

Healing Arts.[@] duke

North Carolina Schweitzer Fellows Program

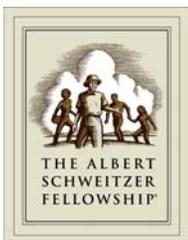
Moira Breslin, MSc., Michael Raisch 2008 Fellows

Through the support of the North Carolina Schweitzer Fellows Program, Duke University School of Medicine and Project Compassion, Healing Arts has served the Triangle Area community by connecting palliative care patients and students from schools of Medicine and Nursing to promote communication and healing through art. Projects included singing, gardening, poetry, mural painting, and clay work. The team-based caregiving initiative provided volunteers an opportunity to establish meaningful relationships with members of the community who were suffering from illness and loss.

Art has been used as a mode of complementary therapy to improve people's emotional well being and mental health. Healing Arts provided a practical approach towards achieving better emotional balance during difficult times, offering participants an additional mode of expression while helping them work towards dealing with the experience of grieving and ill health. While we believe that engaging in art has helped to relieve suffering, we also believe that it has had the potential to go far beyond managing patient's symptoms by providing enjoyable, fun experiences for both students and palliative care participants.

The goals of our project included the following:

- To create a student-run art-based healing program for patients utilizing palliative care in the Triangle. To accomplish this we developed a curriculum of arts projects with the goal to improve patients' quality of life. We then trained our student volunteers and formed teams from the Duke and UNC Medical and Nursing Schools.
- To organize teams of students that will work with palliative care patients and help them engage in these projects. To achieve this aim we coordinated and mentored these teams of students working with palliative care patients who were identified by Project Compassion.
- To improve the knowledge of what palliative care services offer by promoting our project. We spoke to students at the Duke School of Medicine and School of Nursing to promote outreach efforts.



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