

# PORCH LIGHT



Photos by Steve Weinik

## INTRODUCING THE PORCH LIGHT PROGRAM

Does art have the power to heal? The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program's Porch Light Program thinks it does. The Porch Light Program, a collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services, works closely with communities to uplift public art as an expression of community resilience and a vehicle of personal and community healing. We create murals that focus specifically on mental health and substance use, as well as other issues that affect our mental health including faith and spirituality, homelessness, trauma, immigration, war, and community safety and tensions.

## A NEW APPROACH: PUBLIC ART IN PUBLIC HEALTH

The Porch Light Program builds a team of artists, service providers, program participants, community members, and city-wide stakeholders to collaborate on a transformative public art project. The program strives to catalyze positive changes in the community, improve the physical environment, create opportunities for social connectedness, develop skills to enhance resilience and recovery, promote community and social inclusion, shed light on challenges faced by those with behavioral health issues, reduce stigma, and encourage empathy.

## WHOM DO WE ENGAGE?

Each Porch Light site is a bit different but, in general, we strive to consistently engage approximately 30 individuals receiving services at behavioral health and social service agencies in weekly art workshops as well as the broader community. We also make it a priority to engage communities as a whole through paint days, health forums, and community meetings. From 2012-2014, we enrolled 374 program participants and worked with over 3000 community members

## HOW DOES THE PORCH LIGHT PROGRAM ASSESS ITS IMPACT?

The Yale School of Medicine conducted community-based participatory research in three Porch Light communities to assess the program's impact on individual and community-level health outcomes. In neighborhoods where murals were installed, the study showed a relative increase in social cohesion and trust among neighbors, as well as small decreases in feelings of stigma toward individuals with mental health or substance abuse challenges. Relative increases in the quality of the walking environment and perceptions of neighborhood safety were also reported. A full report from the study is available at <http://tinyurl.com/jdrzxc>.

## THE FUTURE OF PORCH LIGHT

National foundations, health leaders from across the country, and universities are looking at the Porch Light Program closely as an example of progressive public health promotion. With generous support from our sponsors, we are honing the Porch Light model with the goal of replicating it beyond Philadelphia city limits. We hope our work will continue to be replicated across Philadelphia and become a national model for an innovative approach to promoting healthy communities.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"In Mural Arts we have everyone coming together to help each other. Other people help me and I try to help others here, and to send a message that we can get everything together and make this a better city. At least we can try." – **Porch Light Participant**

"The Mural Arts Program has given our clients a sense of belonging, that they are a part of the community and are connected to it." – **Porch Light Provider Agency Partner**

## PORCH LIGHT TEAM

### Porch Light Program Director:

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## PORCH LIGHT PARTNERS

North Philadelphia Health Systems, Kirkbride Center, Sobriety Through Outpatient Inc., A.P.M., Stephen and Sandra Sheller 11<sup>th</sup> Street Family Health Services of Drexel University, Project H.O.M.E., Congreso de Latinos Unidos, Broad Street Ministry, Diversified Community Services Dixon House, PRO-ACT Recovery Community Center, Lutheran Children and Family Services, Warrior Writers.

## PORCH LIGHT SPONSORS

City of Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services, Patricia Kind Family Foundation, Hummingbird Foundation, van Ameringen Foundation, 25<sup>th</sup> Century Foundation, Berkowitz Family Foundation, Amy Olswang Mural Arts Advisory Council, Maze Group Development, Lutheran Children and Family Services, National Endowment for the Arts, and Women's Way.