

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

"Perhaps the best way to describe the success of the art therapy program is to directly quote the comments provided by nursing home staff across the state of Alabama in exit interviews regarding program impact for residents in their care."

**~ Gayle Boswell, Executive Director
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Mrs. D has been in the nursing home for three years. She is in the early stage of dementia and suffers from depression. Before starting the art program, she refused to come out of her room and was becoming more and more depressed. She is now an active participant and will tell you that the art program has brought her out of her depression and out of her room. She now eats in the dining room and participates in other activities.

Mrs. B was a resident who was supposedly unable to write her name and usually used an "X" as her signature. But recently when the residents were asked to sign their art, she shocked the room by clearly writing the letter B (although backwards). It is now her new signature, and everyone is beyond proud for her!

One resident was a loner, always sitting in his wheelchair in the hall or on the porch. He was socially isolated and had limited use of the left side of his body. He rejected many invitations to join the art activities; however, he finally joined the group one day and has attended every week since. He had never attended any other activities the NH offered until now.

Another resident constantly deals with anxiety, mood swings and uncertainty due to her progressive dementia and she is going deaf. When she attends the art sessions, her mood lightens – she's in her own world and is completely calm, never agitated or anxious.

Some residents are not physically able to participate in the art activities but would like to be involved. The staff makes every possible effort to accommodate everyone who wants to participate. One resident who is blind is allowed to feel the materials while staff describe the project. Her husband also attends the sessions and it becomes a morning "date" for them. They are always the first ones sitting at the table waiting for the program to start. He and the staff give her hand-over-hand assistance. She made the statement that she loves the art sessions and "appreciates not being left out because of something she couldn't control."

More direct quotes and comments from nursing home staff:

- It has offered an outlet for expression and given our residents a sense of pride and accomplishment. One of our residents who exhibited violent behaviors got involved in the art program and is now calm. She is really involved in the art and is very meticulous when doing her art. Her artwork was entered in the contest. (Note: This comment was from Diversicare of Boaz, one of the art contest winners.)
- Art has lifted their spirit, improved social interaction, allows them to express their own personal outlook, gives them a sense of happiness and peace.
- Residents have been witnessed to be calmer and more easily directed. This program gives them something to look forward to and another form of expression.
- This is a way to express themselves. Took pride when their art was displayed.
- (When asked if the art program has been beneficial to your residents) “Yes” is not a strong enough word! It has reduced behaviors and improved their quality of life.
- Residents look forward to art. It has made them aware that activities can be used to help them get involved and to use their motor skills. CNAs are more involved. Families also enjoy it and are impressed by the program.
- Improved behaviors. Residents look forward to art. They even invited their families.
- Residents are happy, joyful. Twelve to fifteen participate, but some just enjoying watching.
- The art program has engaged the residents. They look forward to it. Residents who had been quiet and reserved became more social. They called it the “art club” and really enjoy displaying their work.
- Wonderful! Gives them a sense of identity back, purpose, pride, sense of self-worth. One resident came off both anti-psychotic and pain meds. Became more alert, proud. Did art for her family. Medical director is so impressed that he has volunteered to buy art supplies to enable them to continue the program.
- Art has motivated residents to participate in more activities. The art training helped to motivate the CNAs.
- Residents enjoy art and displaying their work in the facility.
- Can see more participation from residents who normally won’t/don’t. Really helps bring them out of their rooms.
- Program really helps with emotional control/keeping peace.
- Thank you for making the residents and me (activity director) realize that there’s much quality of life remaining even in residents who are verbally unable to communicate.
- It has played an instrumental role in giving our residents an opportunity to be engaged and to stimulate them socially and sensory. I was so amazed at the difference in their behaviors and talents.



- Program and supplies were a major success. The residents, sponsors and staff enjoyed the program. It was meaningful and motivated others with little or no leisure preference to actively and/or passively engage in the program. As a recreational therapist, it was meaningful because, as a team, we re-created leisure for the residents. Residents stated, “We like doing art because we get to hang it in our rooms.”
- This program is how we were able to find adult art that the residents in memory care unit could complete no matter what level, and they really enjoyed it.
- It’s always been amazing to me to feel the creativity you feel when you participate in art activities. I feel like that’s the same thing our residents get when they participate in art.
- At first residents were hesitant, but now more involved and love to see their artwork on the walls.
- We’ve always had art, but the tricks we’ve used (bundled q-tips, bubble wrap) have enabled more residents with no desire for art to look forward to “class and has brought out past art interest as well. Overall the art program has been wonderful for the residents. Their different styles have come through and given them a sense of accomplishment.
- Residents have enjoyed their sense of accomplishment. We have been able to create a “wall of art” for visitors and families to enjoy as well. Everyone is amazed at their abilities!

