

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As I sit here writing to you on a dark, rainy November afternoon, a steady stream of artists arrive, braving the rain to submit artwork to our next Gibbs Gallery show, “Regeneration,” which promises to be an inspiring exhibit exploring themes of renewal and rebirth.

Looking at the artwork, I can’t help but reflect that *Regeneration* is at the heart of what ACA provides to so many people in our community. As I think back over the past year, I want to share three stories with you – stories of profound personal regeneration that show how your support can transform people’s lives.

Cassandra’s story was particularly moving. The slight, spiky-haired teen had just joined a local family as a foster child, after a long history of abuse.* Anxious and closed off at first, she gradually warmed up to her fellow Teen Art Studio students, and especially to her teacher, Pam. Noticing Cassandra lingering after class one afternoon, Pam asked her about one of her drawings.

“It was just the two of us, and all of a sudden, she started telling me stories about her past,” Pam remembers. “She felt safe, and as she talked, I began to understand what was going on in her artwork. This wasn’t art therapy, but just a very natural unfolding, as this sweet young girl discovered how she could tell her traumatic story in a visual way, a symbolic way. Through art-making, she could express her pain, maybe even overcome it a little, but she didn’t have to give away any secrets unless she decided to share the story behind her art.”

With Pam’s gentle guidance and support, Cassandra began to feel the power of her own creativity, and, as she said, “take my bad experience, turn it into art, and change it into something almost beautiful.”

By the end of the week, Cassandra’s foster mom couldn’t get over the transformation – her anxious, suffering foster daughter was beginning to open up, make friends, and discover the healing power of her own creativity. ***Regeneration, indeed.***

And it’s not just teens who blossom in the creative and nurturing environment at the Arlington Center for the Arts:

It’s Mike - a recent widower who broke out of the isolation of his grief and started throwing pots in our clay studio. A master potter as a young man in his native Greece, Mike had abandoned his art when he immigrated to the United States forty years ago. Now, he’s throwing pots again, working with kids and teens at ACA, and beginning a whole new chapter.



Mike teaching in the Clay Studio

* Not her real name; some details have been changed to protect privacy.

It's Grace – a sixty-something artist who just showed her magnificent paintings and pastels for the first time in over twenty years. The star of her BFA program when she graduated as an adult learner, Grace followed the advice of a professor who said the only way to be a “real” artist, was to get into a gallery in New York City. After a few initial rejections, Grace felt she had “failed” as an artist and put her paintings away in a closet, where they remained, for twenty years, until Arlington Open Studios last month. At Open Studios, Grace’s work was incredibly well received, she made a slew of new artist friends, and most exciting of all, she came in to the gallery this week with new work she created for ACA’s next gallery show. “I feel like an artist again,” she said, with a smile that lit up the room.

Regeneration, indeed!

I invite you to support our work in creating an environment for creative regeneration. Please join us in saying we need a vibrant, nurturing home base for our creative kids and teens. We need a place where our community’s artists, musicians and performers can share their work. We need a place where any one of us could explore an impulse to break out of the everyday and throw a pot or write a poem or discover an artist who makes us look at the world in a whole new way. We need a place where our community can gather in joyful celebration of the arts.

I thank you for being part of the ACA family. Please know that when you contribute to the Arlington Center for the Arts, you truly have the power to change lives of people just like Cassandra, and Mike, and Grace. People just like you, and me, and all of us who feel the pull of our own creativity, and just **need a place to begin, or begin again.**

All the best to you this year, and always.

Sincerely,



John Budzyna
Executive Director



Grace Schust, Windscape, pastel

PS: Your contribution will be doubled! A generous local artist wants to join you in supporting ACA by *matching every dollar you give, doubling the impact of your donation* for the arts.

The Arlington Center for the Arts is a 501(c)(3) not for profit arts organization, meaning that your donation is tax deductible as allowed by state and federal law.

You can also donate online – www.acarts.org/support - Thank you!

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