

Health, Healing and Hope Through Art

"Art has given me a voice I never knew I had," says one participant at the Center for Hope's art therapy group, held each Monday from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. "I've never considered myself artistic, but exploring with paint, colors, collage papers, and clay is really fun. I am surprised that I actually have made things that I

like and I leave feeling uplifted!"

"Art allows people who have an illness or are dealing with loss to involve themselves in some challenging fun while they externalize their internal feelings in an indirect way," explains art teacher Mindy Green of Norwalk.

"Creating art produces positive, 'energized' feelings while it builds

confidence. I take each person on a fun and meditative journey through which one can lose oneself in order to find oneself."

Ms. Green creates a safe environment with humor and a sense of calm. "Through visualization and guided imagery as well as relaxing art exercises, I bring participants into a creative mode where they can be challenged by learning new skills. I love to see how their creations tell them something new about themselves and how proud they are by what they've created," she says.

People who attend the art sessions are typically those who don't feel comfortable in a support group environment," Ms. Green noted. Some participants don't feel comfortable talking in a group. "In art class, they don't



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have to talk. They don't have to hear about the pain or sadness that others in the same situation are feeling. Members of the group

may talk with each other about treatments or what they are going through, but it is not the focus," Ms. Green explains.

"As we create together, we bond through laughter, caring, and throwing ourselves into new fun challenges. I believe that everyone is an artist. All people have an innate need and ability to create. In early childhood, we need no encouragement to pick up crayons and make marks," says Ms. Green. "The creative act of making art is healthy and healing because it taps our non-verbal skills, providing another outlet of expression."

Art sessions at the Center for Hope are free of charge and open to anyone with chronic illness, caregivers, family members of an ill person or those in bereavement.

You don't have to be a client of the Center in order to attend the classes, and Ms. Green provides all the materials for the class. If you are interested in attending, please contact the Center, 590 Post Road, Darien, at 203-655-4693 or info@centerforhope.org.