



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Special Exhibit of Trinidad-style Carnival Costumes Made by Hartford Teens

HARTFORD, Conn. --- The Institute for Community Research will host the opening of *Mas: Costumes from Hartford's West Indian Community*, on August 22, 2012 from 5 to 7 PM at the ICR Gallery, 2 Hartford Square West, 146 Wyllys St., in Hartford. The exhibit will feature colorful and imaginative costumes (*Mas*) such as those worn in Trinidad-style Carnivals around the world, including Hartford.

The event will also mark the graduation of 20 young women plus over 50 volunteer students who have been learning how to make and wear colorful and imaginative costumes (*Mas*) such as those worn in Trinidad-style carnivals around the world. The six-week project is a collaboration of the Institute's Connecticut Cultural Heritage Arts Program (CHAP) and the Connecticut International Cultural Carnival Association (CICCA), whose director Linford "Junior" Miller has organized costume production and display for several national and international carnivals.

The 2012 Hartford *Mas* Camp was under the direction of Linford Miller and master costume maker Keimaai "Q" Delpeche, along with experienced assistant Larry Cooper and several volunteer parents. Artistic director Harold Springer, dance teacher Coryse Villarouel, and dance assistant Uniqua Jones trained the students in "displaying" their costumes in a parade. According to Project Co-Director Junior Miller, "This summer training program highlights our West Indian traditions, and serves Hartford's teens by teaching them important cultural heritage. Carnival is very important to our Caribbean community, and the teens now have design and creation skills that they can use in other areas. The community will now have exciting costumes on display at local festivals and parades, and in ICR's gallery."

Each teen designed and built a complete costume, including headpiece, arm and foot bands, girdles, collars, backpacks, and all frames and attachments needed for wearing the elaborate structures. They formed a Carnival "Band" called the *Exotic One's Part II*, with seven sections of masqueraders in different color schemes. The Band performed with their costumes in the Taste of the Caribbean Festival at the Riverfront on August 4, and in the West Indian 50th Anniversary Independence Parade and festival on August 11.

Mas represents an important and beloved art form in the West Indian communities that make up a vibrant component of Hartford's population. The costumes and the knowledge behind them serve as central expressions of Caribbean cultural identity and heritage. The beauty of nearly 75 new costumes – including a gorgeous Queen and two Junior Queens – as displayed by Hartford's own masqueraders in this year's Parade, along with the excitement of their dance routines, brings a tremendous energy and pride to the City's West Indian communities.



The exhibit opening will showcase many of these costumes displayed in the gallery and some of the teens will “masquerade” their costumes in person, accompanied by the Hartford Steel Symphony led by master steel pan maker and player Kelvin Griffith. All the participants in the summer costume-making program will receive certificates for successfully completing their training. The costumes will be on exhibit until October 1, 2012.

The project is supported by a City of Hartford Jobs Grant for 2012, as managed by the Greater Hartford Arts Council. CHAP’s participation is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Connecticut Office of the Arts (DECD), and the Institute for Community Research.

For more information about the exhibit please contact Lynne Williamson at 860-278-2044 x 251 or Lynne.Williamson@icrweb.org; also visit our websites at www.incommunityresearch.org and www.ctheritagearts.org

For press information call 860-278-2044 x 284

The Institute for Community Research is an independent, nonprofit organization that conducts applied research and community enhancement programs to promote equal access to health, education, and cultural resources. Its Connecticut Cultural Heritage Arts Program encourages and promotes traditional artists and their communities through an active process of documentation, technical assistance, and public presentations to bring their work and the history of their communities to new audiences. Support comes from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, and the Greater Hartford Arts Council as well as foundations. For more information about ICR please visit our websites at www.incommunityresearch.org and www.ctheritagearts.org

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Photo caption: Queen costume designed and built by Q Delpeche and the teens of the Mas Camp 2012 Summer Youth Employment Program organized by CICA and ICR and funded by the City of Hartford Jobs grant. Worn by Luzmarie Maldonado. Photo: Lynne Williamson/ICR

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<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.355310724548233.80431.128471997232108&type=1>