

Healing Arts

ART AND MEDICINE INTERSECT AT CENTRAL FLORIDA HEALTHCARE FACILITIES,
WHERE CREATIVE EXPRESSION HELPS PAVE THE ROAD TO RECOVERY.

BY KRISTEN MANIERI



LOVE OF FOREST DREAMS by Brandi Renee hangs in the Art of Healing Gallery at Florida Hospital Altamonte. Local healthcare facilities are embracing art as a means to support health and healing.

PHILAN M. EBENHACK

Can the act of painting help someone fight cancer? Does viewing a sculpture make it easier to cope with illness? Can creating artwork help surgeons improve their skills? These are just some of the questions being considered by the medical community as interest builds in the correlation between art and healing. In Orlando, major healthcare providers are embracing cultural components to foster an environment that nurtures more than just physical health. And for a growing number of people, the evidence that art heals is indisputable.

Among those people is Chizuko Carothers, who participates in the Artists-in-Residence (AIR) program during her chemotherapy treatments at MD Anderson Cancer Center Orlando. The bedside initiative was launched earlier this year when the facility, in partnership with United Arts of Central Florida, (UA) received a \$20,000 grant from LIVESTRONG, a branch of the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

Twice a week, local artists bring art supplies to the center's outpatient chemotherapy floor and encourage patients to nurture their creative side. Eagerly

embraced, the program provides much more than just a welcome diversion.

"When my wife is painting, she is more relaxed," says Carothers' husband, Vance. "I believe it clears her mind and sets the stage for a more advantageous healing environment. Battling a serious disease, you need any edge you can get."

Vance says that his wife was a little hesitant at first. "Many other things were on her mind and painting was not one of them." But that changed when she picked up a paintbrush and began to transform the blank canvas before her. "With each

stroke of her brush she became more focused, intent on creating a masterpiece. I've never seen her so concentrated as when she is working on a painting. It takes her to another place where there is no cancer."

Andrea Canny, one of the program's artists, says she sees patients' overall perspective and mood brighten during her weekly visits. "It's amazing to watch people blossom when they are making art," she says. "It feels good to express creatively and it helps people to process their feelings. I once heard the quote 'medicine may cure the body but art heals the spirit.' Every day I see healing as a result of this program."

To kick off AIR, Canny and a handful of other artists traveled to New York City to be trained at The Creative Center, where the program was initially developed and proved successful in area hospitals. "After years of evaluations and surveys, The Creative Center was able to demonstrate that this program not only positively impacted patients' views of a hospital, but also lessened their anxiety, depression and feelings of isolation and loneliness while undergoing treatment," says LIVESTRONG Program Manager Jordan Parks.

Thanks to grants from LIVESTRONG, AIR is currently being implemented in 22 cancer centers and hospitals in the U.S., including MD Anderson – Orlando.

The benefits of AIR are exactly what Dr. Clarence Brown, MD Anderson – Orlando's president and CEO, wanted to replicate at his facility. "It turned out to be exactly what we hoped," says Brown. "It's had an amazing influence on the way patients are dealing with their cancer, not just physically, but emotionally."

The center is part of the Orlando Health network, which has a Mind Body Medicine program that offers yoga, massage therapy and tai chi, in addition to the AIR program. "In terms of these complementary approaches, such as art, I think they do provide a healthy diversion. And any time we can offer our patients things that support their healing and bolster their emotional health, it's a good thing. These programs certainly help patients cope with the serious nature of their illness."

In addition to these programs, MD Anderson – Orlando regularly hosts cultural events and other hands-on arts

activities. In June, patients marked national Cancer Survivor Day by painting hopeful messages on colorful banners created by the resident artists. Each October, in conjunction with the Lily Oncology on Canvas program, the center hosts a 25-piece exhibition of artwork by breast cancer survivors from across the country.

UA also sees a connection between art and health. Recognizing the significance of Central Florida's new "Medical City," UA partnered with University of Central Florida's (UCF) College of Medicine to launch The Art of Medicine. This biannual event brings students and faculty together with patrons and staff from both organizations to enjoy a private reception and a local cultural performance. Past events have featured Orlando Ballet and Orlando Shakespeare Theater. The next one is scheduled for February to coincide with UA's annual ArtsFest program.

The Art of Healing

Established more than a century ago, Florida Hospital was originally called a sanitarium, which back then was a place where people could go not only to heal, but to maintain their health. Its founders were interested in holistic care, believing that being healthy meant more than avoiding illness. Today, Florida Hospital is a member of the Adventist Health System with eight Central Florida locations, and its early principles live on in its Creation



KATIE DAGENAIS

JANEEN CEPULL shares her message of hope at MD Anderson – Orlando on national Cancer Survivor Day.

Health philosophy, a blueprint for healthy living that focuses on eight components. Activity and nutrition are among those, but so are personal choices and environment. And when it comes to its own environment, the hospital strives to create a place that's conducive to mental and spiritual renewal, as well as physical.

Visit many Florida Hospital locations and you'll find a variety of artwork meant to create an atmosphere of hope and



KELLIE WARREN-UNDERWOOD

CHIZUKO CAROTHERS paints and draws during her chemotherapy treatments at MD Anderson – Orlando, thanks to the Artists-in-Residence program established there through a LIVESTRONG grant.



PHELAN M. EBENHACK

THE ART OF HEALING GALLERY at Florida Hospital Altamonte was established through a collaborative effort by community partners. Its exhibitions rotate every three months and showcase work by local artists, including plastic reconstructive surgeon Dr. Saulius Jankauskas, whose piece is shown here.

healing. With more than 500 pieces ranging from photography and mosaics to sculpture and paintings, Florida Hospital Orlando on King Street has the largest collection, but Dr. P. Phillips Hospital and the East Orlando facility have also made art an integral part of their environments.

The Altamonte location is now home to The Art of Healing Gallery, thanks to a collaborative effort by Florida Hospital, the Seminole Cultural Arts Council and the Circle Christian School. Located on the first floor of Florida Hospital Altamonte, the gallery gives staff, patients and their families a place to quietly reflect and appreciate something beautiful. A new exhibition of work by local artists is unveiled every three months. Each collection has a theme, and the paintings, photographs and mixed-media pieces—some of which are created by Florida Hospital physicians and students from Circle Christian School—are all for sale, with 25 percent of the proceeds benefiting the Florida Hospital Foundation.

“The Art of Healing Gallery has proven to be quite a success,” says Josie Foranoce,



FLORIDA HOSPITAL

FLORIDA HOSPITAL ORLANDO features more than 500 secular and nonsecular works, such as this mural, *In the Beginning God Created*.

laboratory director at Florida Hospital Altamonte and a Seminole Cultural Arts Council board member. “It not only gives local artists the opportunity to showcase their work, but it gives individuals the opportunity to escape from their worries and stress with beautiful artwork. I like to think that for just those few moments they get lost in a painting and they forget why they are here.”

To date, the work of more than 150 local artists has been shown in the gallery. The current exhibit, *Falling in Love*, will be on display through the end of the year.

Our ideas of what constitutes medicine have expanded as complementary treatments gain traction in hospitals and other traditional healthcare facilities. And while it may be difficult to draw tangible correlations between art and healing, the people who heal and those who are healing will tell you that whether you’re creating it or just looking at it, art does indeed soothe the soul. **oam**

Kristen Manieri writes lifestyle and travel articles about Orlando and other locales.

Creative Minds with Healing Hands

The connection between art and healing is more personal for healthcare workers with creative talents, and there’s more of them than you might think. In fact, that there’s actually an American Physician Art Association, of which Dr. Charles Best and Sir Fredrick Banting—joint Nobel Prize winners for their discovery of insulin—are honorary members. It turns out that hands that heal can also create some extraordinary works of art.

Dr. Puxiao Cen, a cardiologist at Florida Hospital, knows firsthand the healing power of art. When she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2007, Dr. Cen transformed her casual painting hobby into a regular part of her recovery plan. “I felt like I needed an outlet,” she recalls. “It was very healing to me. It distracted me from the side effects, but it gave me a purpose, too.” Dr. Cen has exhibited six of her paintings in The Art of Healing Gallery since it opened. She also donated 100 percent of proceeds from work that sold to the Florida Hospital Foundation.

“Any artistic endeavor makes you a better surgeon,” says **Dr. Saulius Jankauskas**, a plastic reconstructive surgeon at South Seminole Hospital. Primarily working with glass and ceramics, Jankauskas feels that it helps hone his aesthetic eye, which is important in his line of work. “Any surgeon can repair a wound or cut, but plastics is not only repairing back to something that is functional, but also making it as natural and as pretty as possible.” Jankauskas doesn’t just create extraordinary works of art, but uses the process as a positive emotional outlet. “You can cram a lot of pent-up feelings into one piece of artwork,” he says. His work has been on display at First Thursdays at Orlando Museum of Art, as well as Third Thursdays at CityArts Factory.

Several years ago, neonatologist **Dr. Michael McMahan** started photographing babies in the Neonatal Intensive

Care Unit as a way to share his cases with medical students and his fellow doctors at Winnie Palmer Hospital for Women & Babies. Soon after, parents began asking for his prints and he realized that there was an intense beauty in the photographs that begged to be shared. His black and white, canvas style prints now line the walls of the neonatal unit, not only beautifying the hallways but, Dr. McMahan feels, giving hope to

families whose little ones are being treated there.

Established more than four years ago, the **FHotography** program showcases photography by Florida Hospital healthcare professionals in rotating exhibits in Florida Hospital Orlando’s Ginsburg Gallery and ShowCases area. Prints are changed out every four months, and plans are underway to expand the initiative to other campuses.



PHELAN M. EBENHACK

CARDIOLOGIST DR. PUXIAO CEN turned to painting to fight her own battle with cancer.



DR. SAULIUS JANKAUSKAS

GLASS AND CERAMIC WORKS by Dr. Saulius Jankauskas are often seen in local art shows.



MICHAEL MCMAHAN

NEONATOLOGIST DR. MICHAEL MCMAHAN started photographing his patients to document their cases. The images were soon being requested by parents and today they line the walls of the neonatal unit at Winnie Palmer Hospital for Women & Babies.