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Six Fitchburg Residents Selected for Arts-Focused National Fellowship

2020 Community Revitalization Fellowship Recognizes Vacancy-Fighting Work in Massachusetts Former Industrial Town

WASHINGTON, D.C. – February 11, 2020 – Today, the Center for Community Progress announced six Fitchburg, MA residents have been selected to join the 2020 Community Revitalization Fellowship; a nationwide training program that aims to grow resident-driven efforts to combat vacant, abandoned, and distressed properties.

For 2020, Fellows will travel to creative placemaking sites across the country to experience the work of their peers and receive expert-led training and leadership development on how to use the arts to transform vacant homes and lots.

“Neighborhood vacancy and abandonment solutions have to be as creative as the problems they solve,” said Dr. Akilah Watkins-Butler, CEO and President of the nationally focused Center for Community Progress. “These resident-leaders are already innovating in their backyard. We are excited to invest resources and education to help them expand their work.”



Pictured: Fitchburgh, MA residents participate in outdoor yoga on site to be highlighted by national Fellowship for revitalization through the arts.

North of Main Work Attracts National Attention

Fellows from Fitchburg were recognized for their ongoing work to revitalize the North of Main neighborhood through creative placemaking; which leverages the arts to transform vacant properties. Residents there have leveraged vacant buildings and lots to create “Activate Mill Street,” “Salsa on the Riverfront,” “Trick or Treat on Main Street,” “Porchfest,” and the “We Love our City” campaign.

Local Non-Profit, NewVue Communities, to Serve as Institutional Partner for CRF

NewVue Communities, whose focus is to create strong, healthy neighborhoods where residents live, work, and invest, will serve as the 2020 Institutional Partner for Fitchburg, MA and provide guidance and mentorship to the Fitchburg Fellows during the nine-month program.

“Fitchburg’s work is more than a local win. We believe their efforts can help cities and neighborhoods across the nation,” said Courtney Knox, Vice President and Director of National Leadership and Education at Community Progress.

Fitchburg, MA Participants in the Community Revitalization Fellowship

Fitchburg Fellows will join 12 community leaders from Reading, PA, and Montgomery, AL to learn best practices from cohort members whose neighborhood projects range from alleyway concerts to main street activations.

Fellows from Fitchburg include:

- Leandro Lopez
- Casey Taylor
- Thomas Moser
- Evelina Paulino
- Emmanuella J. Demosthenes
- Sam Godin

“It is certainly an honor to serve as the institutional partner and support the resident-leaders chosen to participate in this great opportunity,” said Marc Dohan, Executive Director of NewVue Communities.

“Fitchburg has good reason to be proud of their work revitalizing the North of Main neighborhood through equitable creative placemaking approaches. We are so excited that they can now share their creativity and passion on a national level. We appreciate that the Center for Community Progress sees the incredible potential these community leaders possess and look forward to leveraging the expertise and knowledge that they and the other communities will provide through the Community Revitalization Fellowship.”

The Community Revitalization Fellowship is made possible by grant funding from the Oak Foundation and The Kresge Foundation. For more information on the program, Fellows, or neighborhood revitalization, contact jhackley@communityprogress.net or call (877) 542-4842 ext. 153.

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About the Center for Community Progress

Founded in 2010, the Center for Community Progress is the national leader for building strong, equitable communities where vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties are transformed into assets for neighbors and neighborhoods. Today, Community Progress has affected change in more than 48 states and seven countries through leadership education and collaborative systems, policy, and practice reforms. Simply, we work to transform “Vacant Spaces into Vibrant Places.” For more information, visit communityprogress.net