

New lives unfolding...

In 2013 A Window Between Worlds began a collaboration with Habitat for Humanity, San Fernando/ Santa Clarita Valleys to offer art-making as a tool for reintegration and addressing trauma. Donna E. Deutchman, Chief Executive Officer, wrote this article to illustrate the important impact art has on their programs.



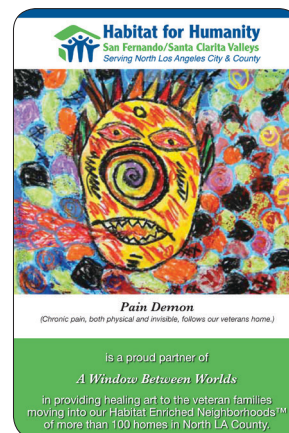
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A Window Between Worlds has been selected as a "best practice" and core required program in a new model to address the needs of veterans throughout the State of California. Habitat for Humanity, San Fernando/ Santa Clarita Valleys and the California Department of Veteran Affairs are collaborating to provide low-income veterans with a homeownership opportunity which they would not otherwise be able to afford, along with enrichment services specifically designed to empower veterans with the knowledge, education and social services they require to become healthy and self-sufficient. The goal is to leverage their homeownership into a better future for themselves and their children.

Known as the Enriched Neighborhood™ model, this out-come based home ownership and supportive services approach is being replicated throughout California. AWBW has been selected to play a vital role in efforts to bring veterans together, reintegrate them with their families, address issues of PTSD and military sexual trauma, and emerge as stronger, more hopeful, more empowered members of our community.

Take the case of Byron R., a US Navy veteran serving in the Reserves who now owns a home and participated in AWBW through Habitat. This Chatsworth veteran noted that "Every returning service member goes through a readjustment period." About AWBW he told us, "At first I thought it [creating art] was a little weird...then a simple project about talking heads got to some intense anger about my father who wants to be in my life for the first time, now after being absent for so long." Byron has been considering this art and keeps it and other AWBW projects on his office desk at the Vet Center. He feels that "Once I get over the anger, maybe we can have some kind of relationship."

Another veteran, a female Army Nurse from the Vietnam era, only recently began talking about the military sexual trauma she experienced during her service. At Habitat's annual Women's Build, she shared this long-held secret with the 300 women in attendance and shared "Habitat's Enriched Neighborhood™ and its art program (AWBW) have not only changed my life; they have given me life."



Based on annual evaluations submitted by 114 Adult WIndows active programs in 2016:

93% of Leaders reported participants making breakthroughs enabling them to take decisive steps forward in their lives

96% of Leaders reported participants were more likely to use professional counseling support after creating art

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