



**Center for Latino Arts and Culture**

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## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **NEW BRUNSWICK ARTS SUMMER CAMP CELEBRATES 10 YEARS**

New Brunswick, N.J. – With the theme of “Building Our Dreams/Construyendo Nuestros Sueños,” the New Brunswick-based Artists Mentoring Against Racism, Drugs, & Violence (AMARD&V): Healing through the Arts Summer Camp is celebrating its 10 year anniversary this July. The program is a collaborative project between the Rutgers University Center for Latino Arts and Culture and various community organizations.

According to camp artistic director Claudio Mir of the Institute for the Arts & Humanities Education, “the camp will help these kids envision their dreams and take stock of their creative potential.” The New Brunswick-based summer arts camp engages some 50 children Latino and African American youth ages 10-16. Over a period of five weeks, the program, held at the Mason Gross School of the Arts, features teaching artists in theater, visual arts, and photography, along with violence prevention workshops and field trips to museums and various recreational sites.

The AMARD&V Arts Summer Camp began in 1996 as a community-based program designed to reduce gang recruitment among youth. Back then, gang activity in New Brunswick had reached alarming proportions and several organizations came together to create a program that engaged youth in positive activities during the summer

months. A strong partnership ensued among the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Community Health Promotion Program, the Puerto Rican Action Board, the Rutgers University Center for Latino Arts & Culture, the Suydam Street Reformed Church, and the Institute for the Arts & Humanities Education.

According to Rocio Castro, associate director of the Center for Latino Arts and Culture, “over the years each organization has committed funding, staff, and other resources in order to make this camp a reality. It makes a huge difference in the lives of these kids at a critical time in their lives.” The camp engages many Rutgers University students as mentors and counselors for the camp. “It is a great opportunity for students to give back to their community and learn through the process,” she added.

For Mariam Merced of the RWJ University Hospital Community Health Promotion Program, the program has succeeded in providing underserved youth in our area with positive alternatives to gang involvement. “The camp fosters an appreciation for the arts, develops health skills, sharpens conflict resolution abilities, and fosters a sense of belonging to a larger society,” she noted.

A final presentation for the camp will be held on Friday, August 11, beginning with the unveiling of a public mural at 5:30pm at the Puerto Rican Action Board, 90 Jersey Avenue in New Brunswick, followed by a night of artistic performances and exhibits starting at 6:30pm at Mason Gross School of the Arts, 33 Livingston Avenue in New Brunswick. Funding for this year’s AMARD&V Summer Camp was provided by Johnson & Johnson, Merck, the Rutgers University Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic and Public Partnerships in the Arts & Humanities, Office of the Faith Based Initiatives, the Middlesex County Cultural & Heritage Commission, PNC Bank and local benefactors.