

The Creative Center: Arts for People with Cancer

Issue Area: Educational, Cultural, and Social Opportunities

Contact: Geraldine Herbert
Creative Center Director
The Creative Center
147 West 26th Street
New York, NY 10001
(646) 336-7612 (Phone)
(646) 336-7614 (Fax)
gherbert@thecreativecenter.org

Elissa Bromberg
Director of Creative Center's
Hospital Artist-in-Residence Program
ebromberg@thecreativecenter.org



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Summary:

Since 1994, the founders of the Creative Center have been helping people with cancer through art workshops and forums. Originally begun as a few art workshops for women with cancer, the Creative Center has expanded vastly to reach out to all patients with cancer and created art programs that take place in hospitals or the center's art loft in New York City. Their program is one of the most diverse therapeutic art programs in the area and the best art program for cancer patients. Aside from offering free workshops at their loft, their bedside art program brings art to the patient. This program is formally called the Artist-In-Residence program, and is one of the best therapeutic art programs offered in the country.

The Artist-In-Residence program brings artmaking directly to the bedsides of people with cancer in the hospital. Artists currently work with more than six thousand patients and family members each year on oncology units, bone marrow transplant units, general medical/surgical floors, intensive care/respiratory units, palliative care programs, and outpatient clinics. The arts are carefully selected and receive education, support, and on-going supervision from social workers and art therapists. The artist is in charge of providing materials and art projects tailored to specific needs of the patient in the hospital. The program is entitled Artist-In-Residence because the artist commits to at least a full year of work, where she/he works one day per week as a member of the hospital team.

A recent analysis of their art program by an outside company demonstrated how successful their Artist-In-Residence program is at helping patients. Statistical analysis showed a drop in feelings of boredom, sadness, and loneliness compared to



*Artist-in-Resident,
Barbara Marco*

before and after the artist's arrival and departure. The group was also reported a two-fold increase in feeling of cheerfulness, and 92% of the patients receiving art therapy rated it as a good or great program, the top two highest rankings offered as possible responses. Beyond providing much-needed relief and distraction from the anxiety, pain, and boredom that is often associated with a hospital stay, the Hospital Artist-In-Residence program provides patients with a way to become absorbed in their own creative process. The program also helps to bring a community feel to the hospital; the artwork that is created provides lively discussion between patients and hospital staff on a more individual and personal basis. The nursing and support staff of the hospitals feel proud to be able to offer something very special, and in many cases, have provided exhibition space for patient artwork.

Currently the Creative Center is funded by several corporate sponsors such as Bristol – Myers Squibb, and donations as well as grants. The Creative Center seeks more money to expand and deepen the study of art's therapeutic avenues in cancer patients. They are also trying to expand their program by creating national Artist-In-Residence fellowships.

Related Resources:

The Creative Center. <<http://thecreativecenter.org/>>.

“Satisfaction and Outcomes Assessment Hospital Artist-in-Residence Program of The Creative Center.” KCI Research and Evaluation. December 6, 2002.
<http://thecreativecenter.org/Resources/PDF/TCC_org_report.pdf>.

Hamanaka, Sheila. “The ‘It Girl’s’ Guide to Chemo.” WBAI Womens Collective.
<<http://www.wbai.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=2382&Itemid=0>>.

“Art Therapy.” American Cancer Society.
<http://www.cancer.org/docroot/ETO/content/ETO_5_3X_Art_Therapy.asp?sitearea=ETO>.