

NEW THERAPEUTIC ART BOOK ADDRESSES SIBLING ISSUES

Nonprofit Art with Heart expands outreach to help thousands more children

MEDIA CONTACT: 206.362.4047; Doris Wong-Estridge, doris@artwithheart.org / Steffanie Lorig, steffanie@artwithheart.org

Seattle, WA, June 2008: Art with Heart, a Seattle-based nonprofit is launching one of the first activity books of its kind that offers therapeutic intervention for children ages 10 and under who are dealing with the emotional challenges of living with a seriously ill or disabled brother or sister.

Magnificent Marvelous Me! contains engaging, age-appropriate, art therapeutic activities to help them recognize and work through the intense emotions that emerge during difficult times such as these.

The project was inspired by Katie (pictured), a local Issaquah child whose sister, Hallie (the inspiration for Art with Heart's *Oodles of Doodles* book), battled cancer for more than 10 years. Katie said that when she saw all the presents and attention that Hallie received while in the hospital, she "wanted cancer too!"

Art with Heart consulted with 17 child therapists and social workers from local, national and international children's organizations, as well as conducted a national survey of well siblings, who contributed advice and counsel throughout *Magnificent Marvelous Me's* development. Almost 50 artists from throughout the United States and Canada as well as London, Italy, Sweden, Argentina and Brazil contributed original illustrations for the activities, which are based on art therapy best practices.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, of the roughly 70 million American children under 18, about 4.8 million suffer from chronic illness. Societal compassion is evident in the number of programs and services available for a child who is seriously ill or disabled, but what about the siblings?

In the words of one of the artists, Jean Tuttle, who grew up with a younger sister afflicted with Williams Syndrome, "As a child I sensed, wrongly, but understandably, that if I could just lighten my parents' load a bit, particularly my mother's, I might win more of their love, approval, and time. So I began a pattern of denying my own needs in favor of helping other people with theirs, which took many years to understand and begin to change...."

The well child experiences an enormous range of conflicting emotions, including feelings of isolation, anger, resentment, disappointment and even guilt that he or she may have caused the problem. National studies show that the toll on the well child, without intervention, can result in behavioral and emotionally-rooted problems that can extend into adulthood – effecting their relationships and mental health. *Magnificent Marvelous Me!* was designed with these siblings in mind and provides a positive and engaging outlet for them to express their feelings.

More info, including the complete list of partners and illustrators, can be found at www.artwithheart.org/books/siblings.

ABOUT ART WITH HEART

Founded in 1996, Art with Heart is a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower youth in crisis through therapeutic programs that foster self-expression. Art with Heart has served over 35,000 children and youth dealing with trauma or serious illness, by providing emotional and mental health support through workshops, training, curriculum and books based on the best practices of art therapy. There are many ways individuals and businesses can get involved with Art with Heart. Visit www.artwithheart.org for more information.



PRE-SURVEY WITH SIBLINGS

We asked children, teens and adults who have (or had) a sibling with a serious illness or disability how it affected them in order to find out more about what types of issues they grappled with. Here are some of their stories...

11 year old **Maddie** writes, “I don’t think it is fair. Why does my sister have to be sick with cancer? I wish there was no such thing as cancer.” She continues, “I have to be extra careful with germs. I have to stay at my Grandparent’s a lot and can’t go some places that might expose my sister to infection. It is hard to plan things when you don’t know how she will be.”

Brian writes, “My younger brother has had epilepsy. He has had it for nearly all of his life, and the disease is growing worse. We spend a lot of time at the hospital. I am not able to do sports or many extracurricular activities. My parents are constantly tired and my family doesn’t go out and do things very often.”

“**Suzie**” is in elementary school and has a sibling who has a serious illness. She writes, “I adore my sister and love to give her hugs, but there are no hugs or words in return from her. My parents argue more; sometimes they get to visit her and I don’t. I don’t have to share my room with her now. My parents talk about where she is going to live and how much money we’ll need. I worry about costing my parents too much...”

Rosalie Frankel, MA, ATR, is the Therapeutic Play Coordinator at Children’s Hospital. She wrote to tell us why she felt this project was so important, “A mother asked for some art supplies. So, I went with her to meet her child and figure out what he might want to do. When I went up to him, he was sitting next to a wheelchair. I asked him if it was his and he said, ‘No...I’m only the brother.’ I think he thought that I would walk away because he wasn’t the patient. Instead I said, ‘Well, you’re important too. What would you like to do?’ This inspired an animated show and tell about his favorite superhero as well as drawings with great detail. We spent some time together and I gave him additional drawing materials. As I was walking away, his mom came running after me saying ‘I want to thank you.’ I was kind of surprised at the emotion she showed. It seemed like she was thanking me for much more than the usual visit – so I asked her ‘For what?’ She said with teary eyes, ‘For telling him he is important too,’ she continued, ‘It was just what he needed.’”

Mandy is in elementary school and has a brother with Aspergers. She writes, “I have to go to the doctor’s a lot, because he never stops getting sick. One day my brother had to go to the hospital because his face was really white. Me and my other brother had such hurting legs from having to walk around in the hospital, since my dad was walking with us in circles, because he didn’t want us to see what was happening with Tommy.”

Lexie is a teen whose brother was diagnosed with ALL Leukemia 5 years ago when she was in the fifth grade. She writes, “My brother was in the hospital most of the time and I usually stayed with my grandparents. I still have a hard time dealing with it. My parents started to argue a lot more during this time. They have been divorced for 4 years now.”

Jennifer is over 22 years old and was 10 when her two-year old brother was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. She writes, “It was a tough time for the whole family and I experienced many feelings ranging from fear, frustration, guilt, anger, and hurt. I felt like I disappeared during that time and for a long time after. My family was so focused on him and his illness that there was no time left for me. He eventually recovered and is now very successful, but it was a long road of Doctors, radiation, and hospital visits...”

Debra is 55 years old, but still remembers vividly what it was like when her 16-year old sister was diagnosed with leukemia. Debra was 13 when they got the news. She writes, “It was a very difficult time for our family. I spent a lot of time alone. My mom spent a lot of time with my sister at the hospital, so I didn’t have much supervision – I took advantage of it, of course. I remember liking the freedom, but being scared of it too. I remember resenting that all the focus was on her...” Her sister died three months after her diagnosis.

Dara is also over 22 and has a sister that has both a disability and a serious illness. “I don’t have any of these challenges, so sometimes it’s difficult for me to relate to her. Growing up was difficult. We didn’t always have the money for my sister to see the doctor. My folk’s attention was focused on her a lot. I felt alone a lot as a kid. My art helps me express a whole bag full of emotions: anger, frustration, helplessness, and love...”

Carly is a teen with a brother who has autism. She writes, “I live with my brother, my mother and my grandmother. I never get to do the things that other kids do and when I do, they are modified. I wish I could say I went to the park with my babysitter and had a great time. Instead, my brother has a meltdown about something that I usually find a ‘waste of a meltdown on his part’ and we end up having to drag him home. My teachers sometimes let me give speeches to the class about autism during autism awareness month. My aunt always agrees with me that things really aren’t fair for me. I’m all for helping my brother but sometimes it’s nice to hear that things really aren’t fair and that my brother shouldn’t get all of the attention and favoring. It helped a lot when I wrote a letter to my aunt telling her how it felt sometimes like she loved my brother more. She assured me that she loved me just as much and that she’ll try harder to show me that...”

MAGNIFICENT MARVELOUS ME CONTRIBUTORS

Illustrators/Designers

Gabriele Antonini, Rome, Italy
Marty Baumann, Arlington, VA
Christiane Beauregard, Montréal, Quebec, Canada
Russell Benfanti, Clarence, NY
Brian Biggs, Philadelphia, PA
Kristine Brogno, San Francisco, CA
Anne Bryant, Seattle, WA
Harvey Chan, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Seymour Chwast, New York, NY
Mike Dammer, Chicago, IL
Helen Dardick, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Linda Davick, San Francisco, CA
Boo Davis, Seattle, WA
Nancy Davis, Las Vegas, NV
Betsey Everitt, London, England
Daniel Guidera, Northampton, MA
John Haslam, Bolton, England
Lydia Hess, Portland, OR
Becky Heavner, Denver, CO
Jessica Hische, New York, NY
Danielle Jones, Montréal, Quebec, Canada
Mark Kaufman, Seattle, WA
Dahe Kim, Federal Way, WA
Nora Krug, Montclair, NJ
Rich Lillash, Columbus, OH
Steffanie Lorig, Seattle, WA
Mary Anne Lloyd, Portland, ME
Rob McClurkan, Woodstock, GA
Mike Moran, Florham Park, NJ
Mitch Mortimer, Waukesha, WI
Ken Orvidas, Woodinville, WA
Jim Paillot, Gilbert, AZ
Julie Paschkis, Seattle, WA
Juliana Pedemonte, Capital Federal, Argentina

Lisa Perrett, Mount Pleasant, SC
Chris Reed, Edison, NJ
Amanda Shepherd, Phoenix, AZ
Elwood Smith, Rhinebeck, NY
Lasse Skarbovik, Stockholm, Sweden
Bob Staake, Chatham, MA
Judy Stead, Charlotte, NC
Eric Sturdevant, Chantilly, VA
Jean Tuttle, Denver, CO
Kirsten Ulve, New York, NY
Walter Vasconcelos, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Andrew Wicklund, Seattle, WA
Molly Z, Chicago, IL

Therapists/Social Workers

Don Meyer, M.Ed., Sibling Support Project, Sibshops, Seattle, WA
Julie Marler, MSW, Social Worker, Seattle, WA
Sandra K. Ring, MS, CCLS, SuperSibs!, Canada & US
From Providence Hospice of Seattle:

- Beverly Goldsmith, MSW, Safe Crossings Program Coordinator
- Maureen Horgan, LICSW, Stepping Stones Prog. Coordinator
- Jane Fleming, MPM, Grief Support Services Specialist

Rosalie Frankel, MA ATR, Art Therapist and Therapeutic Play Coordinator, Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center, Seattle, WA
Kate Gardner, CCLS & Lizann McLaughlin, CCLS, Child Life Specialists at Inova Fairfax Hospital for Children, Falls Church, VA
From The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families, Portland, OR:

- Donna Schuurman, EdD, FT, National Director
- Rebecca Hobbs-Lawrence, MA, Grief Services Coordinator

Ann Sparling White, MS LMHC, Director of Family Services, The Healing Center, Seattle, WA
Erin Behen, MS, CCLS, Program Services Director, Starlight-Starbright Children's Foundation of Washington, Renton, WA
Suzie Slonaker, Executive Director, REACH Ministries, Tacoma
Michelle Massey, Program Manager, Gilda's Club Seattle, WA
Jackie Williams, MS, Medical Family Therapist, Raleigh, NC
Amy Zimmerman, Executive Director, Camp Erin/Boise, ID