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AWBWI

art transforming trauma

A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

“It was easier for me to put paint to paper than say the words out loud.”

CHILDREN'S WINDOWS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

WHO WE ARE

A Window Between Worlds is a 501(c)3 nonprofit based in Venice, California with a network of transformative arts programs at partnering human service agencies nationwide. Our programs provide art as a tool for empowerment and healing to hundreds of thousands of women, men and children who have experienced violence and trauma. Our goal is replacing violence and shame with safety and hope.



WHO WE REACH

Our network of partners includes domestic violence shelters, sexual assault agencies, homeless shelters, veteran's programs, foster youth services, substance abuse treatment centers, school districts, community programs, and more.



TRAUMA AND ART

- Up to 70% of people will be impacted by trauma in their lifetime¹
- Up to 43% experience trauma by the age of 18²
- Creation of art³:
 - reduces distress
 - increases self-reflection and self-awareness
 - alters behavior and thinking patterns
 - has positive physical effects
 - causes specific brain regions to interact, leading to stronger resilience



2016 PROGRAM IMPACT

- 32,394 Unique Participants
- 13,562 Art Workshops
- 1,284 Windows Leaders
- 365 Locations
- Leaders report that Windows Programs improve children's and youth's:
 - relationships with parents: 96%
 - relationships with peers: 99%
 - levels of fear, anxiety and depression: 97%
 - ability to communicate in a non-violent way: 99%
- Adult Participants report that Windows Programs helped them to:
 - more easily express themselves: 95%
 - identify the difficult things they were experiencing: 88%
 - find courage to make healthy decisions for the future: 92%

1: Public Education Committee, ISTSS, (2000). *When a friend or loved one has been traumatized* [pamphlet]. 2000. Retrieved from istss.org/public_resources

2: Public Education Committee, ISTSS, (2000). *Children and trauma* [pamphlet]. Retrieved from istss.org/public_resources

3: Bolwerk, A., Mack-Andrick J., Lang F.R., Dörfler, A., Maihöfner, C. (2014) *How art changes your brain*. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0101035

AWBW/About Us



OUR MISSION

A Window Between Worlds is dedicated to cultivating and supporting a network of transformative arts programs that empower individuals and communities impacted by violence and trauma.

OUR VISION

A Window Between Worlds views art as a catalyst to release trauma, build resilience and ignite social change. When individuals create art in a safe community they can be heard and respected – replacing violence and shame with safety and hope.



OUR HISTORY

In 1991 Cathy Salser, Los Angeles-based artist and teacher, set out to share visual expression as a tool for empowerment with survivors of domestic violence. Herself a survivor, Cathy led art workshops at shelters across the country, witnessing new opportunities for healing. She recognized that, through these workshops, windows of safety and time were opened for these women to freely tell their stories, and A Window Between Worlds (AWBW) was born.

As a result of the concrete progress art made possible in these survivor's lives, the Women's Windows Program was soon piloted in 17 Los Angeles-based domestic violence shelters.

In 1994 Cathy was invited by then-Senator Joe Biden and Senator Paul Wellstone to exhibit portraits of domestic violence survivors she had met on her journey at the Russell Senate Office Building as support for the Violence Against Women Act.

In 1996 the Los Angeles Domestic Violence Counsel asked AWWB to create a Children's Windows Program to meet the unique needs of children living in shelters in LA County.

AWBW has grown exponentially in the past 26 years, with workshops now facilitated at 365 partnering agencies nationwide. In 2015 AWWB broadened its mission to make trainings and curriculum applicable to various populations impacted by violence and trauma.



A Window Between Worlds is at the center of a network of transformative arts programs at partnering human service agencies nationwide. AWWB's programs allow these partnering organizations to expand their offerings to best serve those who are coping with the consequences of a variety of violent and traumatic experiences.

Leadership Trainings

Established employees of human service agencies may apply to become Windows Leaders. Training sessions including trauma-informed care approaches and experiential art workshops. Advanced trainings on specific topics are also available to previously trained Leaders.

Adult and Children's Windows Programs

Through weekly hands-on art experiences on-site at our partnering agencies, participants are provided a safe environment in which to express themselves and tell their stories. Workshop projects center on themes to support the healing process, including resilience-building, healthy decision-making, handling anger, and identifying, naming and expressing emotions.

Ongoing Support and Curriculum

AWBW Program Department personnel are consistently in direct contact with all active Windows Leaders, along with sending monthly email updates. Through awbw.org Leaders can access and search over 500 workshops in our ever-evolving curriculum. Additionally, AWWB allocates art supply allowances and community outreach funding.

Community Art Initiatives

By connecting with local socially engaged artists, such as Kim Abeles and Fabian Debora, AWWB brings Windows art into Los Angeles communities in collaboration with our program partners to raise awareness and strengthen the anti-violence movement.

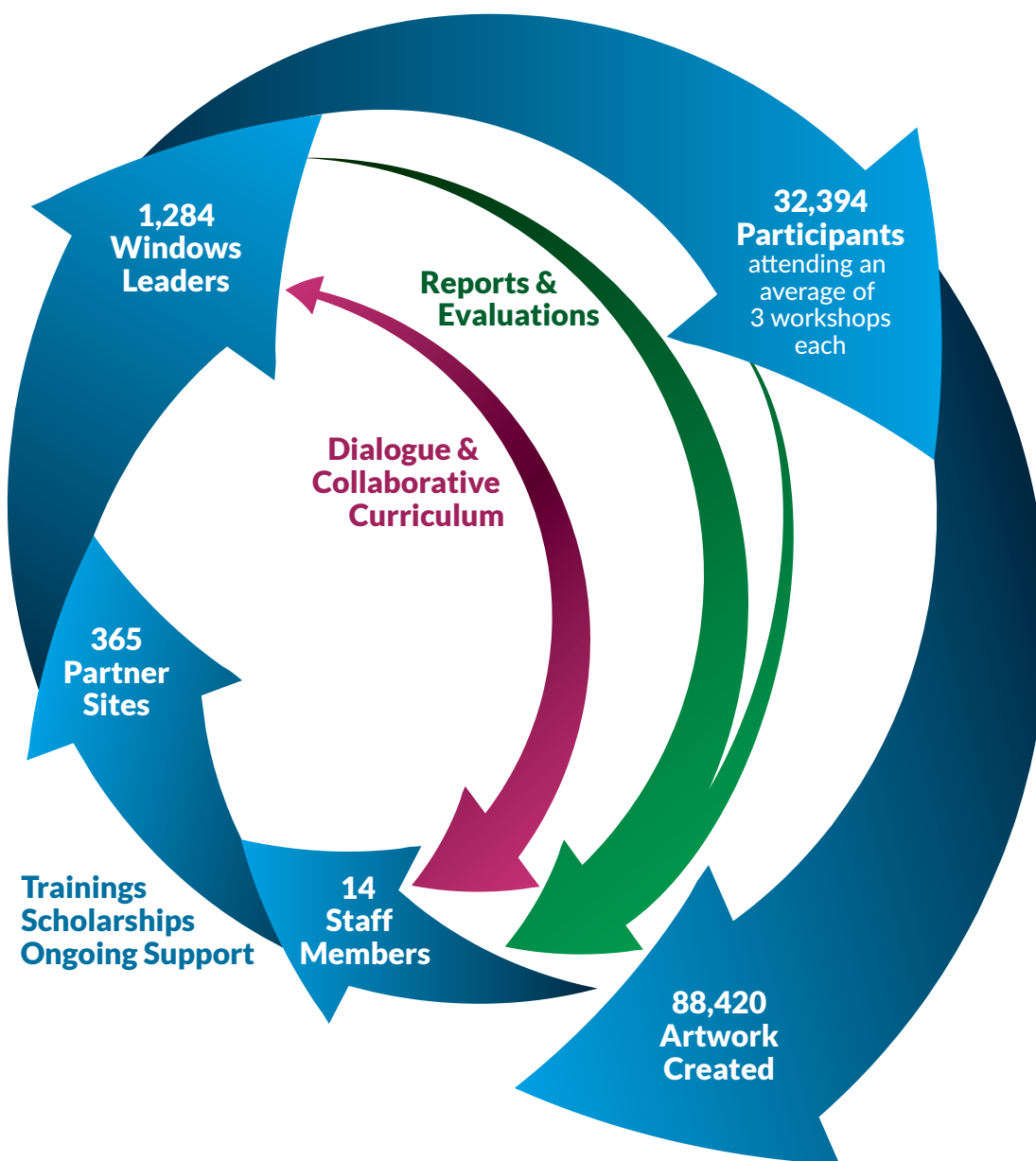
THANK YOU TO ALL OUR FUNDERS WHO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE, INCLUDING:



AWBW/Community of Practice Model

As a community of practice we are constantly learning and evolving through our partnerships with multiple human service agencies and their staff. Through these mutually beneficial relationships we are able to lift up and share best approaches to addressing trauma through art, allowing us all to deepen and expand our collective expertise.

This diagram illustrates how this community of practice operates and includes statistics from 2016.



AWBW/Adult Program Impact

Windows Leader's complete monthly reports for the workshops they facilitate, as well as fill out an annual evaluation, providing quantitative data about the impact of our programs.



In 2016 AWWB...

launched
21 new adult programs

supported
642 Adult Leaders
at **198 sites**

These Windows Leaders...

worked with
17,970 participants
(each adult participating in an average of 2.4 workshops)

Participant demographics:

Female: 88%
Male: 12%
Other: 0%

18-25 years old: 20%
25-35 years: 40%
35-65 years: 32%
65+ years: 8%

African American: 16%
Asian/Pacific Islander: 7%
Latino/Latina: 41%
Native American: 3%
White: 28%
Other: 5%



Out of 114 adult sites submitting annual evaluations, 94% agreed that the art workshops help participants take decisive steps in their lives to break the cycle of violence. Adult Windows Leaders also reported that:

Windows Programs are highly effective in helping adults to...

- Take time to tune into their needs and future goals: 93%
- Make breakthroughs that enable them to take decisive steps forward in their lives: 94%
- Use professional counseling support: 96%

Adult participants are given the option to complete evaluations at the end of each workshop. In 2016* Adult Windows Program participants agreed that:

Windows Programs helped me to...

- More easily express myself: 95%
- Open up about things I had never shared before: 88%
- Identify the difficult things I was experiencing: 88%
- Feel more positive about myself and my future: 94%
- Find courage to make healthy decisions for the future: 92%
- Have a better relationship with my children: 86%



* We received 2,917 participant evaluations in 2016

AWBW/Adult Program Voices

I think the most valuable aspect of the art project was being able to express the history of my pain and, in creating this expression of my pain, I've released its grasp of my soul.

Adult Windows Participant

For the first time some of our clients, with crayon in hand, begin to believe they can create something beautiful.

Adult Windows Leader

My first collage expressed a lot of hurt, sadness, and being afraid of tomorrow. My new collage reflects positive words and a new beginning for me and my children. I am looking ahead with a new outlook at life.

Adult Windows Participant

Every workshop is a cleanse of my soul, leaving space for the new, the beautiful and the discovery of the self!

Adult Windows Participant

We could not do what we do without the AWWB program and workshops. It's the way our participants and other community members come together.

Adult Windows Leader

At the beginning I thought "How could cutting and gluing my thoughts on paper be helpful?" However, by the end of the session, I was in tears — healing tears. Just as the sun rays break through on a stormy day, I too will break through my storm and shine again. Thank you!

Adult Windows Participant

The Windows groups just seem to help women define goals and remove self-blame in a way that no other groups do.

Adult Windows Leader

It is supportive and liberating to create not just the art but the relationships with all involved.

Adult Windows Participant

Before being in the workshop, I couldn't have imagined that with colors and figures I would be able to remove my sadness as well as see my future and my dreams.

Adult Windows Participant

The AWWB workshops give the families an opportunity to not only appreciate art but one another as well. I have seen workshops allow mothers and their children to enjoy and learn from each other.

Adult Windows Leader

When doing the art, I have the ability to put things in perspective.

Adult Windows Participant

The workshop made me realize that there are other women that have the same feelings as me and that I am not alone.

Adult Windows Participant

The art helps women let down their walls; it helps them connect with each other in a way they don't in the groups that are just talking.

Adult Windows Leader

These workshops have shown me that I do have talent and I look forward to incorporating art into my everyday life.

Adult Windows Participant

I felt good after expressing the things that for so long I couldn't express. And because of this workshop I was able to with no fear!

Adult Windows Participant

You can read books and pamphlets, but I think with my hands making things. It works to wake up a part of me that was dead.

Adult Windows Participant

This project was cool because I was able to see my story go from negative to positive.

Adult Windows Participant



AWBW/Children's Program Impact

Windows Leader's complete monthly reports for the workshops they facilitate, as well as fill out an annual evaluation, providing quantitative data about the impact of our programs.



In 2016 AWWB...

launched
15 new children's programs

supported
642 Children's Leaders
at **167 sites**

These Windows Leaders...

worked with
14,424 participants
(each child/youth participating in an average of 3.1 workshops)

Participant demographics:

Female: 61%
Male: 38%
Other: 1%

0-2 years old: 9%
3-5 years: 18%
6-12 years: 34%
13-17 years: 39%

African American: 15%
Asian/Pacific Islander: 8%
Latino/Latina: 43%
Native American: 3%
White: 26%
Other: 5%



Out of 99 children's sites submitting annual evaluations in 2016, 99% reported witnessing significant growth and healing in children/youth that participated in art workshops over a period of time. Additional observations by trained Children's Windows Leaders include:

Windows Programs are highly effective in helping children/youth to...

- Open up and express themselves: 93%
- Build trust with staff and use support more readily: 92%
- Envision positive impacts they want to have on their life and the world around them: 85%
- Reduce self-destructive behaviors: 75%
- Make breakthroughs, specifically those with the most difficulty connecting: 86%

Windows Programs improves the children's/youth's...

- Sense of confidence and independence: 100%
- Relationships with peers: 99%
- Relationships with parents: 96%
- Ability to handle anger, conflict and communication in a non-violent way: 96%
- Levels of depression, anxiety and fear: 97%



AWBW/Children's Program Voices

Now that I did this activity I feel like a rock was taken off my chest.

Children's Windows Participant, Age 14

When I made this project it helped me to find my identity and my self.

Children's Windows Participant, Age 17

There was one ten-year old girl in our shelter who seemed very depressed. I asked her to draw me a picture of her life, and then two weeks later I asked her to draw me a picture of her life again. In the second picture there was light coming through.

Children's Windows Leader

The dripping paint represents my tears of pain.

Children's Windows Participant, Age 15

The art workshop helped the kids feel more open to say why they are here, and the sharing helped them see that they had all been through the same things.

Children's Windows Leader

A 12-year old boy shared with us that the monster would come out in him when he used to bully children at school. When he did this workshop he started to cry and acknowledge that he did not want the monster to come out anymore.

Children's Windows Leader

Every time I think I don't want to do art, but then I do it and I don't feel angry anymore.

Children's Windows Participant, Age 7

I have my sad heart and
I have my happy heart;
when I do art my heart is happy.

Children's Windows Participant, Age 4

The place I am happiest is here.

Children's Windows Participant, Age 12

I want to draw the freedom I feel. When I came to the shelter almost two years ago I had many secrets, but now I know I can talk to those I can trust.

Children's Windows Participant, Age 10



One young boy was talking with a child new to the shelter. The newcomer was crying and scared; the slightly older boy was trying to comfort him and said, "Just wait 'til Friday when we have Windows. Everything will be all right then."

Children's Windows Leader

I get mad from school and yell at my mom, but today I can yell at the paper.

Children's Windows Participant, Age 10

The Windows program has transformed our entire agency. It has brought all of our hearts together in a wonderful way. The parents are responding differently. The children are different. I'm different.

Children's Windows Leader

My face was an aggressive face. After making it, I did not feel like that anymore.

Children's Windows Participant, Age 13

This program really helps to get the participation and response from all the children we have done group with. They love all the different activities and want to come back for more.

Children's Windows Leader

It's amazing seeing a hurt and troubled child transform into a creative and positive one through the art.

Children's Windows Leader

When you look at all my feelings together, I am a whole girl.

Children's Windows Participant, Age 8



I was no longer the same...

Eighteen years after first finding A Window Between Worlds, Silvia Rico shares the critical window of change art opened in her heart and how she is now fulfilling her dream of giving back, using art to transform the lives of other domestic violence survivors.



“When I left the abusive relationship (with my children) for the last time, I knew it was the art that had allowed me to let go of my past.”

For many years I experienced both physical and verbal abuse by my husband, the father of my children. It was something I always hid. I felt that I was the one who was wrong. My abuse was something that I lived every day and I was completely blind. I took DV classes and only saw it as a problem of others.

In 1994, I entered a domestic violence shelter, Chicana Service Action Center. There I was exposed to the AWBW program. It was the first time I used art to express the feelings I had inside. That night, while meditating and thinking about the class, I felt a great tranquility that was hard to explain. It was then that my dream was born to one day teach this class.

While I continued to live in the same house with my abuser, I found refuge in the art. The AWBW program helped me get my most profound feelings out. I remember when creating art, my pictures were all wet. I cried a lot when I made them. I think my heart moved my hands.

Once, when I was separated from my abuser, he swore to me that he had changed, so I went back to him again. I returned with hope, only to go back to more suffering. But thanks to my art, I was no longer the same. His comments affected me less, and I was sure I didn't trigger or provoke his blows. I knew it was he who could not control himself.

Without the art, I would still be lost. I would be without hope, resigned to continue believing that the situation I was in was normal and what I deserved. When I left the abusive relationship (with my children) for the last time, I knew it was the art that had allowed me to let go of my past. It made me responsible for myself, to decide how I wanted to live my life and create a better future with my children.

Now, my dream to give back has come true. I am very proud to teach what I have personally proven to heal and cure, to help other victims of domestic violence through art to see the world that our abusers would not let us see. As a newly certified Windows Leader at California Mental Health Connection, it is my joy to take away the bandages we have over our eyes and see the light that illuminates our road ahead. Art is my voice; through art I can shout from the depths of my being; it is freedom!



Based on 2,921 participant evaluations submitted in 2016:

95% of adults found the workshops helped them more easily express themselves

94% of adults felt more positively about themselves after participating in a Windows workshop

Finding a positive path...

63% of boys age 11-20 who commit murder, kill the man who was abusing their mother.*
A child witnessing domestic violence is the strongest risk factor for transmitting violent behavior to the next generation.** What children DO with what they've witnessed is critical. Art can be a window of safety for children to find a positive path through trauma.



“He was finally able to put a face on his anger... He became a mentor to the new kids at the shelter and encouraged them to share their feelings.”

A seven year-old boy had witnessed a lot of domestic violence and traumatic events in a short period of time. When he came to the shelter with his mom and family, he was extremely impacted by these events and had many behavioral issues. He acted out constantly – angry, lashing out, and violent. When anyone tried to talk with him about the anger and his feelings, he would shrink back and detach, eyes glazed over. It was as if he lost any connection with his body.

One day, he had a terrible outburst. To calm him, I did the Monster in Me art project with him. He was very quiet in the beginning, drawing on his own and not using any words. I wasn't sure if he was getting anything out of it. When he was finished with his art, his monster had no ears. He wrote that since his monster didn't have ears, he was not able to hear himself yelling. Somehow, realizing this, he felt he could now stop yelling.

This was a big turn around for him. He was finally able to put a face on his anger and had a better understanding of the feelings that resulted from his trauma. After that workshop, he started to share and communicate more. He became a mentor to the new kids at the shelter and encouraged them to share their feelings. We created a Feelings Faces poster together. He drew all the faces and came up with the feelings that were shown.

He has since left the shelter, and his mom and teachers have shared that now he is more in touch with his feelings, and is able to express himself in healthier ways.



Based on annual evaluations submitted by 99 active Children's Windows programs in 2016:
96% of Leaders reported the art workshops helped the children to communicate in a non-violent way

* National Coalition Against Domestic Violence & FBI Crime Statistics.

** American Psychology Association Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family

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.



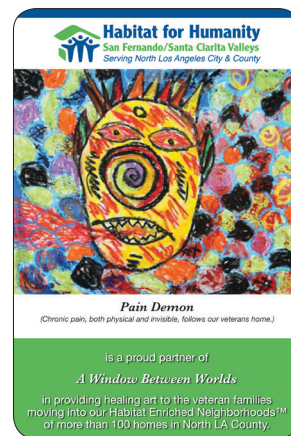
"At first I thought it was a little weird... then a simple project got to some intense anger."

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

Speaking freely from the heart...

After escaping domestic violence, survivors are left with the heavy task of repairing their remaining family relationships, and children have limited tools to express what they have experienced. Leaders share that for many participants, the Feeling Friends workshop is a safe way to acknowledge their feelings and open communication.



*“Since that day
I have seen a
complete change
in the girl’s
ability to
cope.”*

An eight year-old girl who was residing at the shelter was exhibiting a lot of adverse behavior: she refused to attend school and was violent with the other children. One day, she had such an intense and overwhelming episode that we called the Psychiatric Emergency Team (PET).

Unable to communicate her feelings, the girl sat mute in the corner, refusing to talk or make eye contact. While waiting for the PET team to arrive I knew that I needed to find a way for her to access and process her inner turmoil. I decided to combine the Feeling Friends and Heart Stories workshops so she could speak freely from her heart, through her art.

Using AWWB’s Feeling Faces chart made it easy to create a small banner that contained the different feeling words that empowered the girl to identify and define a myriad of feelings and emotions. She created three hearts on her project. Each heart contained a feeling word. The girl wrote safety in the largest heart which allowed me to recognize her need for safety and reinforced that she would not articulate or trust us enough to share her emotions until she felt safe.

The art was so effective in helping her regulate her emotions that by the time the PET team arrived they didn’t need to take her! Once I discovered what a wonderful communication tool the project was, I shared it with her mother and helped the girl hang it on the wall of her room. From that day on, every morning the girl would choose which feeling best represented how she felt that day and then placed the feeling word banner in her feeling friend’s hands. This ensured that the girl would not get embarrassed and hide her feelings, but rather



communicate her feelings through her feeling friend. Now her mother has insight into how to meet her daughter’s needs.

Since that day I have seen a complete change in the girl’s ability to cope. She is a lot more cooperative; she attends school and interacts with the other children in a positive way!

Based on annual evaluations submitted by 99 active Children’s Windows programs in 2016:

91% of Leaders reported the art workshops helped the children build more trust with the staff

96% of Leaders reported the Windows program made a positive difference in the children’s relationships with their parents