

Transportation ALTERNATIVES

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For Immediate Release:
August 28, 2007

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A Mural Grows in Brooklyn **After three young lives are taken,** **a community says “never again”**

In February 2007, 4 year-old James Rice was crossing the street with his aunt when he was struck and killed by a Hummer. His death stunned a community still reeling from a similar tragedy two years prior, just blocks away, when fifth graders Juan Estrada and Victor Flores were also killed by a driver. Now, all three children stand in a mural at 3rd Avenue and Butler Street in Brooklyn, urging drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians to respect each other. The message is simple: not one more death.

The mural will be officially unveiled and dedicated at 6pm today; it is the work of Groundswell Community Mural Project, a Brooklyn-based arts organization. For seven weeks, local youth from the 3rd Avenue corridor participating in Groundswell’s Summer Leadership Institute have researched street safety and traffic calming strategies and in turn designed and painted a large-scale mural. The mural is the centerpiece of an ongoing campaign for safer streets along the 3rd and 4th Avenue.

“When I first started this mural I thought this was about improving your art skills but then I heard about these accidents and I had to help,” says Laquon Wheeler, 17, of Gowanus Houses. “I really want Brooklyn to be a safe borough. I thank Groundswell for giving me this job.”

“It has been incredible to see kids from this community come together and make something powerful and beautiful out of these tragedies,” says Brooke DuBose, Pedestrian Campaign Coordinator of Transportation Alternatives. “Everyone who uses these streets – bicyclists, pedestrians and drivers – will come away from this mural with a message of shared respect.”

“These big, scary avenues can and should be transformed into ‘complete streets’ that are safe for all users,” says Paul Steely White, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives. “The time has come for City Hall and the DOT to make the changes that will prevent future tragedies.”

This mural is part of a larger campaign to improve pedestrian safety along 3rd and 4th Avenues. Transportation Alternatives is advocating for a full build-out of the City’s 2004 Downtown Brooklyn Traffic Calming Plan, immediate improvements to the city’s most hazardous streets and intersections and for a comprehensive citywide study of pedestrian injuries and fatalities.

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