

The Impact of Brushes With Cancer



Brushes with Cancer® is the signature program of Twist Out Cancer® which provides psychosocial support to individuals touched by cancer through a unique art experience. The program matches those touched by cancer (inspirations) with artists to create a unique piece of artwork that reflects their personal journey with cancer. Each pair is matched with a mentor which is typically a clinical psychologist or social worker that oversees the relationship development and helps to ensure that each participant is supported and heard. Program participants also have the opportunity to attend local Twistshops®, which are art-therapy workshops led by a licensed clinical art therapist that encourage storytelling, reflecting and healing through guided art-making.

Since 2012, there have been over 400 works of art created and over 30,000 individuals impacted by the program.

In 2020, Brushes With Cancer programs will be held in Detroit, Austin, and Chicago. More information is available at twistoutcancer.org.



“Walking In Walking Out”

Bob Kaufman, Inspiration and **Bryan and Liz Kuntz** with **Ricky Kimball**, Artists
Austin

“Stage IV Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma in January 2009. After six months of traditional therapy, I was equally surprised to learn that the cancer had returned. Following a successful stem cell transplant in 2010, I wrote *Replenished*, as a way to provide hope and encouragement for others facing blood cancers. I believe the what-to-expect story for those considering stem cell transplants has helped others in their own battles with their disease. This was my way of giving back to the cancer community that was so supportive of me during my fight.”

Artist Statement: “We met our inspiration one evening for a brief introduction, and he told us about his experience with stage 4 Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. The three things that most impressed us about his story were the strong motivation to walk into the hospital and to walk out of the hospital after his treatment, that he wants to help others by telling his story, and that he now intends to live his life to the fullest extent. We used this inspiration to think and brainstorm over the following weeks.

One night Bryan had a dream that was the main inspiration for the sculpture. The man is a figurative representation of Bob and his walk from cancer to cure. The words on the first page are Bob’s words, taken directly from his book *Replenished*. These represent the unpleasant and challenging parts of his story. The second page is also Bob’s words that represent the positive good days and outcomes of his story. And finally we named the sculpture Walking In, Walking Out because that was a very profound part of Bob’s story. It represents his strength and courage to follow through with the fight to beat his cancer.”



Bob Kaufman, Inspiration with Artists Liz and Bryan Kuntz.
Brushes With Cancer in Austin, October 20, 2019.

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Brushes With Cancer in Chicago, November 2, 2019.



A photoshoot for Inspiration Tracy Ahrens organized by her Artist Sujata Gazder.



“Sakura”

[Tracy Ahrens](#), Inspiration and [Sujata Gazder](#), Artist
Chicago

“It is still hard for me to talk about what I have learned in this cancer journey, because that journey has not ended. The unknown hangs like a fog. I’d like to proclaim a profound message for everyone, but my message is only what you see of me today for coming through cancer to this point...The strength that I found to keep moving every day came from God. He kept me here and has shown me many messages I keep receiving. I don’t know what He wishes for me by keeping me here. I keep listening and watching and using the talents He has blessed me with...I wish to love and be loved without hesitation. I aim daily for the smallest of bucket list goals. I cry. I physically hurt. I walk away from negativity without hesitation or regret. I still am.”

Artist Statement: "This Is Sakura. The rear skirt of the gown is hand screen printed and stamped with writing and symbols. The writings are Tracy's poems and essays. The Chinese symbols are 'Courage', 'Hope', 'Love', and 'Faith'. This is in shades of grey and black representing the past, the struggle, the darkness...the cancer...and the courage with which this battle has been fought. The layers and ruffles represent the complexity of the disease, as well as the layers of raw emotion and angst experienced.

The front of the dress is straight. The shape represents the strength with which this twist in life has been faced head on. It also symbolizes heading into a new dawn. We see color now. Color signifying renewal, a new start. There is light ahead. The flowers painted on the dress are Cherry blossoms. It is symbolic of the beauty and fragility of life. For those of you who have traveled this difficult road the cherry blossoms are a reminder that life can yet be powerful, glorious and intoxicating. For the rest of us, it makes us pause — marvel at this existence, looking on it with joy and passion. It reminds us to pay attention!"



"I'm rethinking my perceived limitations, and finding myself again. I'm grateful to Sanda, and Brushes With Cancer, for this gift of rediscovery."

"We Are Here To Help Each Other"

Cassandra Esselink, Inspiration and [Sanda Cook](#), Artist
Detroit

"Brushes With Cancer has helped me reclaim a part of myself. Sanda inspired me to begin painting again, after years of inactivity. I'm rethinking my perceived limitations, and finding myself again. I'm grateful to Sanda, and Brushes With Cancer, for this gift of rediscovery."

Artist Statement: "Talking with Cassie Esselink on the phone for the first time, I was so touched by her story. Going to cancer and therapy was very hard. Even if she is cancer free now, she still needs emotional support, love and understanding from others as her body is not the same. My first painting of Cassie was so dark and emotional...I painted another painting after I met Cassie in person and saw her beautiful spirit and strength, her kindness and her love for nature and art. Cassie started to paint again recently after many years. She told me: 'If I have to live with pain, I better paint as well.' Cassie has fibromyalgia and she has days when her body is in lots of pain. This painting is about beautiful and magical Cassie Esselink! She is a phoenix bird and her strength and beauty is bigger than life! I am so thankful to meet her and be a part of this amazing and inspirational experience."



Cassandra Esselink, Inspiration and Sanda Cook, Artist. Brushes With Cancer in Detroit, August 1, 2019.

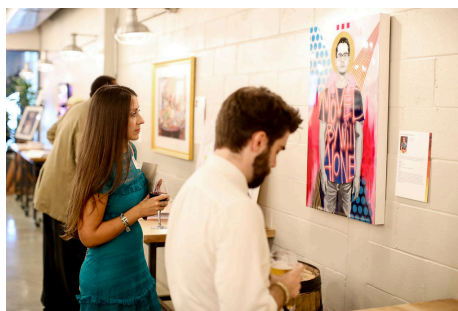
“It’s been a real honor getting to know Phillip, as he has inspired me greatly on my own journey in fighting cancer.”

“Intension”

Phillip Sorrentino, Inspiration and **Michael Leavy**, Artist
Philadelphia

“After my brush with cancer I became intimately aware of my emotional and physical well-being. Through treatment and healing I found growth and a new approach to our day to day experiences. I truly value time spent with friends and loved ones and now know the importance of being present within those interactions.”

Artist Statement: “For this piece, my inspiration is Phillip, a great guy and a seriously tough dude. I named the painting ‘Intension’, after a song written by his favorite band, Tool. The words ‘Moved By Will Alone’ on Phillip’s shirt were taken directly from the lyrics of the song itself, and I think they sum up Phillip’s attitude and sense of purpose while fighting his illness perfectly. In addition to both of us going through cancer treatments, we are also both artists and musicians, so right from the get-go we had a ton in common. When I photographed Phillip for reference images for the painting, there was naturally and instinctively a sense of defiance in the photos, which I thought was absolutely perfect and really got me excited about making this painting. It’s been a real honor getting to know Phillip, as he has inspired me greatly on my own journey in fighting cancer. I’m truly grateful and humbled to have been a part of this process.”



Brushes With Cancer in Philadelphia, September 18, 2019.



“She’s so positive. Very sure of herself. Looking to the future.”

“Forward”

Julia Allmond, Inspiration and **Jesse Weinstein**, Artist
Philadelphia

“Cancer has twisted my view at a young age on how to live everyday life. It has taught me to control what I can and let go of what is out of my control. I value time spent with friends and family more than ever now and make my health a top priority. One piece of advice I’d give to anybody, cancer survivor or not, is to not sweat the small things. Life’s too short, live in the moment!”

Artist Statement: “I’ve had this vision of what cancer looks like. A growth. Clingy, burning, viscous. And after experiencing a cancer related loss and meeting Julia, I feel like I have a much clearer view of what cancer is. She’s so positive. Very sure of herself. Looking to the future. That’s what keeps us going. Looking forward.”

Above: Julia Allmond, Inspiration and Jesse Weinstein, Artist.
Left: Jesse Weinstein with his grandmother, Joan Shepp.
Brushes With Cancer in Philadelphia, September 18, 2019.



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Twist Out Cancer provides psychosocial support to individuals touched by cancer through creative arts programming. What started in 2012 as a small grass roots online community movement has evolved into an international non-profit that has touched over 130,000 people around the world through our online platforms and community wide programming. With programs in Chicago, Ann Arbor, Detroit, Toronto, Montreal, Tel Aviv, Philadelphia, and Austin, we are a global community of support comprised of previvors, survivors, caregivers, supporters and artists.

Want to Join the Movement?

Contact us at info@twistoutcancer.org to sign up for our e-newsletter. You can stay up-to-date on all upcoming Brushes With Cancer programs, Twistshops, and other events. Email our founder at Jenna@twistoutcancer.org.

More information on Twist Out Cancer is available at twistoutcancer.org.

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