one of its strongest arts leaders. The plans for Alphabet City and the corridor along Sampsonia Way are shining examples of a vision of place making through public art shared by City Planning, the Office of Mayor Luke Ravenstahl and City of Asylum. The City

offers its thanks to the National Endowment for the Arts and sincerest congratulations to City of Asylum on this prestigious grant award."

The NEA received 254 applications for Our Town this year. Grant amounts ranged from \$25,000 to \$200,000 with a median grant amount of \$50,000.

For a complete listing of projects recommended for Our Town grant support, please visit the NEA web site at arts.gov. Project descriptions, grants listed by state and by project type, and creative placemaking resources are available as well. The Twitter hashtag is #NEAOurTown13

About City of Asylum/Pittsburgh

Founded in 2004, City of Asylum/Pittsburgh is a model for arts-based community development, bringing writers, readers and neighbors together through global literature and cultural exchange. Located on Sampsonia Way in Pittsburgh's Northside, City of Asylum/Pittsburgh has redeveloped 5 dilapidated houses to serve both as homes for writers exiled under threat of persecution and as public artworks. It has also presented more than 250 authors and musicians from 42 countries in free readings and concerts on or near Sampsonia Way. SampsoniaWay.org, its online journal of free speech, literature, and justice publication serves as a virtual home for persecuted writers and serves a growing global audience online. City of Asylum/Pittsburgh connects and impacts people on our street, in our city, and around the world.

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