



Newsletter

0105/12

For more information, contact:

Karen Campbell, Communications
The Rose

kcampbell@therose.org
832.474.9008

Pink Days Offer Comfort and Joy as Participants Create While They Wait

HOUSTON – If the music and buzz of activity going on through the open double doors doesn't lure patients waiting for their screening or diagnostic procedure into the conference room, the smell of coffee and tempting pink cupcakes will!

Since June of 2011, each first Tuesday of the month has been declared a Pink Day at The Rose with various artists and volunteers giving their time and talents to provide a calming presence and brief distraction for clients in the waiting room at The Rose Galleria. Thanks to the generosity of a grant by Pink Ribbons Project 352 sponsored procedures have been covered for 117 patients who are uninsured and the doors have been open wide to the therapeutic power of art.

Kermit Eisenhut has led two of the Tuesdays, instructing clients and, often, the friends and family members who have come to support them, in painting small canvases. Terri King brought her three children –two teens and a young adult – to assist her with the needlework project she shared with clients. Jessica Stricker turned the conference room into a jewelry boutique and showed women how to design their own earrings. Kay Kemp spread the tables with scraps of materials, trinkets, and baubles which were then transformed into beautiful three-dimensional cards and bookmarks. Lori Betz offered up sculpting tips and clients walked away with more jewelry or ornaments for the upcoming holidays. And Jamie Collier did a combination art/science project using photosensitive paper to create contrasts in color similar to batik.

Volunteers are critical to the success of the program as they encourage clients to join the fun and then find that a listening ear may be even more valuable than the creative expression the client will be taking home. One male volunteer, Bill, was especially helpful as an obviously distraught and anxious husband awaited word on his wife's diagnostics. At first engaged with the painting project, he soon became too restless and abandoned his second painting in order to sit fretfully in the waiting room. A female volunteer had already noted that the man seemed most receptive to letting his guard down

with Bill rather than the women volunteering with the project. At her suggestion, Bill joined the husband for the duration of his wait, sometimes talking, sometimes simply sitting in silence. The beam on the husband's face when his wife emerged with good news and his quick trip back into the art area to retrieve his gift for her was a reward for all involved.

Clients complete surveys to chronicle strengths and weaknesses of the program. Evaluations have ranged from "perfect" to "awesome" with one comment noting that it was a "relaxed experience and much different from the uncomfortable one I anticipated."

Pink Ribbons Project not only takes care of the cost of the procedures done for any sponsored patients during Pink Days, they also cover a small honorarium for the artists and additional supplies needed for the projects outside those donated by the artists themselves.

Jessica Stricker, whose nonprofit Sweet Notions uses sales of repurposed jewelry to benefit women coming out of vulnerable situations such as human trafficking, was happy to donate items to Pink Days. However, her generosity was stretched as one woman stayed long after her appointment to complete 15 pairs of beautifully designed earrings. Jessica confessed that she was about to limit any further creations when the woman announced that she was ready to leave. Jessica breathed a sigh of relief and was about to offer encouraging words about all the woman had been able to accomplish when the woman said "Here" and offered up the tray of her completed projects. Jessica, obviously confused, paused and the woman filled in the blanks. "I haven't felt creative in so very long. You gave me a gift. And now I want to give one to you. Please take these and sell them to help your cause."

While never wanting to measure the success of any program by the bad news that's discovered, Pink Ribbons Project and The Rose do celebrate lives saved. In November, one of the sponsored patients who had benefitted from Pink Days learned that she did indeed have breast cancer. Fortunately, a navigator with The Rose was able to find funding and help her access timely treatment. She had surgery before the holidays.

"Our sponsored patients are incredible. They are so very often working women who struggle to provide for their families and put their health last among their priorities," said Dorothy Gibbons, Co-Founder and CEO of The Rose. "To be able to offer them not only breast health care but to also interrupt their constant giving of themselves and gift them with a fun, creative experience is truly a pleasure. We are so grateful to Pink Ribbons Project for making these days possible."

The program has been deemed such a success that it has been extended for another six months. Loubel Cruz Galik, Executive Director of Pink Ribbons Project, joins Dorothy in praise for Pink Days, "Pink Ribbons Project is honored to continue to fund the Pink Days at The Rose. We believe it is such a unique and life-saving program that not only offers services to The Rose patients, but also brings in our mission to use the arts to promote breast health, save lives and improve the quality of life for those touched by breast cancer."

Enthusiasm for Pink Days seems to be contagious. Lori Betz was so captivated with the project that she has now assumed the role of enlisting artists to assist with Pink Days. Volunteers are now recruited by not only The Rose staff but the Breast Health Collaborative as well.

For more information or to volunteer, please email info@therose.org.

###