

GIVING

Survivors heal through art therapy

BY KAYDEE TUFF

Communications Manager
The Shelter for Abused Women & Children

Nine-year-old Nikko could not talk about the daily abuse he saw his father inflict on his mother but he could create amazing works with clay. Watching him, one might see a child at play, but Nikko's clay creations are much more than play — they are healing therapy.

Although personal safety is the first and foremost concern for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking, vital to the healing process is recovery from the repeated trauma, posttraumatic stress, personal shame and loss of self.

Speaking the truth about the abuse in one's life is a step toward healing, but not all survivors are ready to talk about what has happened to them. For some, it is literally unspeakable.

Art therapy provides these survivors with a variety of alternatives to free themselves of this pain and move toward recovery.

Through a grant from the Southwest Florida Community Foundation, the Shelter for Abused Women & Children's Healing Arts program provides yoga, breath work, creative writing, art



SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO

therapy, meditation, drumming circles and other clinically proven methods to allow survivors to heal from the past, live fully in the present and plan for a life free from violence.

Art therapy does not come easily to those who have been controlled, betrayed, punished and have learned self-hatred. The waters of creativity and imagination must be stirred to restore a sense of possibility, identity and reconnection with the parts of ones' self that were silenced in order to survive. While survivors often feel shame in talking about abuse, they find that talking about their artwork is an experience of finally coming home.

"I am grateful that you let me release emotion when all I've ever done my whole life is keep my emotions held inside," a participant shared in a thank you note to her advocate. "Please know that the work you do is making a huge

positive impact."

That sentiment was shared by Angie, who found healing in the form of a paint brush. Her final piece, "How I feel today," featured a large sun shining just beyond some mountains. The sunlight took up most of the canvas. She shared that she could almost grasp the end of this chapter in her life as she looked forward to the beginning of a new one.

In addition to the fine arts, yoga and meditation also provide healing and release.

"Yoga helps me focus on the here and now, and be grateful for all things," says one participant. "It helps to open you up emotionally to express what's happening in your body and to release it. You need to work through the process. You need to be disciplined and push yourself a little bit more each time. It provides a mindset for your general health and to move forward."

— If you or someone you know is affected by domestic violence or human trafficking, call the shelter's crisis hotline at 239-775-1101. For more information on the shelter, go to naplesshelter.org.

— This summer, Florida Weekly and the Southwest Florida Community Foundation are spotlighting the nonprofits funded through the foundation's 2019 grant cycle. For more information on the foundation, call 239-274-5900 or see www.floridacommunity.com.



The Widest Array of the Most Trusted CBD & Hemp Brands



The ONLY MARKETPLACE Where You can BUY, STAY & ENJOY CBD & HEMP Products



SeedAndBeanMarket.com

1520 Broadway
Downtown Fort Myers
239-243-8137



SEED & BEAN MARKET

THE RETURN

MARCO ISLAND HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Now through April 3, 2021

Frozen in time for an estimated 500 to 1,500 years until discovered on Marco Island during an 1896 archaeological expedition, the enigmatic Key Marco Cat and other rare Pre-Columbian Native-American artifacts return home for a major exhibit at the Marco Island Historical Museum.

The summer's best day trip!

Visit the Museum Gift Shop
Unique gifts hand-crafted by local artisans



NAPLES • MARCO ISLAND
EVERGLADES
PARADISE COAST

180 S. Heathwood Dr.
Marco Island
Tuesday - Saturday
9am-4pm
Free Admission
themih.org

f t i @ @ @ @themih

Smithsonian Penn Museum
SpoonBillManMask, courtesy of Penn Museum (Image #C298906)

Dolphins, Sunsets, Shells... Oh My!

SIGHT SEA-R CRUISES

**\$5 Off
A TICKET**

One coupon per person. Book online! Use promo code FW5OFF. Can not be combined with any other offer or promotion. Expires 8/24/19 FW.

**Fun for the Whole Family!
Private Charters Available!**

www.SightSeaFlorida.com • 239-765-7272

2500 MAIN ST. FORT MYERS BEACH, FL 33931

BOAT RENTALS!

EXPLORE THE WATER WITH THE AREA'S LARGEST FLEET!

**BOW RIDERS • CENTER CONSOLES
PONTOONS & KAYAKS**

**\$20 Off
ANY POWER
BOAT RENTAL**

Book online! Use promo code FW20. Excluding blackout dates. Not valid with any other offers. Expires 8/24/19 FW.

HALF-DAY, FULL DAY, AND WEEK-LONG RENTALS!

www.SaltySamsMarina.com • 239-463-7333

2500 MAIN ST. FORT MYERS BEACH, FL 33931