

NEWS NEWS



Department of Human Services

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**Anne Marie Ambrose,
Commissioner**

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DHS unveils mural created by Youth Study Center residents

The Department of Human Services (DHS), Youth Study Center (YSC) will host a dedication ceremony to unveil a mural called *Inspirations*, which was created by residents of the Center. The event will be held at the YSC, 3232 Henry Avenue, Philadelphia on Wednesday, October 20th from 9-10am.

Work on the mural, which was developed in collaboration with the Mural Arts Program (MAP) and artist Cesar Viveros, began in the fall of 2009. Residents of the Center were involved in both conceiving the theme and creating much of the artwork. “The mural project was incorporated into the art classes we hold at the YSC, so just about every resident had some role in developing the mural,” says Marq Temple, YSC Executive Director.

The mural design was inspired by the study of ancient mythology, from which the students generated ideas and drawings. According to Robyn Buseman, Director of Restorative Justice for the MAP, *Inspirations* is divided into three segments. “At the far left the destruction and rebirth of the mythical phoenix is represented,” she says. From there, a swirl of images reinforces the idea that no matter how many mistakes we make, we can learn from those experiences and start over. The middle segment depicts a mythological monster that represents weaknesses of the human spirit that need to be conquered such as fear and insecurity. The last image represents

building a community together.”

The new mural sits on a long wall in a main hallway of the Center. “One side of the hallway features the actual mural and the other side is covered with quotations submitted by YSC staff, so our residents can be inspired as they come and go,” explains Temple. He notes that because the YSC is currently housed in a temporary location, the mural was created in sections attached to drywall, which can be moved to the Center’s new location when it is built.

DHS Commissioner Anne Marie Ambrose says the Mural Arts Program at YSC helps at-risk youth discover their talent and creativity. “We believe that every young person, regardless of his or her circumstances has something to offer,” she says. “Part of our job at DHS is to provide the opportunities to help the youth in our care develop their potential so they can flourish as individuals.”

MAP Executive Director, Jane Golden, emphasizes powerful role art can play in the lives of young people. “At the Mural Arts Program we believe that art can ignite change,” “The beautiful mural we are dedicating at the Youth Study Center is a testament to the talent and dedication of the many young people at YSC who participated in this public art project. Over and over we see that art can be a point of inspiration and transformation as well as a life-line that pulls young people out of a cycle of crime and violence. We are incredibly grateful to DHS for having the vision to know the powerful catalytic role art can play in the lives of young people all over this city.”

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The Philadelphia Department of Human Services is the City agency charged with protecting children from abuse, neglect, and delinquency; ensuring their safety and permanency in nurturing home environments; and strengthening and preserving families by enhancing community-based prevention services. In partnership with community organizations, DHS provides services to strengthen the overall well being of Philadelphia children, youth, and families using a customer focused approach that is responsive to evolving community needs.