

Healing Arts Programs Benefit Entire Community

Twenty years ago, the last thing on the mind of Vicky Jekich — founder of the Merina Healing Arts Foundation Philanthropic Gift Fund — was the impact a recording of soothing music would have on a community years later. At the time, Jekich sought comfort in the music to aid her labor and delivery of her first child. Little did Jekich realize that this simple comfort measure would later underscore the type of service her philanthropic fund would soon support. Like other philanthropic funds, the MHA fund stems from an underserved need that was identified, an idea that was later developed, and a plan of action that was ultimately created.

For Jekich, aligning with the Idaho Community Foundation was one of the milestones that gave this grassroots fund the strong base it needed to begin pursuing its vision of enhancing access and availability of arts in health care in Idaho.

“Through Merina Healing Arts, the goal is to enhance therapeutic arts services currently offered to hospitalized or hospice patients and their families,” states Jekich.

“What is special about MHA is that it serves a health care need that is often unfamiliar, underutilized or lacking in support or funding. MHA has the potential to benefit more than one target group as well. The fund will not only support patients and families who receive comfort from the healing arts programs, but it also can serve as an additional resource for health care providers to extend current or establish new therapeutic arts programs. Plus, MHA can benefit Idaho artists through a grant award process that will help artists pursue a therapeutic arts certification or degree. The end result is a win for the entire community: Patients and families benefit from the healing arts services, health care providers are able to include healing arts practices into their business plans, and local artists can serve the public as trained professionals in therapeutic arts.”

While the Idaho Community Foundation brings the skills and expertise to manage the fund, Jekich is

dedicated to finding ways to break down barriers and establish support for therapeutic arts programs.

“As a musician, I found it a challenge to find local resources to become certified in therapeutic music or obtain a music therapy degree. As a result, the training I am taking in Sacramento to become a certified music practitioner will be brought to Idaho for the first time. Access to certified training was once a barrier and I am proud to say that beginning in January 2008, that won’t be a problem. Cost is another hurdle, so through MHA, we will explore how we can help remove the financial hurdle

so that artists can pursue this meaningful and much needed profession,” adds Jekich.

In addition to grants that help artists obtain professional training, MHA will also look to support programs and initiatives that deliver comfort to the ill or dying, such as therapeutic music, art therapy, journaling workshops and horticultural therapy. Another example is a therapeutic art program that brings healing to parents who suffer the loss of a child at a hospital or during childbirth.

To help them cope with their loss, a simple memory box – handmade by area artists and/or or decorated by family members and friends – can help bring comfort and some closure at a critical time of need.

In addition, support for MHA is now coming from beyond Idaho. Grammy-nominated pianist David Lanz and world flute music artist and composer Gary Stroutsos will give a benefit concert in Boise to share their healing music, help educate the community about MHA and garner support for its mission.

For Jekich, the launch of the Merina Healing Arts Foundation and the groundswell of community support reinforce her commitment. “It’s been a long road but we are just beginning the journey. I am pleased by the outpouring of community support and am excited we will be able to work together to make a difference in so many lives through therapeutic arts,” she said.



When parents lose a child, a simple memory box can help bring comfort and some closure at a critical time of need.

