

Does It Work?

Sandie Crocker, the program's founder, recounts numerous success stories of how the program has positively affected the lives of its participants:

● “There is one participant that you can just see the progression of his work. He began with very simple squares of colors, and his work has evolved into fantastic, vibrant pieces where he has explored different avenues and how to use both color and shape. But the bigger difference has been within him. He needs help with **self-esteem**, and since we've begun to display his works here in our building, we've been able to see a big change in him.”



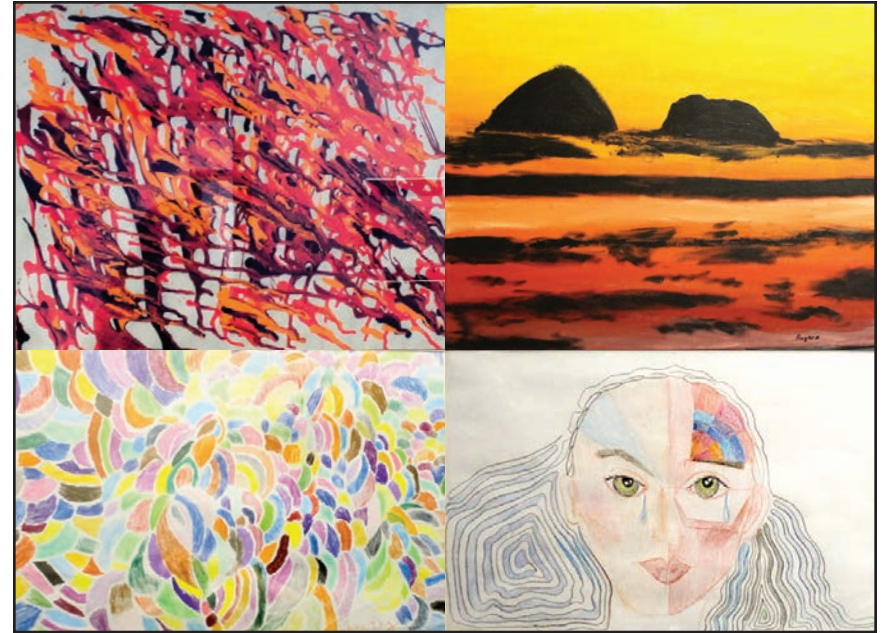
● “One interesting case has been in helping a woman that has trouble **making any kinds of decisions**. This is a great way to have her make simple decisions, like what color to use and what the subject of the piece will be. Then she can look back at a finished piece and feel good about each decision she made to create it.”

● “Another gentleman has gone through **personal identity problems**, and he has used art therapy directives to sort things out. He is very talented in art, very creative, and art has been a forum in which he has been able to explore how he feels about himself.”



● “A big reason that people are interested in the art program is for **stress management**; at least half of the group comes in for that reason alone. What is so encouraging to see is that many of them have gotten art supplies themselves, so that they can do artwork at home. Art is a great way to reduce stress, and it will be a wonderful coping mechanism for them down the road once they take that step of transferring it from the classroom to their home.”

● “It's amazing to see the progression of so many of the participants, not only in their art skills, but also in their **social skills**. It's a very laid back group, and the process of working on an art piece is a great conversation starter that can lead into any kind of discussion. It helps people socialize where they otherwise would not.”



Art for Mental Health



A Niagara Visions PROS Program

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For more information on giving to Art for Mental Health, Niagara Visions PROS or Community Missions, please contact Christian Hoffman at (716) 285-3403 x.2247, or choffman@communitymissions.org.

What is Art for Mental Health?

Art for Mental Health is a class offered by the Niagara Visions PROS program. Participants in the program are diagnosed with psychiatric disabilities, and use the class to learn how they can incorporate art into their recovery.



Sessions are led by Sandie Crocker, the program's Training Coordinator, who has a teaching degree in Art Education and is a board certified Art Therapist. While the program is open to any participant interested in expressing themselves,

structure can be offered via instruction or therapy directives. This mix has led to Art for Mental Health to become one of the program's most popular offerings.



Materials available include watercolor paint, acrylic paint, tempera paint, colored pencils, clay, pastels and markers. The Art Room can be accessed throughout the week, though the class meets each Tuesday afternoon.

What is Niagara Visions PROS?

The Niagara Visions PROS program is a comprehensive, recovery-oriented program for individuals with psychiatric disabilities in Niagara County. Opened in 2011, the program supports goals directed by the individual. These goals may include improving functioning, gaining employment, attaining higher levels of education or securing preferred housing.

The program's staff strive to integrate person-centered planning into each facet of its design, and truly believe that recovery is possible for each participant. The program integrates treatment, support and rehabilitation in a manner that facilitates recovery.



Niagara Visions PROS supports an individual's personal journey towards recovery by providing services targeted to help them overcome barriers that stand in the way.

How Can I Get Involved?

The largest hurdle to the ongoing operation of the Art for Mental Health program is funding for its supplies. Each year, the supplies needed to keep the program up and running (including paint, markers, easels, mats, frames), range into the thousands of dollars. Donations to underwrite these costs will ensure the future viability of the program.



In the past, Community Missions has sponsored showings in the community featuring the art created by program participants. Funding for such endeavors has not been available for such opportunities of late. The exposure generated by these showings can be an enormous boost for the artists, particularly for those dealing with self-esteem or social issues. Donations to fund a local art showing will make a direct impact on the lives of such participants.

"We have a participant that has been put down by her sister all her life, and feels that she hasn't really succeeded in anything. She has great talent in art, and one of her goals is to have a piece shown in an art show. However, we don't currently have the materials necessary to have her work framed & matted, in order to submit her pieces to a show."

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