



The Poetry of Healing

By Shanti Norris, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I've long been a fan of poetry—a love rekindled each time we hold a cancer retreat where reading and writing poetry is always included. I begin this letter with a poem by Galway Kinnell, one of my favorite poets, because it reminds me so much of the nature of the work we do:

St. Francis And The Sow

*The bud
stands for all things,
even those things that don't flower,
for everything flowers, from within, of self-blessing;
though sometimes it is necessary
to reteach a thing its loveliness,
to put a hand on its brow
of the flower
and retell it in words and in touch
it is lovely
until it flowers again from within, of self-blessing;*

We held a four-day residential cancer retreat at Hollywood Retreat Center in July. Eight people attended, including a remarkable couple that daily manifested their deep love and admiration for each other. Every person came fully ready to dive into the work of the week and by the end of the first full day, one attendee mentioned to me that it felt like we had been there for a week together already.

The first night is one of sharing what brings us each into the room and what we want to get out of the week. Stories of loss, misdiagnosis, grief, and joy are brought into the safe and sacred space. Ted Billings led the morning support groups. Dick Grossman, who wrote one of the first books on complementary therapies over 20 years ago, inspired us all with his evening sessions. Having passed 90 years of age, he continues to come from Connecticut to co-lead our retreats and is working on his 4th book.

Elise Wiarda is a gifted healer who offers massage and sometimes Rosen method, is the 'Night Mother' and guides the writing session on the retreat. She somehow manages to draw out of each person a piece of deeply meaningful writing. The poem on the outside of this letter was one such piece from our July retreat, and here is another:

Brother, II

*I held still as possible, instructed not to move
Though the curling iron's heat
Threatened my forehead.
Picture day at school.
You curled my hair, my eight-year-old-hair,
With a mother's care.
Almost thirty-five years later,
I sit in the bathtub
Wearing t-shirt and shorts.
You shave my head. My hair looks
So much darker against the white porcelain.
And there is so much of it to be shorn.
But your hands and your eyes
Gently hold my head, seeing my beauty.*

The writer of this second poem is a university professor who was previously married to a writer. She wrote several poems during the retreat session and told us afterwards that she feels she has discovered for the first time that she is a writer. I am grateful for permission to include these.

This has been a remarkable year for Smith Center. We just entered our 18th year of offering cancer retreats and support programs in the community. Our program directors will tell you more in the pages of this letter. In addition, I will briefly share some projects that don't often get written about.

The Gift of Healing at Smith Center Programs

By Adrienne Dern, Program Director



Imagine a room full of people gently lifting their arms to the sky – gathering energy in peaceful, graceful movements led by a practitioner of Qigong and acupuncturist. That was the scene at a recent Smith Center event featuring three dedicated healers sharing their knowledge of complementary cancer therapies.

One participant in the session described its impact this way:

I feel a sense of wonder in that each field, massage, acupuncturist, etc., holds infinite possibilities for learning and discovery.

For the past 17 years, Smith Center has been offering the gift of healing to those whose lives have been touched, or perhaps more accurately, altered by cancer. Since our founding our programs have continuously evolved and grown. In 1996, we primarily offered weeklong retreats for people with cancer. Today several retreat options, a robust array of individual classes and workshops, and thought-provoking speakers are available to those we serve.

Although my professional connection with Smith Center has been short—less than a year—my personal connection has been long and rich. Participating in a weeklong retreat just months after my cancer diagnosis allowed me to create a profound shift in my life that has served me well for 13 years.

I had never before experienced the deep love, compassion, skill, and wisdom that surrounded and held me at the retreat. From that point on, I was hooked on what “Smith Farm” (as it was known back then) had to offer.

Today it is my privilege to serve as the Program

Director at Smith Center. In this role I am responsible for our stress reduction, creativity, and nutrition classes, our speaker series, our One-Day Retreats, and soon, our new Three-Day Retreats for people with cancer and their caregivers.

The Three-Day Retreat has been on our minds for some time, and we are thrilled to be offering the first one this November. We hope that this non-residential three-day format will enable many more to benefit from the transformative experience of a retreat, but with a smaller investment of time and cost than our renowned weeklong model.

One of the most exciting developments of 2013 has been the growth of our Young Adult Cancer Survivors (YACS) program. While we have always maintained a strong commitment to offer programs that meet the unique needs of patients between 19-39, we began experiencing dwindling participation in programs designed for this group.

We learned through conversations with staff at local hospitals that they were experiencing the same challenges in their programming. While young adults were among those who most needed resources and support, no one facility had been successful in developing a strong program for this group and, therefore, no one felt they were offering the community and support that YACS needed.

This spring, we invited representatives from every major DC hospital and support organization to gather and work together to find a solution. We agreed to work in partnership to create a new collaborative support program — the DC Young Adult Cancer Community.

(continued on page 7)



“If there’s alchemy here, it is in creating a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, and the real value is in the intangible thing that binds them all together.”

— Margaret Boozer

These are the words of one of the 125 featured artists in last May’s exhibition, *Alchemical Vessels*. In the fall of 2012, we hatched a small idea that grew beyond both our expectations and eventually our center’s walls—attracting 17 local curators and inspiring 125 artists to conjure visions of healing for a rare exhibition and benefit.

Working closely with our past *9/11 Arts Project* collaborators and a committee of arts supporters, we developed a curatorial vision that would extend further into our community than ever before and encourage artists and curators to directly engage with our unique mission. Instead of curating a show of existing works to speak to our core practice of using the arts to heal, we engaged an entire community of artists and curators in a deep and meaningful dialogue on the topic.

The Intangible that Binds Them All Together

By Brooke Seidelmann, Gallery Director

With the help of 17 local curators, we invited 125 artists to tell their own stories of healing through the transformation of a simple, ceramic bowl. Each artist had a month and a half to re-envision their blank bowl as an alchemical vessel, a form we chose to serve as a metaphor for Smith Center itself—a place of holding where pain is transformed into hope, fear into strength, and darkness into light. Artists were driven to answer such questions as: *How can art transform pain and suffering into hope and healing?* and, *Can art move us outside our egos and toward a deeper connection with one another?*

The culmination of months of creative collaboration and community outreach was finally realized when the gallery itself was transformed into a communal vessel on April 26th with the opening of *Alchemical Vessels*—holding more than 200 art patrons, eight committee members, 17 curators, and 125 profoundly thoughtful artworks.

Complementing the exhibition, we hosted a benefit on May 17th. Unlike a standard art auction, our interactive benefit welcomed art patrons to purchase tickets in advance, and then allowed each to select a vessel in the order in which they purchased their ticket. The event began with a rousing buzz as patrons entered the space already committed to walking away with a one-of-a-kind work of art.

From our temporal vantage point we now look back at what we

created and realize that Smith Center served as an alchemist of sorts; Smith Center was the “intangible thing” that bound together various parts—artists, curators, patrons, and sponsors—into a singular artistic expression celebrating community and creativity. Over the course of the exhibition we welcomed more than 900 visitors and raised over \$20,000 to support Smith Center’s programs.

The response from the artists was equally rewarding—after working with an unconventional “canvas” and sharing their personal healing stories they were immensely proud of their outputs and many have asked to be invited back. With such resounding support from the arts community, patrons, and sponsors alike, we have committed ourselves to reviving *Alchemical Vessels* next year and look forward to the visions that emerge in 2014.

In other gallery news: After the birth of my daughter Isobel, a.k.a. Izzy, I’m finally finding my footing post leave. Along with my assistant Anthony Palliparambil, I look forward to presenting this year’s sensational line-up of exhibitions, including September’s *Depicted/Connected: Paintings by Tim Okamura*, and to continuing our Art Advisory work, bringing contemporary fine art to corporations, healthcare facilities, and private collectors.

See you soon at the Gallery!

We are deeply grateful to the DC Commission on Arts & Humanities, TD Bank, & Majestic Fine Wines for their generous core support of *Alchemical Vessels*.

THE NEED FOR NAVIGATION

By Carole O'Toole, Director,
Institute for Integrative Oncology Navigation

Cancer is described universally by survivors as an overwhelming experience; not only in adjusting to a life disrupted by such a challenging illness, but also in accessing medical care and making the way through a seemingly endless maze of health care providers, treatments, and difficult decisions.

It is estimated that 1.6 million new cancer cases will be diagnosed this year alone, with an additional 13.7 million survivors living with the effects of the disease and treatments in our country. By 2022, there will be an estimated 18 million survivors living in the US, a 31% increase.

In the blog, “The Prepared Patient Forum,” Jessie Gruman describes the experience:

Each of the four times I have received a cancer-related diagnosis, I felt like I had been drop-kicked into a foreign country: I didn't know the language, I didn't understand the culture, I didn't have a map and I desperately wanted to find my way home.

In 1990, Dr. Harold Freeman saw a need to provide greater support to patients trying to seek care and launched the first patient navigation program at Harlem Hospital in New York. Since that time, navigation has taken hold as a valuable service in improving timely access to appropriate medical treatments and the quality of patient care. Numerous studies validate the effectiveness of navigators in reducing time

from screening to diagnosis to treatment, improving treatment completion rates, decreasing barriers to care, lowering distress scores, and improving patient satisfaction.

Early navigation programs offered assistance from screening and diagnosis through treatment and primarily addressed physical barriers, such as transportation needs, insurance coverage, language barriers, appointment scheduling, and managing treatment side effects.

Over the years, navigation has grown to assist patients through recovery and survivorship, and several models now advertise psychosocial support as part of navigation services.

Our philosophy and approach to cancer care led Smith Center to expand the original concept of patient navigation, creating an opportunity to address patient needs beyond what our medical system currently offers.

We created a unique model of integrative cancer care navigation that empowers navigators to educate and support patients in the use of both conventional medical oncology treatments and complementary methodologies, such as stress reduction, nutrition, and psychosocial support.

Smith Center's model uses a “patient honored” approach: we help adapt the system to the patient so their needs are met and healing is supported. We offer patients integrative care that facilitates healing through education and assistance in accessing resources that enhance their wellness. We address not only the practical issues of cancer but the emotional, mental, and spiritual issues as well.

Our model was first introduced in 2006 at Howard Hospital, where in the first year, we contributed to a 15% improvement in treatment compliance rates.

With this success, we began to offer individual navigation and educational outreach programs in the community, serving over 12,000 city residents. We also joined 18 area hospitals, clinics, and community organizations in developing the country's first city-wide comprehensive navigation network, coordinating efforts to provide seamless navigation to any DC resident diagnosed with cancer.

Smith Center has since become a nationally recognized leader in navigation training for healthcare professionals and lay navigators.

THE GROWTH OF CANCER CARE NAVIGATION

How and where navigation services are offered is being dramatically shaped by several current events.

First, growing support for cancer navigation services is colliding with the looming prospect of an oncology workforce crisis. Oncology leadership now views navigation as a means to maximize patient benefit and system efficiency. Attention is also being paid to navigation with the oncoming implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

“No person with cancer should be forced to spend more time fighting their way through the health care system than fighting their disease.”

Harold Freeman, MD, President's Cancer Panel Report, 2001

Growth in navigation is also being influenced by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer Standards that require member cancer care facilities to offer navigation by 2015. As a result, navigator positions are increasing, as is interest in training and certification of navigators.

Leaders in oncology navigation are rushing to develop a universal definition of the discipline, establish a unified core curriculum, and set training and certification standards. The oncology nursing and social work professions are demanding instruction in psychosocial oncology care. They are also setting standards for using complementary medicine that underscore the need for instruction in integrative navigation.

SMITH CENTER'S NAVIGATION TRAINING

As you read this newsletter, we have just completed our 5th annual training in Patient Navigation for Integrative Cancer Care. Among the 23 attendees were nurses, social workers, and lay navigators from across the country.

Past graduates of our training now serve over 18,000 people each year in rural and urban areas. We remain, to the best of our knowledge, the only national training for oncology navigation that provides instruction in integrative cancer care.

The case for integrative navigation grows stronger and more visible each year. Beginning with three seminal reports issued by the Institute of Medicine between 2003-2007, the focus of cancer care navigation has increasingly turned towards providing holistic, comprehensive and psychosocial support for cancer patients from diagnosis through survivorship.



Smith Center will continue to move integrative navigation forward through its launch of our Institute for Integrative Oncology Navigation (IION).

Our mission is to ensure that all people facing cancer have access to appropriate, evidence-based, integrative cancer care resources and are assisted in their journey by trained navigators that provide skilled holistic support. The focus of our efforts will be to:

- Increase visibility and availability of our training and expand our on-line training capability;

- Establish integrative navigation as the standard of care for oncology navigation programs nationwide through participation in national leadership forums; and
- Continue to raise awareness of the value of integrative oncology navigation within the medical profession, the general public, and cancer survivor community through participation in research studies, publications, and presentations at professional conferences.

We are also excited to announce that we plan to offer an additional training in February of 2014.

We look forward to the year ahead and hope you'll stay tuned as we continue to grow.

Blessings,

Our Integrative Approach to Navigation

Smith Center's training is known for its remarkable depth and comprehensive instruction in integrative practices, psychosocial support, and healing at every stage of the cancer journey. Our holistic approach to navigation is unique and offers support on many levels. We:

- Facilitate timely access to both medical treatment and supportive resources;
- Honor the individual's cultural heritage, religious beliefs and individual circumstances;
- Increase patient's knowledge of available resources, tools and skills to better cope with their illness and reduce stress;
- Introduce patients to the healing power of nutrition, stress reduction, mind-body skills, and creative resources, and their role in treatment and survivorship;
- Support the patient and caregivers emotionally and spiritually;
- Empower individuals to become more engaged in their health care and their healing process;
- Improve the quality of the cancer experience; and
- Are available throughout the journey, from screening through diagnosis, treatment, recovery, and survivorship, which may include recurrence and/or end-of-life.

Creative Health. For the past eight years, I have been part of a diverse group of arts and healthcare administrators and practitioners who have met annually, initially brought together by Gerry Herbert of the Creative Center in New York. Incorporated as **AHA – Arts and Health Advocates**, the nine women who make up this group include an artist, a physician, and representatives from hospital programs like Georgetown Lombardi Cancer Center, NYU Hospital, and Duke University Hospital.

This year, we created a survey on Creative Health to which 455 individuals responded. We were invited to meet at Ucross Foundation in Clearmont, WY where the results of the survey were reviewed and analyzed.

The vast majority of respondents suggested that creativity is an important component in both work and personal lives. The words *fun*, *freedom*, and *joy* were the most commonly selected words associated with being creative. 70% replied that they have specific creative techniques that contribute to their health and wellbeing. Over half listed a regular or daily practice as primary, such as journaling, reading, and meditation. We are currently preparing a publication that will include observations based on this survey and personal statements regarding Creative Health that will be on our website by the end of the year. A quote by Abraham Maslow summarizes my thoughts:

My feeling is that the concept of creativeness and the concept of the healthy, self-actualizing, fully human person seem to be coming closer and closer together, and may perhaps turn out to be the same thing.

Arts for Wounded Warriors. We have been bringing our professional artists into the Wounded Warrior Surgical Unit at Walter Reed three days a week for the past three years. Working directly with wounded service members, families, and staff, Linda O'Neill and Kiamsha Leake continually rise to the challenge of finding a place of dialogue and engagement to help transform the hospital experience.

Together with Americans for the Arts, The Global Alliance for Health, National Endowment for the Arts, and other local and national nonprofits, we have been working to help create a national initiative for utilizing the arts throughout the military experience.

This spring we held our second *National Summit: Arts, Health and Well-being Across the Military Continuum* sponsored by Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and held at Walter Reed and

the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (a new state of the art treatment facility for the 'unseen' wounds of war, such as PTSD and traumatic brain injury).

A high-level roundtable held last fall at the Kennedy Center engaged top military and non-military leaders in beginning to set a National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military. Under this rubric a paper is in the last stages of preparation entitled *Arts, Health and Well-being Across the Military Continuum: White Paper and Framing a National Plan for Action*. It will outline why and how the arts are well used in the military and offer specific research, practice, and policy recommendations for their inclusion. The paper is in support of a broad research agenda, creating training programs for artists and incorporating family-centered arts programs at all stages of military service and promoting the inclusion of the arts and creative arts therapies in national health, the military strategic agency, and interagency initiatives. We will have a link to the paper on our website shortly.

Making it all possible. As I write this, we are preparing for the 6th annual **Joan Hisaoka 'Make A Difference' Gala**, serving those with cancer. Joan was a beautiful and gifted entrepreneur who created Hisaoka Public Relations and worked with the top restaurants and chefs in Washington. Bob Hisaoka and his wife Paula have honored Joan's legacy by raising over five million dollars for supportive services for people with cancer in our area over the past five years. As one of the recipients of the Gala annually, we thank Bob and Paula as well as everyone who has supported and participated. We are deeply grateful for this support that allows us to offer our programs.

I often find myself mentally speaking to Barbara Smith Coleman. She envisioned Smith Center (then Smith Farm) after attending a retreat for adults with cancer in England with her brother. After her brother passed away, Barbara knew that she wanted to create something similar in Washington, DC. She found Michael Lerner, who was holding cancer retreats at Commonweal in California, and they found me.

In 1996, we created our first weeklong retreat held at Rockwood Manor Park in Potomac, MD with eight extraordinary individuals. They nicknamed themselves "the Vikings"—with a goal of each having lived a full life of integrity and honor that when their day came, they would warrant a full Viking funeral. Five of our Vikings are still with us, and three have departed. I salute our Vikings all. And, I salute Barbara and Web Coleman for their vision and for the legacy of Smith Center.

As I reflect on so many great souls who pass through our doors, I want to thank each and everyone who has helped us to do this work over the many years since we began. We cannot possibly do this without your support.

We have always offered our retreats at less than half the cost it takes to hold them, and many of our programs are offered for free or for a modest donation. I ask for your continued support so that we can be here for those who need us, and remain at the forefront of new and innovative programs that offer opportunities for healing for so many.

Please donate \$100, \$500, \$1,000 or more if you can. And please continue to tell people about our services and keep us in your hearts and minds. You are always invited to stop by for a program, for a visit, or just to see what's going on.

With love and thanks,

PS: I'd like to introduce you to Smith Center's gifted staff!

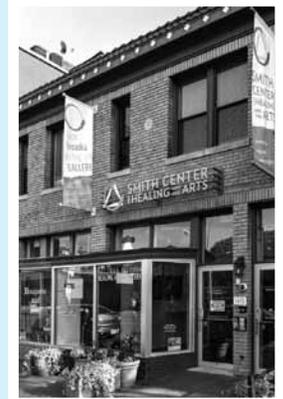


Smith Center Staff, from left to right: (back row) Matt Ehlenbach, Johanna Seltzer, Shefa Benoit, Erin Price, Ali Decker, Carole O'Toole, Brooke Seidemann, Anthony Palliparambil (front row) Michelle Clermont, Shanti Norris, Alaina Sadick, Adrienne Dern. Not pictured: Tanya Batalaska, Anita Rice

*The Gift of Healing at
Smith Center Programs
...continued from page 2*

Since June, this new, vibrant group has been meeting here at our U Street center monthly. Each event has been well attended by YACS who are enthusiastic about the benefits of being with their peers in a very supportive environment.

Our work is made easy and rewarding by the feedback we receive from our program participants. Comments from recent participants confirm that what we offer makes a difference.



*"I have had so many special, important, fun hours at your place... and a greater insight into the healing needs and possibilities of those who are seriously ill."
- Program Participant*

Statements like this one indicate that we are on the right track—and our goal is to continue to consistently and profoundly touch the lives of those who come to us for healing in the face of cancer... and life.

In hope and healing,

With gratitude for all of our friends and supporters

Out of respect for privacy, it is our policy not to publish a public list of our donors. You know who you are—and we hope you know how grateful we are for what you do. To see a full list of our Foundation and Corporate Supporters, please visit smithcenter.org/funders.

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I Am.

Cancer has tried to take my life,
I am living.

Cancer has tried to rob me of love,
I am loving.

Cancer has tried to destroy my smile,
I am smiling.

Cancer has tried to make me weak,
I am strong.

Cancer has tried to compromise my faith,
I am faithful.

Cancer has tried to remove my hope,
I am hopeful.

I am everything cancer does not want me to be,
I am.

We are grateful for permission to publish this poem, written by one of our July retreat participants.