



## Winter Break: Caregivers Experience a Day of Healing

Art-Reach and BuildaBridge, an Art-Reach member, combined forces on Friday, February 19 to combat the “Groundhog Blues” at a Day of Healing for over 40 caregivers. Activities for the day took place in a homey setting at the Second Baptist Church in Germantown. The six-month collaboration between Art Reach’s Associate Director Stephanie Borton, BuildaBridge’s Dr. Vivian Nix-Early and Kim Jupinka produced an enjoyable and relaxing agenda. Our own generous Art-Reach Ambassadors side-by-side with the BuildaBridge staff and volunteers did a great job in welcoming the caregivers, serving tea and assisting in the free afternoon raffle.



Penelope Reed, Artistic Director of Hedgerow Theater, kicks off Day of Healing with the first group activity incorporating interactive theatre games.

Day of Healing began with morning tea and a group activity lead by Penelope Reed, Artistic Director of [Hedgerow Theater](#). Designed to break the ice and get the neurons moving, Penelope led the entire group through a number of “Theater Games” that paired folks off to perform mirroring movement. They quickly got to know each other and learned tools they could later use with their own clients.



Day of Healing attendees use poses to capture feelings and emotions that Penelope assigns.

I helped attendees sign up for the day's single 2-hour workshops that took place following Penelope's presentation. These workshops, conducted for groups of 4-10 participants, were designed to engage body and mind in creative, relaxing activities – Poetry, Clay Sculpture, Breading Baking, Beaded Jewelry Making, and International Folk and African Dance Movement. In fact, the only complaint I heard during the Day of Healing was that there was only time for 1 workshop per person! Debi, Recreation Supervisor from Riverview House, explained that she was so excited to attend the Day of Healing that she would have even taken the day off to attend on her own time.

I dropped in on all workshops to see them in action and quickly learned that Workshop time was definitely designed to be non-stress playtime for adults! Lenape Nanticoke Shaman and Assistant Chief Brother, Ron Wandering Feather, had a full-house in his Bead Jewelry Workshop. He set the scene in his class room with a recording of his own Native American Music. Wandering Feather used a combination of natural and man made materials plus sculpting clay. Monique, a supervisor from Woodstock Family Center, shared that, "...the copper wire was very difficult for me to manipulate, but Ron helped me develop a design with memory wire. I am interested in beading on an ongoing basis. A number of ladies in our class are wearing the beaded earring they made today."



Making jewelry with Ron Wandering Feather

In the kitchen, Chef Chiwishi Abney, a lead instructor for BuildaBridge's Discovery Program and owner of a catering firm, led a bread making workshop. The chef prepared several types of dough for the class, and gave out recipes for whole wheat bread, challah, and a "letting go" (pizza) dough. The letting go dough was a therapeutic tool used to release tension, anxiety and negative emotions. Participants kneaded the letting go dough to remove "doubt", "fear of change" and "fear of flying". After lunch, the loaves were removed hot from the oven and everyone sampled the bread with jam or butter. Eddie, Administrative Assistant of Mars Hill Community Development Center, offered his thoughts about the bread baking activity, "I grew up in a bread-baking house. It has been in the back of my mind to start baking again. I can also use this experience with the kids at the center. This is a wonderful experience!"



Chef Chiwishi Abney, leads the bread making workshop and teaches participants how to make Challah. The bread made by the participants was later served to everyone to taste.



Next, I visited the Poetry Workshop conducted by Dr. Naia Claude Schulte. The small group clustered quietly around the conference table with pads and pens and listened to the poetry of Shakespeare. Naia read some sensory evocative works of Langston Hughes, and urged the caregivers to find their own voices and inspirations for imagery explaining that developing sparkling images with sensory details makes poetry memorable and meaningful to both the poets themselves and their listeners. Jane, Program Director of Drueding Center/Project Rainbow, was "...very interested in developing imagery, composing poems and learning how to listen to poets. I think that a poetry program can have a big impact on Project Rainbow".



Using objects to identify word relationships, Dr. Naia Claude Schulte leads the poetry workshop.

Across the hallway from the poets, Michelle, from Mosaic Delaware, participated in international folk dancing with peers and instructors Anne, Bill, and John. Caregivers learned a number of Eastern European and Greek dances accompanied by the accordion. Hands were waving, feet flying and handkerchiefs fluttering in the joy of movement. Michelle told me that she enjoyed both the folk dancing and African dance because the instructors talked about types of music and national traditions regarding the dances." Angela Watson conducted the second part of the workshop with African dance moves. She encouraged the caregivers to listen to their bodies and work out their emotions through music and dance movement.

(Right) Caregivers learn a number of Eastern European and Greek dances accompanied by the accordion. (Below) Angela Watson conducts the second African dance portion of the class.



Visiting clay sculptor, and Art-Reach in-Facility artist, [Beth McGuiggan's](#) session was my last stop. She led participants in

creating tiles using coils and slabs of clay. As I walked around the room to look at the caregivers' work, I was really impressed by how much each participant had built in such a short time with little previous experience. Yasmin, Director of Elwyn New Visions shared her experience, saying that the workshop "Gave me the opportunity to look into myself to express how I feel, not only to be something to others, but to focus on my own feelings. This is not something I ordinarily do." What a great accomplishment, Michelle! And all before lunch!



In Facility roster artist, [Beth McGuigan](#) leads participants through the clay workshop.



During lunch, [Angel Baby Music](#), an Art-Reach In-Facility artist, provided smooth jazz entertainment. At this point many of the caregivers had received their chair massages from Pamela Brown of

Pampered Bodies Spa & Wellness Center and floated into the room to enjoy the music.



[Angel Baby Music](#) performs during lunch.

After lunch, Vivian conducted the most worthwhile speed networking event I have ever attended. As the Co-Founder and visionary of BuildaBridge, she wisely used this time not only to provide an opportunity for more caregivers to network, but also to give them the chance to tell about their good work. During the networking, I discovered that many of the caregivers were volunteers. Rose, Recreation Coordinator at NHS of Delaware County-Upland Woods, is gratified to be able to provide "[cultural] outings which truly excite her clients". She also is grateful to Art-Reach for helping find events near Rehoboth Beach, DE, which can be a challenge.

For the last group activity, Vivian marched the caregivers, maracas in hand, into the conference room to experience the final activity– a full scale drumming circle with Art-Reach In-Facility artist [Tony Mascara](#). All 46 participants had an instrument, and could be heard enthusiastically drumming all the way down the hall way. I thought to myself– what a great way for the caregivers to end the day – energized physically and mentally, yet relaxed and ready for the weekend!



[Tony Mascara](#), Art-Reach In-Facility Artist, leads the final drum circle group activity.



As a parting gift, each caregiver was sent home with a bit of wrapped plasticene clay, recipe for homemade play doh and a cookie cutter. These simple materials would serve as a reminder for individual caregivers to continue taking time for themselves and to play in a creative, relaxing fashion.

My new bread-baking friend Eddie best summed up Day of Healing "... this is a wonderful day for networking and no stress! I would give it an A. More than a day of healing it is a chance to refresh, rebuild, retool, and renew. Art Reach and BuildaBridge always do a good job!"

I could not have said it better myself, Eddie!

- By Maureen Zug