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## **Newark Arts Council Links Homelessness and Social Services with Photography**

**Council's Award Supports HYCIDE Bridges program to train homeless in photography**

*Akintola Hanif of photojournal HYCIDE exhibits homeless' artwork at Gallery Aferro*

Newark, NJ – The Newark Arts Council has funded the works of a new photography exhibit at Gallery Aferro, at 73 Market Street in Newark. The exhibit, “We Are Forever: Images Through the Eyes of Homeless Photographers,” runs May 26-June 11, 2016, with a gallery opening on May 26th from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

The Council's ArtStart award - an annual juried grants competition - was presented to the nonprofit [Bridges](#) in June 2015. They used the grant to engage homeless individuals with professional photographer Akintola Hanif, founder/editor-in-chief of HYCIDE magazine. A photojournalist, muralist and filmmaker, Hanif's photography and film projects have been featured in such venues as The Metropolitan Museum, the Newark Museum and the Guggenheim Museum.

The ArtStart grant funded the purchase of digital cameras for use by the homeless men and women recruited for the project. The intent was for them to express their world through photography giving voice to the reality of their lives in Newark. For six months, Hanif worked with the photographers to provide instruction and leadership. Lois Bhatt, Executive Director of Bridges noted that, “The interaction between Akintola and the photographers was genuine, respectful and inspiring.”

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The six-month project, “We Are Forever” (a title chosen by the photographers) culminates in this exhibit of approximately 20 curated photographs as seen through the eyes of the homeless. All photographs will be on sale through the Bridges website, with the proceeds going to the photographers.

Of the project Hanif said, “For me this wore more than an exchange of photography skills, this was an exchange of love. HYCIDE Bridges photography program has been my most humbling and fulfilling experience in my entire career as a photographer. I don’t see my students as homeless people. I see them for their hearts and intentions and that is the place we connected from.”

Each year, the [Newark Arts Council](#) releases a request for proposals from artists and arts organization for a limited number of grants. The applications are reviewed by a jury of artists and other NAC shareholders and selections announced at the Council’s annual meeting in June. “This exhibit speaks to the power of the arts to give dignity and offer opportunity to some of our city’s residents,” said Jeremy Johnson, Executive Director of Newark Arts Council. “We’re thrilled that we helped seed a project that is using the power of the arts to transform lives.” The Thursday, May 26<sup>th</sup> opening reception of “We Are Forever” at Gallery Aferro is free and open to the public.

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### **About Bridges**

Bridges connects the housed and homeless to establish relationships that lead to greater acceptance and understanding, social and economic growth, and wellbeing. In 1988, Bridges launched its first mobile outreach, and began to bring food, clothing and necessities to the homeless living on the streets of New York City. In March 2014, Bridges opened “Project Connect” at [St. John’s Soup Kitchen](#) in Newark to provide case management services to assess the complete needs of the homeless client and to provide administrative and financial support to acquire a NJ State ID (the first step in rebuilding a life), links to physical and mental healthcare, jobs and housing. For more information, contact Lois Bhatt, Executive Director, Bridges, at 908-967-1963 (cell) or [loisbhatt.bridges@gmail.com](mailto:loisbhatt.bridges@gmail.com) or [www.bridgesoutreach.org](http://www.bridgesoutreach.org).

### **About the Newark Arts Council**

The Newark Arts Council is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization created to advance and expand the artistic and cultural resources of the City of Newark, New Jersey. The Council’s mission is to bring the transformative power of the arts into the lives of those who live in, work in, and visit Newark. The Council is the umbrella for the Newark Arts Education Roundtable (NAER) and is a partner with the Mayor’s Office of Cultural Development, Arts, and Tourism. The Council awards neighborhood grants through its ArtStart program and sponsors the citywide Open Doors Festival every October. For more information, call 973-643-1625 or visit [www.newarkarts.org](http://www.newarkarts.org).

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