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Press Release

Wish You Were Here! Closing Reception for Photography Exhibit

A Youth Photography Project Documenting the Transformation of
the Historic Atlanta neighborhood of Pittsburgh

Event Details

Who: Students from Atlanta's Gideons Elementary and Parks Middle Schools and
professional photographers from Sistagraphy

What: Closing Reception of the Wish You Were Here! Photo Project

Where: Atlanta Fulton County Public Library, Lower Level Gallery, One Margaret Mitchell Square
Atlanta, GA 30303. 404.730.1700

When: Thursday, March 31, 2011, 5:30-6:30pm

Wish You Were Here! is a photo project that is introducing the young people, ages 9-12, of Atlanta's historic Pittsburgh neighborhood to the medium of photography as a form of self discovery and personal growth. Since January, these youth have worked with professional photographers at Sistagraphy to explore the community around them and visually respond to the changes they saw. Their photographs, which will be on display at the Atlanta Fulton County Public Library until April 1, 2011, portray the positive aspects of their neighborhood and include a written description by the student to explain what the photograph means to them. The students' photographs range from depictions of residents engaged in building a community garden to the front of a house that one student hopes his family will one day be able to purchase and flowering landscapes.

For Immediate Release

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“The images captured by these students include the people, homes, landscapes and activities that make Pittsburgh special,” explains Tyrone Roderick Williams, the Senior Development Director at Sustainable Neighborhood Development Strategies, Inc. “They show the breadth of what makes Pittsburgh a positive place. It is these positive aspects that we are seeking to build on through our redevelopment efforts.”

After decades of disinvestment and decline, the Pittsburgh neighborhood – one of Atlanta’s oldest African-American neighborhoods – became ground zero for the local foreclosure crisis resulting in vacancy rates that exceeded 40 percent. Since 2008, the Partnership for the Preservation of Pittsburgh (a collaborative between the Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association, Sustainable Neighborhood Development Strategies, Inc., and the Annie E. Casey Foundation-Atlanta Civic Site) has been using public and private funds to acquire vacant and abandoned homes in Pittsburgh, rehab them to high energy efficiency standards, and convert them into rental and for sale housing in an effort to return the neighborhood to the thriving and vibrant community it once was. The Pittsburgh Public Art Collaborative, which is a part of these efforts, invited Sistagraphy to collaborate on a photography project in an effort to include children and youth in the redevelopment efforts in Pittsburgh.

As Pittsburgh’s young people witnessed the changes happening around them, the Pittsburgh Public Art Collaborative and Sistagraphy worked together to enable the students to create visual messages of the changes, to give the students an outlet for expressing their feelings about those changes, and to demonstrate how the camera can be used as a form of communication. Through the lens of disposable 35mm cameras, these youth have responded to the transformation of the Pittsburgh neighborhood and have created photographs that can inform the broader public of the exciting transformation happening just south of downtown Atlanta.

The project was designed to:

- Give students a better understanding of themselves and the world around them
- Help students see the possibilities of modern photography
- Broaden the visual, intellectual and aesthetic faculties of students
- Emphasize the value of teambuilding and collective works
- Help in the development of youth wellness, specifically patience
- Lead students in the production of a body of work for public display

The Wish You Were Here! Photo Project is scheduled to include three phases. The current exhibition at the Atlanta Fulton County Public Library (March 14-April 1, 2011) represents the conclusion of the first phase. This phase was designed to coincide with the start of the \$7 million revitalization efforts currently underway in the Pittsburgh neighborhood. The second phase is tentatively scheduled to take place between April and June 2011 with an exhibition in July. This exhibition is

planned to extend through the National Black Arts Festival in a location that is yet to be determined. The third phase is tentatively scheduled to take place between August and September 2011 with an exhibition during October 2011, extending through Atlanta Celebrates Photography.

The Wish You Were Here! Photo Project is funded by the Pittsburgh Public Art Collaborative in collaboration with Sistagraphy, The Salvation Army Kroc Center, Communities In Schools of Atlanta, Walter Leonard Parks Middle School, and Charles L. Gideons Elementary School.

For more information on Sistagraphy, visit: www.Sistagraphy.org or contact Sheila Turner at: 404.849.5250

For more information on the Pittsburgh Public Art Collaborative or the redevelopment efforts of The Partnership for the Preservation of Pittsburgh, contact: Tyrone Roderick Williams at: 404.222.3671 or twilliams@sndsi.org.