

Laurie Zagon

Art & Creativity for Healing

by Peggy Goldwater Clay

Art & Creativity for Healing's classes and workshops offer inspiration and creative therapy to many individuals in need, and for founder and director Laurie Zagon, it is a labor of love. Zagon, who received her master's degree in fine arts at Syracuse University in New York, was a professor for more than 14 years at the City University of New York, where she taught design, color, light theory, and painting. She used these talents to found Laguna Niguel-based Art & Creativity for Healing in 2000, helping thousands of children and adults process stress, illness, and grief. Zagon and 25 certified facilitators teach classes at the organization.

Q: What is Art & Creativity for Healing, and why did you start this organization?

A: Art & Creativity for Healing is an innovative arts organization that offers unique classes and workshops that help children, teens, and adults suffering from abuse, illness, grief, or stress process their feelings using the venue of painting on canvas. The method of Art for Healing was originally developed by me in New York City in 1987 as a workshop designed to help busy Wall Street executives deal with stress. I relocated to Southern California in 1989, and began collaborating with therapists and social workers to facilitate workshops for groups of children and adults who were hurting from life's challenges.

Q: What are some of the programs your organization offers?

A: Our programs are offered in collaboration with more than 35 hospitals, treatment facilities, and nonprofit agencies

throughout Orange County.

In addition to our collaborative programs, we offer a number of workshops, including Art for Healing Bereavement, Art for Healing Divorce Recovery, Art for Renewal & Stress Management, Art for Healing Compassion Fatigue, Expressing Feelings with Color, Paint Your Heart Out, Painting Prayer, Painting from the Soul, and Teen Anger Management.

Q: How do you help hospitalized individuals?

A: Our Bedside Visiting Art Angel program is designed for children suffering from leukemia and other life-threatening illnesses in long-term care at Children's Hospital of Orange County in Orange. It is the only program of its kind serving patients in the hematology/oncology and bone marrow transplant units at CHOC. As part of the program, Art & Creativity for Healing facilitators, or Visiting Art Angels, go to the unit twice a week and provide one-on-one workshops using drawing, painting, and sculpture techniques to help children with cancer express their feelings through art. Because patients must remain in isolation for a minimum of one month following a bone marrow transplant procedure, facilitators provide an enthusiastic resource for these children. During the visit, each "angel" sees 12 to 15 children.

Q: What are your wishes for the future?

A: My biggest wish is for funding to continue our free community workshops for underprivileged children and adults. As a small nonprofit, we continually struggle to find individual and corporate sponsors to augment



"Painting with colors and shapes helps our students express themselves when they have no words."

the support we receive from foundations.

I also wish for the continued success of our two major annual fundraising events. On November 2, we held our sixth annual Girls Night Out event at the Mercedes Classic Center in Irvine. Our sixth annual Palette of Colors event will be held on May 17 at the Balboa Bay Club & Resort in Newport Beach. Each year we celebrate a different color, and in 2008 it will be *Celebration in Green*.

Soon, we will also be starting an Art Angel Women's Guild and need local women to join.

For more information about Art & Creativity for Healing, visit www.art4healing.org or call 949-367-1902. **OC**