

Recreation Therapy Harnessing the Power of Art to Heal

Inspiring surroundings have a way of satisfying our longings for beauty and facilitating health and healing, especially in a healthcare setting. The physical structures and interior design of our attractive, new hospital certainly fit that bill.

While it may be an accepted fact that contemporary healthcare facility design is conducive to healing, there is also growing evidence that shows arts programs also facilitate healing. As with evidence-based medicine and evidence-based facility design, arts programs are demonstrating their effectiveness in enhancing patient outcomes.

In November 2009, **Helene Freni-Rogers, CTRS**, Recreation Therapy Manager, introduced one of the nationally acclaimed Art for Life Foundation programs called "Ceramics & Kids! primarily for the inpatients of Shriners Hospitals for Children® - Honolulu.

For more than a year now, Recreation Therapy has been using the Art for Life Foundation's Ceramics & Kids! – Honolulu program as a healing modality, giving patients the freedom of self-expression through art so that they can paint ceramic pieces the way they want, without having to worry about set rules or convention.

Ceramics & Kids! - Sacramento at the Shriners Hospitals for Children® - Northern California this year celebrates a milestone: five years of offering this valuable Art for



Life program to their patients. In November of 2010, Ceramics & Kids! - Boston was welcomed at Shriners Hospitals for Children® - Boston.

"Who says a frog has to be green? Why not pink?" asked Helene, showing the creative license she provides to the patients who participate in the monthly Art for Life sessions. "One thing I've noticed is that many of our patients are very artistic. This program has a way of drawing it out of them."

This is different from drawing or doing a painting. "A blank white piece of paper can be intimidating for some. With a ceramic critter in front of them, they know what to do with it. And since Art for Life

uses acrylic paints and not ceramic glazes that require firing, they can finish it right away and take it home," said Helene.

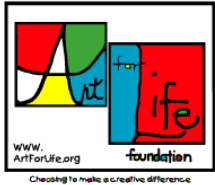
"Even those patients who typically would not do anything except play video games find painting ceramics interesting," added Helene, noting how it gives the patients a sense of accomplishment. "We work with the whole child and this naturally fits into what Recreation Therapy is all about."

This program would not be possible without the generosity of **Anthony Knutson**, who founded the Art for Life Foundation in 1998. This year, the Art for Life Foundation celebrates its 13th year

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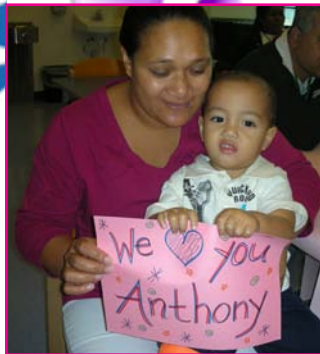
of offering healing arts programming in hospitals/healing locations

across the country. Their programs currently reach more than 18,000 sick children a year.

Anthony's motto is simple: "Give a child medicine to take and heal their body. Give a child art to create and heal their soul." That philosophy has been taken to heart at our hospital, and the results have been outstanding.

"It isn't enough to just allow art to be in a sick child's life. It is necessary to offer it in a way that inspires them to have the courage to step outside of pain and go inside of their imagination to a place where everything is exciting and everything is possible," Anthony said. "Our Ceramics & Kids! Programs like the one at Shriners Hospitals for Children® in Honolulu create a special space where children can be inspired, where they can feel safe enough to create and express themselves as artists."

"I am grateful to our Shriners locations for creating a safe artistic haven for kids that nurtures and promotes the Art for Life belief that the creative process is a healing tool," he added.



The Art for Life Foundation supplies all of the materials, including the ceramic pieces and paints, at no cost to the Honolulu hospital. The foundation has even tried to make sure the ceramic pieces resonate with Hawaii patients, providing such pieces as geckos, surfboards and slippers.

"It's super positive," added **Jenny Dooling**, Art for Life volunteer and long-time volunteer in Recreation

Therapy. "They get to be real creative. It's relaxing with all that they're going through in the hospital. It's a great concept and we're lucky to have their (Art for Life Foundation) support of Shriners Hospital."

For more information, visit the Art for Life Foundation website and read about the Honolulu hospital at www.artforlife.org/our_programs.html. 🌸