

CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

Our mission: To meet the needs of children and families in our community by providing a community-based, child-focused center than facilitates a compassionate, multi-disciplinary approach to the prevention, treatment, identification, investigation, and prosecution of child abuse.

BY MARLENE MISH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is said that art doesn't lie. Somehow no matter what someone's skill level, the heart and soul of a person slips silently through manmade defenses onto the canvas, speaking boldly of what the voice cannot articulate. That was the basic premise of an exceptional opportunity that the Children's Advocacy Center's Mentoring girls will have this summer through a grant from the **Gordon Elwood Foundation**, the Anna May Foundation and KOB! Television Channel 5 in collaboration with Living Opportunities and Studio Sfumato.

Our project, "Just Outside the Door" gives a visual of how our child victims of sexual abuse feel as they attempt to navigate a world where they no longer feel a part. Seeing a similarity to the barriers that Studio Sfumato's artists with developmental disabilities, we began to see that child abuse is an invisible disability but just as debilitating as those whose disabilities which are evident.

Since it is well accepted that art is the door that often leads to healing for children who have experienced profound trauma and loss, the dream emerged to give our mentoring preteens and teens an experience in healing through a month-long experience of painting. This five-week experience would culminate in a real art opening at the Children's Advocacy Center on July 31, 2009 and the entire experience will be documented by KOB! Television Channel 5. This experience then will translate into a video that could be used as a teaching tool to educate the community that healing is indeed possible, and that no one is sentenced to a life of "victimhood" because they had once been a victim. This project is all about hope and the magic that happens when a broken hearted soul picks up a paintbrush and later stands back to see that her truth has escaped unexpectedly onto the canvas. And in that unconscious release comes healing!

Since we know that self-esteem begins with a sense of competence, this art experience will indeed be a turning point for our girls as they face the challenge of growing up and moving beyond their abuse.

The Children's Advocacy Center is so very grateful to the **Gordon Elwood Foundation** for collaborating with us by funding a great part of this project and believing that something as simple as art could be a motivation for a child to view herself differently, as capable and worthwhile and able to be a positive force in our community and not at the whim of the abuse that was not her fault or within her control. The Children's Advocacy Center has many dreams for its child victims, but dreams always take money and a belief by the community that they serve a higher purpose and are an overall benefit to the health of the community itself.

We are confident that this project will prove to be one of the most life-altering projects we have ever undertaken and it has indeed taken the cooperation of many community entities who believe in its importance that makes it possible. The funding will allow us to create an environment so that each young woman can evolve at her own pace, in her own way, finding her own truth as truth becomes manifest through art. Hopefully, at the end of this project our girls will no longer experience themselves as standing "Just Outside the Door" of possibilities.

For more information, visit Children's Advocacy Center on the Web at <http://www.cac4kids.us>.

