

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEET THE LOCAL ARTISTS BEHIND TEN NEW MURALS IN NIAGARA FALLS

A \$160k Project Funded by New York State Health Foundation's Building Healthy Communities Program, led by the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area as part of their public art initiative.

NIAGARA FALLS, August 20, 2019 – The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, with financial support from the New York State Health Foundation, is embarking on a multi-phase *Heritage Arts Mural Project* and Walking Trail that will merge public art, local history, and public health. Through August and September of this year, ten artists from Niagara Falls and Buffalo will paint ten new murals on Main Street and Depot Avenue in the North End neighborhood. The project unites artists with the Highland Community in the North End in a collaborative process to transform public spaces and inspire local citizens.

"At the National Heritage Area, we get to take a creative approach to projects with the objective to foster pride of place and support for our community. We believe that art creates change. By transforming public spaces, improving the neighborhoods we live and work in, conveying messages of hope, empathy, compassion, we can make positive change," said Ally Spongr, Project Director of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area.



The new murals convey messages of hope and freedom, and celebrate the Highland Community, a neighborhood with a legacy of creativity, courage, and active resistance to oppression that has lasted from the days of the Underground Railroad to today. Some of these stories of heroism are documented and told at the adjacent Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center. Selected muralists include Ashley Kay, Casey Milbrand, Madonna Pannell, Jonathan Rogers, Christal Smith, Natalia Suska, Tyshaun Tyson, Edreys Wajed, Imani Williamson and Muhammad Zaman. Community members can meet the artists at a Happy Hour event, Food Trucks at the Tracks, on Wednesday, August 21 from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m at the Niagara Falls Amtrak Station and Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center located at 825 Depot Avenue West, Niagara Falls, NY 14305.

The next phase of the project is *The Walk to Freedom: A Heritage Walking Trail for Niagara Falls*, that will promote physical activity options for local residents and better connect the Highland Community to various Niagara Falls resources, including parks and trails, as well as free transportation to cultural attractions and key food outlets, which are severely lacking in some areas.

"Increasing opportunities for physical activity is one of the ways we are working to build healthy communities across the State," said David Sandman, Ph.D., President and CEO of the New York State Health Foundation. "Vibrant public art, like these murals, can benefit the community by encouraging residents to get out there and engage with the neighborhood's culture."

Additionally, funding will go to increase walkability options, install crosswalks for safety, and create opportunities for participation in the mural project and the special guided walks, and improvements to sidewalks have already been made along Main Street and Depot Avenue.

Niagara Falls National Heritage Area

The Heritage Arts Mural Project is an extension of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area (NFNHA). The National Heritage Area, federally designated by United States Congress in 2008, works to preserve, protect and promote the historic, natural and cultural resources of the area stretching from Niagara Falls to Old Fort Niagara in Youngstown, New York. The NFNHA works to enhance public appreciation for the communities, significant historic and natural resources, and landscapes of the Niagara region. Learn more about the NFNHA at DiscoverNiagara.org and follow the progress of the project on Instagram at [@nfmurals](https://www.instagram.com/nfmurals) and Niagara Falls Murals on Facebook.

New York State Health Foundation

The New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth) is a private, statewide foundation dedicated to improving the health of all New Yorkers, especially the most vulnerable. Today, NYSHealth concentrates its work in two strategic priority areas: building healthy communities and empowering health care consumers. The Foundation is committed to making grants, informing health policy and practice, spreading effective programs to improve the health care system and the health of New Yorkers, serving as a neutral convener of health leaders across the State, and providing technical assistance to its grantees and partners. Find NYSHealth online at www.nyshealth.org and on Twitter at [@nys_health](https://twitter.com/nys_health).

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