

**For Immediate Release**

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***Leading Bay Area Arts Organizations Mark a Return to the Mission District and Plant Roots in a Historic Forever Home Through a Groundbreaking City Development***

*Youth Speaks returns to the Mission District with a shared space and sibling organization to create an intergenerational incubator for creative expression and storytelling.*

**[San Francisco, CA]** — On July 16, 2022, leading literary arts organization [Youth Speaks](#) and nationally recognized youth photography organization [First Exposures](#) will officially open the doors of their new shared office space for a community-wide celebration sponsored by the San Francisco Parks, and Rec Department featuring live performances, music, on-site vaccinations and a program highlighting prestigious guest speakers.

*“This moment is more than a celebration for us. We are returning to our roots in the Mission — the neighborhood where it all started. Young people need spaces where they can cultivate communities of care now more than ever and this new space will activate a new era of cultural power for Youth Speaks where we can gather and connect with a sense of belonging.”* **said, Michelle Mush Lee**, Youth Speaks Executive Director.

The grand opening of 265 Shotwell marks a historic moment for the Mission District communities and the organizers who spearheaded Casa Adelante with co-developers Chinatown Community Development Center and Mission Economic Development Agency to develop a multi-unit “Green” housing and commercial property — one of the only affordable housing developments built in the Mission District in over a decade.

*“When we first learned about the possibility of being a part of the 2060 Folsom project we jumped at the opportunity. The idea of building an incredible youth arts hub with Youth Speaks in the heart of the Mission, a neighborhood that so many of our constituents come from, felt so perfect for us. Being in the space right now, I can feel the energy of the endless potential of creating with Youth Speaks, connecting with our neighbors in the building, and continuing to empower youth using supportive mentorship and photography— we can’t wait!”* **said, Erik Auerbach**, First Exposures Executive Director.

265 Shotwell was made possible through the dedicated community support of individuals and organizations, such as Community Vision and public funding support from the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development, Office of Economic & Workforce Development, and the San Francisco Arts Commission. Funding for this collaborative communal model to re-activate cultural and gathering spaces in a city where these spaces have rapidly disappeared over the last decade is not only crucial but timely.

**WHO:** Youth Speaks and First Exposures staff, youth performers, San Francisco community leaders, building residents, District 9 community members

**WHEN:** Saturday, July 16, 2022, from 12 pm-4 pm

**WHERE:** Inside 265 Shotwell, San Francisco CA, 94110, Casa Adelante Community Room, and In Chan Kaajal Park

**WHAT:** Community celebration, live poetry performances, DJ, [COVID-19 vaccination drive hosted by the California Department of Public Health's VA58 Program](#)

**VISUALS:** Captivating performance images, powerful quotes from youth, poignant statements from community leaders, celebrating, dancing, joy, youth

**COVID POLICY:** Up-to-date vaccination checks, masks required at all times indoors

**RSVP:** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/265-shotwell-grand-opening-tickets-375020023987>

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***Youth Speaks** creates spaces that challenge young people to develop and amplify their voices as creators of social change. By providing free arts education to youth with limited access, Youth Speaks programs empower young people with opportunities to discover and develop their own voices. As the leading literary arts and spoken word organization, Youth Speaks has served hundreds of thousands of youth in the Bay Area and across the nation over the last 25 years.*

***First Exposures** is a Bay Area photography mentorship program for youth ages 11-18 who have been impacted by socio-economic inequity. Serving hundreds of youth annually, First Exposures uses the power of art and creativity to cultivate courage, confidence, and wellbeing in young people. Over 60% of program participants show an increase in markers of resiliency for and since 1993 over 95% of our youth graduate from high school to pursue a college education.*