

News from: **Oakland Parks & Recreation**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OPR Celebrates Mural that Connects Community

Artist Tarika Lewis engages local youth to create mural at Verdese Carter Park

Oakland, CA – The public is invited to celebrate community connections through art with the unveiling of a mural painted by local artist Tarika Lewis. The unveiling takes place on **Thursday, November 12 at 2 p.m.** at Verdese Carter Park, located at 9600 Sunnyside Street between 98th Avenue and Bancroft Avenue. The mural, entitled *Making the Connection: Bringing Students, Families, and Community Together to Secure the Future of Our Youth Through Arts, Innovation, Academics, Imagination, Athletics and the Support of Local Businesses*, will highlight the significant role Verdese Carter Park plays in cultivating personal growth and skill development in a safe and healthy environment for youth, families and adults, while simultaneously fostering community ownership.

The mural will hang on the interior wall of the recreation center serving as a warm welcome to afterschool program participants that utilize the facility. For this project, artist Tarika Lewis engaged local youth at Verdese Carter Park in the creative process of designing the mural concept. Lewis' vision for the mural will pay respect to Carter himself. The park was named after the late Oakland Unified School District Superintendent Verdese Carter. During the '70s Carter took a grassroots approach to improving the local education system by encouraging student and family involvement in City Council meetings and also in developing a student rights handbook that was later submitted to the State Board of Education. In addition to honoring Carter, the mural captures the importance of building a stronger community through collaborations.

Renaissance woman Tarika Lewis devoted countless hours volunteering to create this enduring piece of art that serves to honor Oakland's history, while enlivening the park's environment. Lewis' extensive background in cultural arts and community involvement has been recognized with honors such as *101 Women Making a Difference* by the California State Assembly, *Alameda County Women's Hall of Fame Inductee* by the Alameda County Art & Cultural Division and Congressional Recognition for Performing Arts by Congresswoman Barbara Lee. Recognized as the first female recruit of the Black Panther Party, Lewis helped establish free community activities and resources at deFremery Park.

Oakland Parks & Recreation, One Toyota of Oakland, Oakland Police Athletic League, Oakland Police Department, District 7 Councilmember Larry Reid, the City of Oakland, Jair Foundation, California Waste Solution, Reuse People of America, Inc. and Home Depot are excited to have collaborated with Lewis on the mural project. To continue in the spirit of solidarity, the Oakland Raiders will host a Gatorade Junior Training Camp for local youth following the ribbon cutting



City of
OAKLAND
California

Media Contact:

Jada Chiu
Oakland Parks & Recreation
510-238-3053
Jchiu2@oaklandnet.com



*Artist Tarika Lewis with
Verdese Carter Park
afterschool participant*

ceremony.

The mural caps the many improvements that have been made to the park this year. Thanks to the Golden State Warriors, PG&E, Good Tidings, Oakland Parks & Recreation and the Oakland Police Athletic League, the Verdese Carter basketball courts were resurfaced this past July.

For more information on improvements at Verdese Carter Park, call (510) 238-7275.

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