

# Passionate Art Work

*New York artist, after losing her job, moves to Stuart and begins teaching classes, for free, to area residents because of her passion for what she does.*



**Janet leads an art class for students.**  
Photo courtesy of Artists for a Cause

by Terry Barber  
Community contributor

In April, the local nonprofit organization, Artists for a Cause, met an artist with a truly remarkable story. She learned about the organization while seeking volunteer opportunities online, and swiftly registered to become part of a national network of artists looking to use their talent for community improvement. However, Janet, like many other talented and experienced local artists, is struggling financially. In fact, though she has incredible work experience and an advanced degree, she is currently homeless, living in a shelter in Stuart.

Janet holds a Masters in Fine Arts with a Minor in Psychology and was an educator at the New York City Children's Museum. Additionally, she taught painting and ceramic lessons at an adult training center for the disabled.

Her work in New York was praised, but when the museum made major cutbacks a few years ago due to financial issues, Janet was among many to be let go, and her difficulty began.

She looked for a new job in the New York area, but couldn't find the opportunity in her field that she wanted. Eventually, she lost financial stability, but not hope.

A friend had offered her enough support to make the journey to Florida, a place she had always wanted to live. She landed in Stuart, an arts destination, with promise.

Janet's training and experience made

her a perfect candidate to participate in the Artists for a Cause "Therapeutic Arts" program. The organization put her to work both with elderly patients and kids in at-risk communities, teaching them watercolor basics; using the arts as a vehicle to overcome physical pain, social and emotional struggles.

Janet said that her class participants are encouraged to express themselves artistically, touching on areas that may be difficult to express verbally. Aside from strengthening their communication and motor skills, her classes also improve students' self-esteem and reinforce their ability to meet deadlines and work as part of a team.

Janet walked from Stuart to Ft. Pierce to complete her first outreach at Broadmoor Assisted Living, before Artists for a Cause was fully aware of her situation and provided her with a bike.

Her lessons were so well received by those she served at various facilities, that Artists for a Cause was able to secure

her a regular opportunity at the Boys and Girls Club of Martin County, serving children ages nine to 11.

The organization is looking to create more job opportunities for her, and the hundreds of other deserving visual and performing artists in their network.

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Though Janet's current lesson plan consists of guided therapeutic water-color sessions, she plans to expand her repertoire to include different art mediums. Delighted by her experience working with Artists for a Cause, she also predicts that this is the beginning of a lasting and rewarding endeavor.

"I feel very fortunate to have found opportunity with Artists for a Cause. I'm honored to work with such a committed group of artists as an educator. It has always been my goal as an artist to teach the healing power of art. I can't thank Artists for a Cause enough for helping me to carry out my calling." Janet said.

*– Terry Barber is founder and president of Artists for a Cause.*



**Janet teaches therapeutic arts programs that use water colors.**  
Photo courtesy of Artists for a Cause

**NYC**

**Janet moved to Florida after losing her job in New York City because of financial cutbacks.**

**Artists for a Cause was founded to help artists like Janet** to use their talents for community improvement. Specifically, the "Therapeutic Arts" program provides support for artists, and allows them to bring arts experiences to people who might not have access to them otherwise. The program focuses on the therapeutic benefits that visual and performing arts can have.

## IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH

According to research, classes like those guided by Janet, are conducive to improved mental health. The American Art Therapy association asserts that artistic expression helps people of all ages to develop better interpersonal skills and resolve conflicts, while increasing their self-awareness and self-esteem. Recent studies carried out by the University of Toronto also demonstrate the efficacy of art therapy as applied to clients with conditions ranging from Alzheimer's to anxiety and depression.

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**Artists for a Cause is helping Janet in her job search.**  
Photo courtesy of Artists for a Cause