

# AWBWI/25

A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

*Celebrating 25 years... and seeding the next!*

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art transforming trauma

**awbw.org**

310.396.0317

710 4th Ave. #5 Venice, CA 90291

info@awbw.org

@AWBWorg

# AWBW / A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

## Fact Sheet



- Trauma and Art:**
- Up to 70% of people will be impacted by trauma in their lifetime<sup>1</sup>
  - Up to 43% experience trauma by the age of 18<sup>2</sup>
  - Creation of art<sup>3</sup>:
    - 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

**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.

**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.

**Scope:** In 2014 A Window Between Worlds (AWBW) unveiled a new mission, reflecting cross-sector and trauma-informed care approaches. During its first 23 years AWWB centered its outreach in the field of domestic violence, providing art interventions for over 159,000 women and children nationwide. Through the requests of trained Windows Leaders, as well as an ever-expanding understanding of trauma, our programs are now facilitated for a variety of populations impacted by violence and trauma.



Partnering California agencies include Habitat for Humanity - SF/SCV, The Salvation Army Haven, Los Angeles Unified School District, YWCA Wings, The Joe Torre Safe at Home Program, Jewish Family Service, Good Shepherd, The Latina Center, Peace Over Violence, UCLA CARE, and South Asian Network.

We continue exploring new partnerships with human service agencies, along with engaging the community through art initiatives, as we celebrate our 25th Anniversary. AWWB holds new trainings regularly, are launching a new initiative with Los Angeles-based artist and former gang member Fabian Debora, and hosted our first ever Art Transforming Trauma Conference in June 2016.

**2015 Arts Programs Impact:** • 23,814 Participants; 1,173 Trained Windows Leaders; 361 Locations

- Children's Windows Program Leaders:
  - 98% reported witnessing significant healing
  - 93% reported improvement in children's relationships with parents and peers
  - 99% reported children's improvement in handling anger and conflict
- Adult Windows Program Participants:
  - 95% more easily expressed themselves
  - 92% claimed more courage and ability to make decisive steps forward in their lives
  - 94% felt more positive about themselves



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

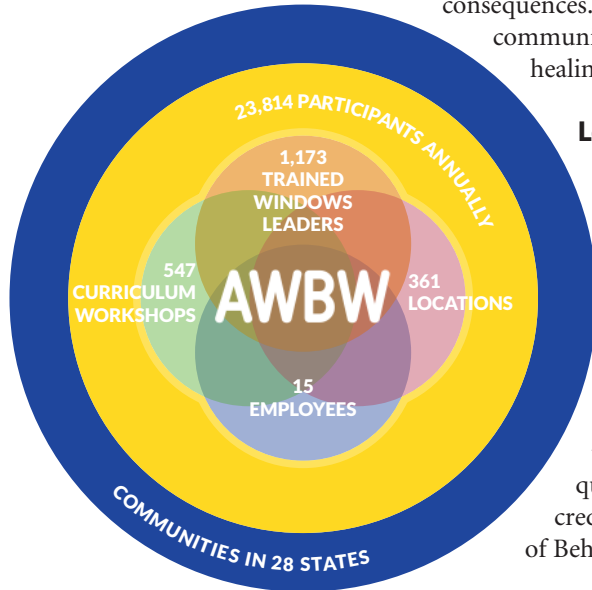
2: Public Education Committee, ISTSS, (2000). *Children and trauma* [pamphlet]. Retrieved from [istss.org/public\\_resources](http://istss.org/public_resources)

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 / A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

## About Us

**A** Window Between Worlds is at the center of a network of transformative arts programs for facilitators at human service agencies who work every day with those who have endured a variety of violent and traumatic experiences — and are coping with the consequences. Our training, programs, support and community outreach play a prominent role in the healing process of their clients.



### Leadership Trainings

Established employees of human service agencies may apply to become Windows Leaders. These applicants go through comprehensive experiential training sessions, including trauma-informed care approaches, before beginning to facilitate our curriculum. Advanced trainings addressing specific areas of focus are also available to previously trained Leaders. All trainings meet the qualifications for continuing education credits as required by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences.

### Adult and Children's Windows Programs

Through weekly hands-on art experiences on-site at our partnering agencies, those impacted by violence and trauma are provided a safe environment in which to express themselves and tell their stories. Workshop projects center on themes designed 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 contact with all active Windows Leaders by both phone and email. Leaders also receive a monthly email with updates, new workshops and spotlights of the work others are doing. Through [awbw.org](http://awbw.org) Leaders can access and search over 500 workshops in our ever-evolving curriculum. Additionally, AWBW allocates art supply allowances and community outreach funding.

### Community Art Initiatives

By using connecting with local socially engaged artists, such as Kim Abeles, Barbara T. Smith and Fabian Debora, AWBW brings Windows art into Los Angeles communities through workshops, events and exhibitions in order to raise awareness and strengthen the anti-violence movement. We encourage our Leaders to do the same — working beyond the agency setting to educate and transform individuals, families and communities.

### History

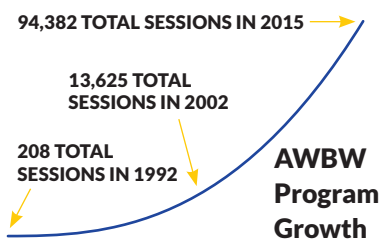
In 1991 Cathy Salser, Los Angeles-based artist and teacher, loaded her trunk full of art supplies and set out to share visual expression with survivors of domestic violence. Herself a survivor, Cathy led art workshops at shelters across the country, witnessing new opportunities for healing. She recognized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

Cathy also created portraits of the women she spent time with during her cross-country journey. In 1994 she was invited by then-Senator Joe Biden to exhibit in the rotunda of the Russel Senate Office Building as support for his Violence Against Women Act. According to Biden, this exhibition, allowed for "a 'window of understanding' into the strength and hopes of battered women nationwide."

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

Today AWBW workshops for people of are facilitated nationwide with a broadened mission to make training and curriculum applicable to various populations impacted by violence and trauma.



OUR WORK WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT. THANK YOU.



# AWBW / A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

## Windows Programs Settings

Since expanding the scope of our mission beyond domestic violence shelters, Windows Programs have been established in multiple settings. This is the breakdown of programs in 2015, along with examples of partnering agencies for each area.

### MENTAL HEALTH

- Center for Integrated Family Health
- Prototypes

### HOSPITAL / MEDICAL

- Kaiser Permanente Educational Outreach Program

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

- South Gate Police Department Family Violence Prevention

### PREVENTION

- All People's Community Center
- Peace Over Violence

### FAITH-BASED

- Helping Hands Resource Center
- Jewish Family Services
- Good Sheperd Shelter

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTERS

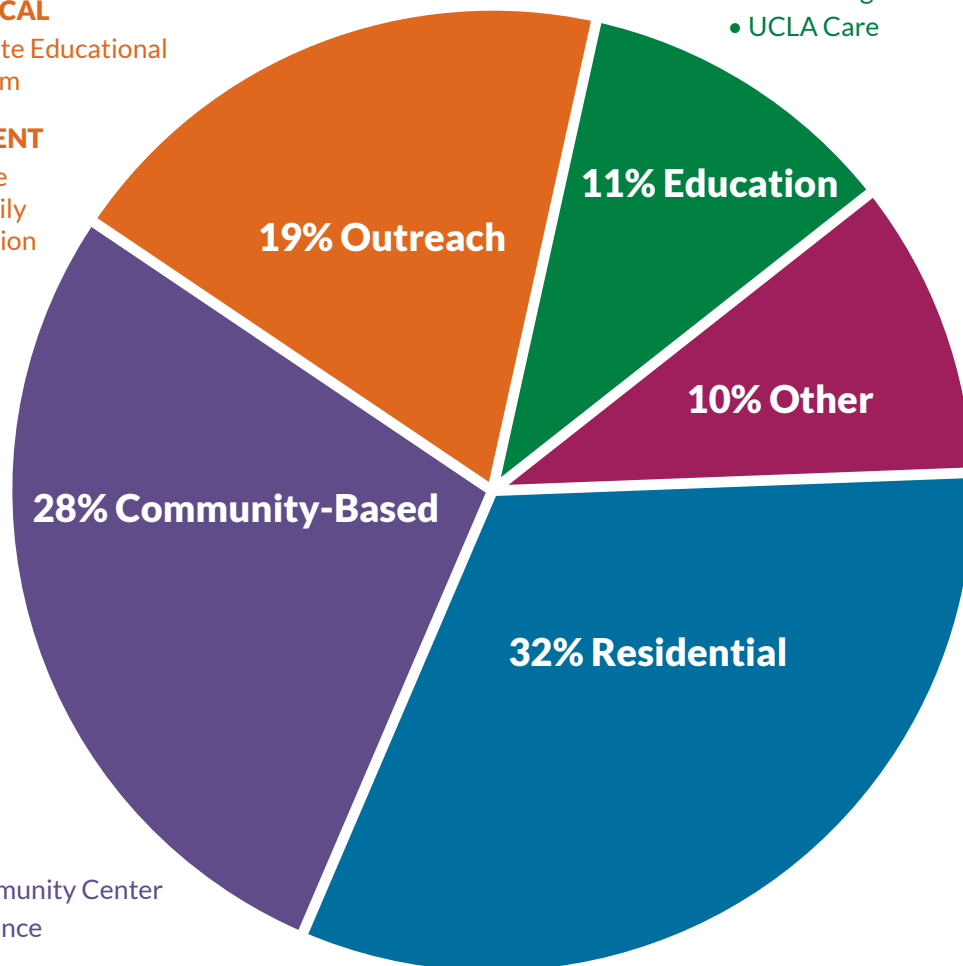
- Center for the Pacific-Asian Family
- Rainbow Services
- Haven Hills

### HOMELESS SHELTERS

- Union Rescue Mission

### K-12, COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Joe Torre Safe at Home Foundation & Margaret's Place
- New Village Girls Academy
- UCLA Care



### VETERANS HOUSING

- Habitat for Humanity SC/SFV
- Salvation Army Haven

### SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAMS

- Angel Step Inn

### DETENTION / RE-ENTRY PROGRAMS

- LA Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse
- Coalition for Engaged Education – Camp David Gonzalez

# AWBWI / A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

## 2015 Adult Windows Program Results

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 nationwide.



**In 2015 AWBWI...**  
 launched  
**24 new adult programs**  
 supported  
**640 Children's Leaders**

**These Windows Leaders...**

facilitated  
**5,760 workshops**  
 at **195 sites**  
 worked with  
**13,289 unique participants**  
 (each adult participating in an average of 3.4 workshops)



**Participant demographics:**

Female: 89%  
 Male: 11%  
 Other: 0%

18-25 years old: 24%  
 25-35 years: 38%  
 35-65 years: 32%  
 65+ years: 6%

African American: 15%  
 Asian/Pacific Islander: 7%  
 Latino/Latina: 41%  
 Native American: 6%  
 White: 30%  
 Other: 2%

**O**ut of 108 adults sites submitting annual evaluations, 95% 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 present needs and future goals: 90%
- Make breakthroughs, specifically those with the most difficulty connecting: 86%

**A**dult participants are given the option to complete evaluations at the end of each workshop. In 2015\* 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: 81%
- Identify the difficult things I was experiencing: 85%
- Feel more positive about myself and my future 93%
- Find courage to make healthy decisions for the future: 92%
- Have a better relationship with my children: 84%
- More likely to break the cycle of violence: 95%



\* We received 3,960 participant evaluations in 2015

# AWBW / A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

## Adult Windows Participant Voices

Art gives me an outlet for emotions that linger deep within.

The creative process lets them pour out.

Participant, *Turning Over A New Leaf*  
Safe Passage

This workshop brought me peace. With peace comes the strength to carry on.

Participant, *The Lotus Flower*  
Haven Women's Center of Stanislaus

This workshop has given me a healthy channel for my stress and depression. The art is a good release and helps inspire another side of me.

Participant, *Adult Windows Workshops*  
Community Corrections and Counseling Services, Inc.

I'm very happy and relieved that there is a place like your workshops where I can be given hope that there very well could be a happy ending in my life and for other woman like me.

Participant, *Sun Kisses, Moon Hugs*  
Jewish Family and Children's Service

I realized that I can be anything I choose to be. It will take work but I am worth saving.

Participant, *Vision Board*  
Prototypes – Ventura

This group has helped me to grow. There were times where it seemed I couldn't forgive myself but through these workshops I've gained great purpose.

Participant, *Thank Me Card*  
Heritage House Cottages –  
Southern California Alcohol & Drug Programs, Inc.

Being able to keep 'quiet' and say so much is a refreshing experience.

Participant, *Good Mother*  
Angel Step Inn – Los Angeles

This workshop has help me to see that not everything is based on ugliness and cruelty. There is a lot of love and good in my past as well as my future.

Participant, *Hands Mandala*  
Desert Sanctuary, Inc./Haley House

It felt good to express my feelings. I opened my mind to change.

Participant, *Daring Greatly*  
Rainbow Services

I truly connected with the art material. It reminded me of who I am and who I used to be before the abuse. In this moment, without a doubt, I know I am strong and a survivor.

Participant, *Touchstones*  
Casa de Esperanza

I made five little hearts within a large heart with wings to symbolize my family. My family makes my heart soar.

Participant, *Heart Stories*  
Habitat for Humanity SF/SCV- Enrichment Services

I finally have a place to share with wonderful souls and to connect with my inner voice of wisdom!

Participant, *Dream Pillows*  
Women's Addiction Treatment Center

After participating in this workshop, I can go home with my happiness and hopes of a better life.

Participant, *The Lotus Flower*  
Rainbow Services

Talking about my past experience of abuse was hard. Using art as a way to express myself really helped me to heal and let out my feelings in a safe way.

Participant, *Adult Windows Workshops*  
Between Friends

Thank you for helping me realize how valuable I am and that I don't deserve to be treated badly.

Participant, *Inspirational Scrolls*  
Prototypes – Hollywood

There's no limit to creativity. Art supports my visions for change.

Participant, *Touchstones*  
A Window Between Worlds Outreach

This workshop empowered me to reach deep inside to find peace and give myself permission to heal. Thank you.

Participant, *Theatre of the Oppressed*  
Survivor's Art Circle

This workshop has made me feel good and brand new for the day. My stress level is at zero now.

Participant, *Creating a Safe Place*  
House of Ruth – Counseling



# AWBW / A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

## Adult Windows Leader Voices

AWBW allows a new approach to standard group therapy. It opens new doors of expression.

Leader, The Salvation Army Haven – Senior Men

Continuing to build relationships and seeing the pride participants have in themselves and their artwork is rewarding. Having pride in oneself is a critical part of recovery.

Leader, Swain Recovery Center

Windows is a time for the women to be vulnerable and free. Women in prison do not get to enjoy this luxury in this capacity other than through AWW.

Leader, Los Angeles Centers for Alcohol and Drug Abuse

It was rewarding to see how much the senior women connected with the Touchstones workshop to identify coping strategies. I am proud to see some members of the group evolving and genuinely connecting with their emotions through the art projects.

Leader, Union Rescue Mission –  
Hope Gardens Family Center

Windows allows us to offer services that help our trauma and domestic violence clients increase their therapeutic growth potential.

Leader, Jewish Family and Children's Service

In my work of helping those who are recovering from Substance Abuse, Mental Disorders and trauma, it's hard to find methods that bear fruit in the clients understanding of the trench that divides their beliefs and behaviors. The Windows workshops prove to empower the women and let them know that they have value.

Leader, Clare Foundation – Women's Residential Treatment Center

It is rewarding seeing how art allows clients to see themselves – even if just a glance – through different 'eyes' and perspectives, revealing strengths and resilience.

Leader, Amy Little, LLC, Counseling and Wellness House

AWBW destigmatizes 'help' and what that looks and feels like for those who are hesitant or fearful. The workshops are beneficial to those at all stages of counseling; even 'seasoned' clients are still self-discovering new strengths and insights.

Leader, Amy Little, LLC, Counseling and Wellness House

My clients loved the workshop. They shared, cried, and released a lot of shame and guilt they had carried. This workshop helped them move from victim to survivor.

Leader, Prototypes - Hollywood

In the workshops, clients were able to challenge negative beliefs about their parenting and affirm that they are a source of strength for their children.

Leader, House of Ruth – Counseling

Through Windows, clients continue to expand their ideas of the value that art can have in releasing emotion, building a positive vision of self and coping with the challenges of recovery."

Leader, Swain Recovery Center

Windows is an important component in building self-esteem, confidence and a healthy expression of feelings as clients move forward from trauma.

Leader, Marjaree Mason Center – Clovis

I am honored and thrilled to use AWW programming. Art is an essential tool for providing a voice and a platform for healing for survivors.

Leader, Chugachmiut

I am so absolutely amazed at the power of Windows and allowing people a safe environment, choices of materials, and a simple cathartic theme. There are always tears of healing.

There is always bonding. There is always discovery happening in these workshops.

Leader, Los Angeles Centers for Alcohol and Drug Abuse

The survivor's artwork clearly expressed their spirit of overcoming what happened to them. It is wonderful that they were given the opportunity to create art and that could aid in their healing.

Leader, Advocacy Services for Abused Deaf Victims

These workshops support catharsis, emotional expression and integration of traumatic material.. The access to your curriculum and art supplies enhance our capacity to empower clients to develop coping skills and discover new strengths.

Leader, National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW/LA) –  
Women Helping Women



# AWBW / A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

## 2015 Children's Windows Program Results

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 nationwide.



### In 2015 AWWB...

launched  
**27 new children's programs**

supported  
**533 Children's Leaders**

### These Windows Leaders...

facilitated  
**6,316 workshops**  
at **166 sites**

worked with  
**10,525 unique participants**

(each child/youth participating in an average of 4.6 workshops)

### Participant demographics:

Female: 60%  
Male: 40%  
Other: 0%

0-2 years old: 9%  
3-5 years: 18%  
6-12 years: 48%  
13-17 years: 24%

African American: 16%  
Asian/Pacific Islander: 13%  
Latino/Latina: 36%  
Native American: 7%  
White: 25%  
Other: 4%

Out of 90 children's sites submitting annual evaluations in 2015, 98% 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: 92%
- Build trust with staff and use support more readily: 90%
- Envision positive impacts they want to have on their life and the world around them: 84%
- Reduce self-destructive behaviors: 71%
- Make breakthroughs, specifically those with the most difficulty connecting: 83%



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

- Sense of confidence and independence: 100%
- Ability to handle anger, conflict and communication in a non-violent way: 99%
- Levels of depression, anxiety and fear: 94%
- Relationships with both parents and peers: 93%





# AWBW / A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

## Children's Windows Participant Voices

**My inner self sparkles.**

Participant, age 11, *Inner-Self Portraits*  
Women in Distress

**My heart is lots of colors. I like rainbow colors because they make me feel bright and happy. I am happy here because nobody is yelling at us anymore.**

Participant, age 12, *Shrinky Dink Blessing Charms - Holidays with HeART Series*  
Marjaree Mason Center

**My stone is heart-shaped because love is what carries me through hard times.**

Participant, *Stepping Stones*  
Korean American Family Services

**My guardian jar is bright and beautiful, just like me and just like my mom. This will bring a lot of light and angels when we need it.**

Participant, age 9, *Guardian Jars*  
Saving Grace

**I love this group! It feels like a family here. You can just share anything and everyone still cares about you.**

Participant, age 9, *Children's Windows Workshops*  
Family Advocates, Inc.

**I feel better after coloring hard.**

Participant, age 5, *The Aggressive Crayon Warm-Up*  
Union Rescue Mission - Hope Gardens Family Center

**In my necklace, I used words such as you are kind, you are smart and you are important. These words will help me feel loved.**

Participant, age 11, *Words Are Like Charms*  
Seeking Peaceful Solutions

**I have a happy face when I come to group.**

Participant, age 3, *Emotion Hats*  
Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse

**I will change the world by being kind.**

Participant, age 7, *Superhero Power Pourers*  
Peaceful Paths Domestic Abuse Network

**Even when things are bad outside, I will remember the light inside me and keep it safe.**

Participant, *My Inner Light*  
Marjaree Mason Center – Clovis

**Sometimes I pray that my dad gets help and stops acting scary. But I do know that it is not my fault. I learned that here.**

Participant, age 11, *Children's Windows Workshops*  
Saving Grace

**I drew a stop sign because if someone touches you in an unsafe way you say stop, you walk away, and you tell an adult.**

Participant, *Safe Rocks*  
Aiding Women in Abuse and Rape Emergencies, Inc.

**I am going to give my lotus to my mom. I wrote 'hope' in the center. I think she really needs it.**

Participant, age 15, *The Lotus Flower*  
Raphael House of Portland

**How do I know I am brave? Well, I come to this group and that reminds me that I'm brave to be healing from sexual abuse.**

Participant, age 10, *Feelings Target Warm-up*  
Haven Women's Center

**I drew a house with rainbows all over it so that me and my family will always be safe.**

Participant, age 9, *Creating a Safe Place*  
Domestic Violence Center of Santa Clarita Valley – Outreach

**When I wear my crown I feel so powerful! Like I can do anything!**

Participant, age 9, *Crowned with Esteem*  
Habitat for Humanity SF/SCV - Enrichment Services

**Today was a good day for me, the workshop was so much fun. I feel like I can be more open about my life and also letting people in and having the chance to discover me.**

Participant, age 13, *Children's Windows Workshops*  
Desert Sanctuary, Inc./Haley House

**I am like a butterfly, I am changing and growing every day into something very beautiful.**

Participant, *Journey Butterflies*  
Aiding Women in Abuse and Rape Emergencies, Inc.

**In my peaceful world there would be no yelling, no fighting and no bullying. Not ever!**

Participant, age 11, *Children's Windows Workshops*  
Haven Women's Center



# AWBW / A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

## Children's Windows Leader Voices

Art is a magical tool in the healing process for a child. It provides them the opportunity to feel safe, build self-worth and confidence. They are able to set forth new visions and hope for the future.

Leader, Rainbow Services

We continue to see the connections built with ongoing group members, as well as seeing the development of their innate resiliency.

Leader, Advocates of Ozaukee

It is rewarding witnessing a child's progression and branching out of their shells after participating in consistent art workshops.

Leader, CORA - Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse

The workshops allow the children to explore their feelings freely and openly. They are very innocent, want to feel loved, protected and accepted. It is a pleasure watching them be themselves.

Leader, House of Ruth – Emergency

AWBW workshops give the children a forum and safe place to express themselves, and allowing them time to simply 'be' without the expectation of performance or its accompanying pressure.

Leader, Etiwanda School District

Through AWWB, I have been able to witness significant growth within the participants including openness with communication and expressing needs.

Leader, Human Services Association

The teens really opened up to share deeply personal experiences of trauma. They used the art workshops to release a lot of raw emotion into their creations.

Leader, Haven Women's Center

The training, curriculum and supplies allow our staff to reach child clients in a way that 'talk' therapy can't. It offers a unique approach and effective tool to help clients heal from the past and look to a brighter future.

Leader, United American Indian Involvement

Windows activities dissuade bullying, as kids connect with each other in a more intimate and safe way.

Leader, South Bay Community Services

Some of the children we currently have in the program have been through a great deal of trauma and seeing them blossom and smile and laugh in the art program has been very rewarding.

Leader, Marjaree Mason Center – Clovis

The AWWB trainings and workshops have led me to see the importance of creating a space where our clients can respect and honor what is in their hearts. This healing space truly supports our capacity to guide our clients toward a life free from violence.

Leader, WomenShelter of Long Beach (WSLB) - Youth Services

While words can be a challenge for people to use to express their feelings, AWWB reminds us communication and human connections can be shared through creativity.

Leader, Center for the Pacific-Asian Family

Children come into the shelter quiet, scared and traumatized due to the violence they witnessed or experienced at home, but thanks to A Window Between Worlds they learn to speak up about their feelings without fear.

Leader, Women's & Children's Crisis Shelter

As a crisis agency, we can get stuck in the crisis part – but with the provision of all the directions and materials support, we are able to do a 1-2 hour very healing play activity that draws in the whole family.

Leader, Center for a Non Violent Community

The way the children listened as others shared and complimented each other on their art projects was really touching. These kids seem to be bonding more quickly than in any previous group I've led.

Leader, Haven Women's Center

The children have learned to use the art to communicate their feelings and they know that if they do not want to speak what they are feeling, they can express it by drawing.

Leader, Women's & Children's Crisis Shelter

It is rewarding seeing students gain a sense of their own power through art and tap into that inner voice that tells them what they really need.

Leader, Capistrano Unified School District



# 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.



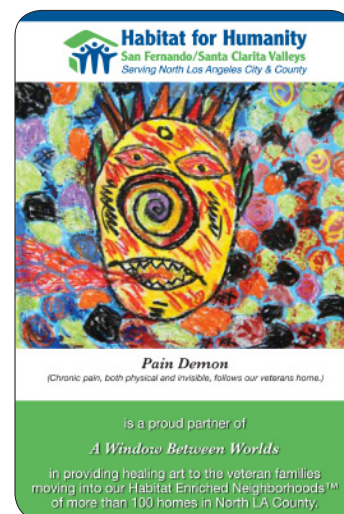
*“At first I thought it was a little weird... then a simple project got to some intense anger.”*

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 108 Adult WIndows active programs in 2015:**

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

**98% of Leaders reported improvement of participants' ability to constructively cope with difficult feelings**

# I felt safe enough to share...

A Window Between Worlds workshops gave Karen Gonzalez the outlet she needed to tell her life story and express herself in ways she never had before. Now she facilitates workshops to provide the same opportunity for others affected by trauma.



*“The art helped me to stop hiding; I was able to express what I felt in that moment of pain and abuse by using different colors.”*

**W**hen I was living in an emergency shelter, I was introduced to A Window Between Worlds for the first time. After participating in the Story Trees workshop, I felt safe enough to share a secret I had been carrying for 29 years.

When I was 5 years old I was sexually abused. It affected my self-esteem and I was always hiding. As a teen mom, I experienced physical, sexual, economic, and emotional abuse at the hands of my child’s father, and it continued into my adult life.

The art helped me to stop hiding. I found I was able to express what I felt in that moment of pain and abuse by using different colors. I felt so much better after each session. In one workshop we were asked to paint ourselves, and where we saw ourselves in the future. I wrote the words life, hope and love, and remember that day I didn’t feel like a victim anymore. I felt powerful.

The workshop, Heart Stories, gave my heart a voice. The first heart I created represented my past; it was black and red, and looked jagged, broken and hurt. My present heart looked healthier. My future heart had bright colors that I never even thought I could carry. Through art, I was able to put my trauma somewhere; I didn’t have to walk with it anymore. I finally felt free.



In the shelter my vision to help others also became clear. I saw the brokenness and was inspired to create a place where no one would experience the aftermath of trauma alone. My organization, Helping Hands Resource Center, supports those affected by trauma and violence so they can move forward and rebuild their lives. Thanks to A Window Between Worlds I am able to hold weekly art classes. I see adults and children becoming stronger, and families getting closer through the art. Now that my heart has healed, I am grateful to use art to help heal the hearts of other survivors.

It has come full circle.



Art has been a powerful force that has helped me to rebuild my life and self-esteem. I have learned that I am strong and the things that happened to me are in my past. Today I choose to live and tell others about it through the art. I recently looked back on the words I wrote from that first AWBW workshop and found they still hold just as much significance for me today: “My pain and wounds had me fooled into thinking I was ugly inside. Today all I see is beauty. This is me, my tree, my life.”

**Based on 3,960 participant evaluations submitted in 2015:**

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

*93% of adults felt more positively about themselves after participating in a Windows workshop*

# Art evoking lost stories...

A group of women, one week out of prison, came together at Los Angeles Centers for Alcohol and Drug Abuse for an art workshop facilitated by AWBW Arts Leader Jill Seither. They shared stories never told before, creating unexpected bonds with one another.



*“Prior to this, they had no other real appropriate ‘space’ to talk about the parts of their journeys that had come up for them.”*

The Story Trees workshop was the first Windows workshop I (Jill Seither) facilitated at my new job. The women were recently released from prison and would not enter the art room without permission. But there was a look of sheer glee on their faces peeking into the room. I guess in prison no matter how much you want something, you are simply not free to explore it.

I began the workshop with a warm-up and relaxation, which offered them freedom; a privilege preciously missed and now deeply valued by the women. During the creation, each woman shared about a time, a place, the important people in their lives and their hopes for the future. Prior to this, they had no other real appropriate “space” to talk about the parts of their journeys that had come up for them.

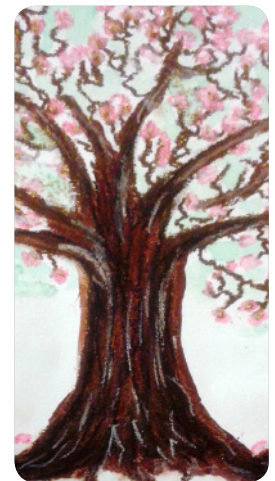
One of the women who almost completely rejects her femininity, created the most colorful tree with the biggest, brightest flowers all over it! This participant felt safe enough to share a part of herself, a part she hides and apparently almost forgot about. She was beautiful in her carefree attitude during creation and even the color in her face was brighter.

Other women shared their incredible stories that the art they created evoked. Here are two examples :

“I went back to my childhood. The last time I felt family pride and unity. I come from a small place in Mexico where there are no lights, no plumbing, nothing. We literally hunted for our food. I remember being a little girl and taking my slingshot to hit a lizard for food. Anyway, I felt myself next to the Cherry Blossom tree in my backyard. From the moment we began the relaxation, I felt myself standing under that tree, re-experiencing the narrative of my life.”

“Oh my God, I don’t know how to explain this... this tree; but I saw it! I was captivated by it! It was see-through gold. I’m telling you, I don’t know where this tree came from... It is like my spirituality is alive or something...”

The stories of the women’s life journeys brought every one of us to tears. This project was an incredible experience and connected me to the strength and resilience of these participants. The madness that prison has imprinted on these women is horrible. However, as a result of this program, these nine women got to “travel” far away and feel really free in the art workshops!



**Based on annual evaluations submitted by 108 Adult Windows active programs in 2015:**

*96% of Leaders reported that adults are more likely to open up and use professional counseling support after participating in a Windows workshop*

*90% of Leaders reported adults being able to tune in to their present needs and future goals*

# 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 90 active Children's Windows programs in 2015:  
99% 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

# 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 AWBW'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 90 active Children's Windows programs in 2015:**

*90% of Leaders reported the art workshops helped the children build more trust with the staff*

*94% of Leaders reported the Windows program made a positive difference in the children's relationships with their parents*

# Touchstones bring strength to Homeboy staff...

As part of the *Touchstones: A Creative Journey* community art initiative, Fabian Debora held a workshop with 70 staff from Homeboy Industries. This was his experience.



*"I asked them to make a commitment, set it in stone and keep it on their desktop."*

There were those there from corporate America and those who were more grassroots, so it was amazing to utilize these Touchstones in a way that brings everyone to equal ground. Touchstones kind of neutralizes everyone. It doesn't matter what corners of the city you come from, it allows vulnerability to take place. We're the ones working with the population on the ground level and sometimes assumptions exist, our biases can play into it where we think they don't care, they don't feel the way we feel, and this creates division. So with the Touchstones, I got creative, I said why don't we utilize these touchstones to make a commitment, a commitment to the organization of Homeboy Industries. I asked, 'What brought you here?' Sometimes, because of the demands of life, we lose sight of why we're here in the first place, so I asked them to make a commitment, set it in stone, and keep it near their computer, on their destop, someplace



where it's visible, so that when we lose sight and become discouraged and defeated, or whatever the thing is that may come about, we don't lose sight, that we have set in stone our commitment to what brought us to Homeboy, and why we're doing this work. It's cool, too, because when I walk around the building I go 'Oh, I see you have your stone there. How are you following your commitment?' and we giggle and laugh and it breaks the tension, and it brings connection. That's the beauty of Touchstones.

Since the beginning of the *Touchstones* community art initiative in January 2015:

Over 9,000 people have participated in *Touchstones* workshops as a part of *Windows Programs* and workshops in the community.

AWBW has held 112 community outreach workshops. This number does not include Leaders who have facilitated workshops with agency staff and outside their agencies in local communities.