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RSD BLOOMS WITH ‘PORTRAITS OF HOPE’

NEW ORLEANS, La.- More than 3,000 pieces of vibrant floral artwork – hand-painted and signed by children and volunteers as part of the historic “Garden in Transit” taxi exhibition in New York City – have been sent to the Recovery School District by Portraits of Hope, a national non-profit art program. The colorful pieces will grace schools around the district as well as the RSD’s Central Office.

“We’re thrilled to receive this beautiful artwork,” said RSD Superintendent Paul Vallas, who has one of the pieces hanging in his office. “We envision their bringing some added color and cheer to many of our classrooms and buildings, especially our modular facilities.”

The pieces are among more than 10,000 sent to New Orleans as part of a project called “New Orleans in Full Bloom,” a gesture of goodwill and compassion for the Gulf Coast from the children of New York. Founded in 1995, Portraits of Hope develops educational art and creative therapy projects that culminate in the visual transformation of public settings. Serving originally as an art therapy program for seriously ill and physically disabled children, the project has since expanded to include children and adults in schools, hospitals, and community groups. Portraits of Hope projects include civics education sessions and tangibly highlight the power of positive collaboration. For four months in 2007, about 5,000 taxis took to the streets covered in the floral artwork, turning the Big Apple into a “Garden in Transit.”

Volunteers have used the panels to transform the cafeteria building at Reed Elementary, which is housed in a modular campus in New Orleans East. The pieces also bedeck lobbies, hallways

and offices at the RSD Central Office. Troy Peloquin, the RSD's Volunteer and Donations

Coordinator, said he will be working with other groups, including the new crew of Americorps volunteers, to bring the panels to other schools.

In addition to the RSD, many others, including Habitat for Humanity, The Arts Council of New Orleans, and The New Orleans Musicians Clinic, are participating in the effort to pass out the panels for those along the recovering Gulf Coast.