

FAIRMOUNT PARK ART ASSOCIATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**April 30, 2010****Special Photo Opportunity for International Workers' Day (May 1)****GROUNDBREAKING FOR LABOR MONUMENT IN SOUTHWEST PHILADELPHIA***Public art project is the only monument of its kind in the United States*

PHILADELPHIA, PA. Union leaders and neighborhood representatives will join the Fairmount Park Art Association to break ground on *The Labor Monument: Philadelphia's Tribute to the American Worker* this Saturday May 1 at 12:00 p.m. as part of the annual May Day (International Workers' Day) commemoration in Southwest Philadelphia's Elmwood Park. *The Labor Monument*, a permanent public artwork by Irish artist John Kindness, will celebrate the contributions of workers nationwide and emphasize the pivotal and unique role that Philadelphia has played in the American labor movement. The project will be completed and dedicated this summer.

The main feature of the artwork will be seven circular bronze tables inspired by the metal buttons on the denim clothing once worn by workers. These *Work Button Tables* will commemorate important events in American labor history, including the landmark 1968 African-American Sanitation Workers Strike in Memphis, Tennessee; the United Farm Workers Union organized by Cesar Chavez; and the 1912 "Bread and Roses" strike by textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts. "*The Labor Monument* will be an outdoor history lesson for many young people who take for granted the rights and protections earned by the labor movement," says **Patrick Eiding**, Council President of the Philadelphia AFL-CIO.

The Labor Monument has been commissioned by the Fairmount Park Art Association in partnership with the Friends of Elmwood Park, and has been fully endorsed by the labor community. "The project has broad support from local and national labor leadership, and over \$190,000 has been donated by more than 60 union affiliates," says **Penny Balkin Bach**, Executive Director of the Fairmount Park Art Association.

Additional funding has been provided by the Art Association, The William Penn Foundation, other local foundations, individuals, and from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). Union contractor J.J. White Inc. will prepare the site and install the artwork.

Participating in the ceremonial groundbreaking will be **Penny Balkin Bach**, Executive Director, Fairmount Park Art Association; **Cathy Brady**, Neighborhood Liaison, Friends of Elmwood Park; **Jim White**, President, JJ White, Inc.; **Jim Moran**, May Day Committee Chairman, Executive Board Member, Newspaper Guild of Greater Philadelphia; **Kathy Black**, President, Coalition of Labor Union Women, Health and Safety Director for AFSCME District Council 47; **Thomas Paine Cronin**, Former President of AFSCME District Council 47, Director, Comey Institute for Labor Studies at St. Joseph's University; **Barbara Rahke**, Director, Philaposh; and **Len Pannirello**, President, Friends of Elmwood Park.

About Elmwood Park: Located at 71st Street and Buist Avenue, Elmwood Park was originally created to provide respite for workers from the Hog Island shipyard and local factories such as Fels Naphtha, General Electric, and Westinghouse. Unfortunately, as business and industry departed from the area, so did many of the residents, and the park declined. After witnessing years of neglect, a group of neighbors with homes bordering the park formed the Friends of Elmwood Park in 1995 to revitalize the area. Today, in a true urban success story, Elmwood Park has been stabilized, and is again being used by neighbors. In conjunction with *Labor in the Park*, the City of Philadelphia Department of Recreation undertook \$500,000 in improvements to the park, including new paths, lighting, and seating. “*The Labor Monument* will have an immediate positive presence and will become a symbol of the ongoing revitalization of the park and the Elmwood community,” says **Cathy Brady**, who has lived across from Elmwood Park for over 20 years.

About the Fairmount Park Art Association: The Fairmount Park Art Association is the nation's first private, nonprofit public art organization. Founded in 1872, the Art Association has worked with civic organizations for more than a century to place an imposing array of outstanding works of public art throughout Philadelphia. *The Labor Monument* was initiated through the Fairmount Park Art Association's program *New•Land•Marks: public art, community, and the meaning of place*, which encourages projects that celebrate community identity, commemorate untold histories, inspire civic pride, respond to the local environment, and invigorate public spaces.

Labor Monument Groundbreaking
Saturday, May 1, 2010
12:00 p.m.

Elmwood Park
71st and Buist Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19142
[Google Map](#)