

Art Therapy: HEALING WITH THE HEART

As Second Lady of the United States, Mrs. Karen Pence chose one initiative to champion, and it is art therapy.



Art Therapy is an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship.



Mrs. Karen Pence first became aware of art therapy and the benefits of this mental health profession in 2006 when she observed an art therapy program for children with cancer called Tracy's Kids, which is based in Washington, D.C.



Over the past decade, Mrs. Pence has seen first-hand and heard stories of the impact that art therapy has on those who have benefited from this unique treatment. From children with cancer and struggling teens, grieving families and military service members experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Mrs. Pence has learned that art therapy is changing lives.



Art Therapy, facilitated by professional art therapists, effectively supports personal and relational treatment goals as well as community concerns. Art Therapy is used to improve cognitive and sensory-motor functions, foster self-esteem and self-awareness, cultivate emotional resilience, promote insight, enhance social skills, reduce and resolve conflicts and distress, and advance societal and ecological change.



Later in 2011, Tracy's Kids asked Mrs. Pence to join the board, and she remains a member.



An art therapist must be an expert in human development, psychological, and counseling theories and techniques.



Mrs. Pence has visited art therapy programs and has spoken with art therapists from various communities across the United States and world.



Mrs. Pence has three goals:

1. To elevate the profession so that people understand that art therapy is a mental health profession, and not arts and crafts
2. To help people understand that art therapy is a treatment option for various conditions, illnesses and life experiences
3. To encourage more young people to go into the profession



Also in 2011, Mrs. Pence decided to help bring art therapy to Riley Hospital for Children at IU Health in Indianapolis, Indiana, where she had the privilege of serving as the Honorary Chair of the art therapy initiative, a movement to bring art therapy to the hospital.

“ART THERAPISTS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE HEALING PROCESS FOR THE MANY PEOPLE WHO RELY ON THE UNIQUE TREATMENT. WITHOUT ART THERAPISTS, THERE IS NO ART THERAPY.”
- SECOND LADY KAREN PENCE