

Rimbey Community Home Help Services Association - Opening Minds through Art (OMA) Final Report

Executive Summary

The Opening Minds Through Art (OMA) project supports people living with dementia to express their feelings through art and music, involves them in a meaningful activity in which they are engaged in the process and provides social engagement. Although the pandemic delayed some of the training and workshops, three workshops were able to be offered during the grant timeline. The program was followed by a successful art show with funds generated supporting program sustainability. The program has also received offers for sponsorship, the volunteers are committed to the program and the Rimbey Community Home Help Services Association Board of Directors are committed to ensuring the program continues to operate. The OMA program will also be the recipient of financial donations from the community that are not already ear marked for other projects for the upcoming year (2023).

Objectives/Implementation

The objective of the program was to offer multiple workshops in the inaugural year to firmly establish the program. There was no cost for participants. Three workshops were offered in a beautiful bright south facing room. The spaciousness of the program area allowed for easy movement and safe transfers for the participants. The natural light that flooded into the room enabled the artists to see more easily as the art took shape. Trained facilitators, using the OMA values, were able to demonstrate easy to follow steps to create amazing results using their provided art projects. During the workshops the participants experienced respect of their autonomy as they were offered choices, acceptance of those choices and meaningful engagement in the activity. There was a high degree of participation from artists and volunteers. The project was successful in including people living with dementia in a social community activity and also taught volunteers to interact with those living with dementia positively. The public were invited to an art show of the art created in the program. The art projects were framed and displayed on easels; the professional appearance was commented on by attendees. An objective of the show was to reduce the stigma of what people living with dementia are capable of.

Impact

The evaluation consisted of four questions directed at the artists themselves. These were completed after each workshop. The results indicated that 100% of participants felt happier after each workshop. The family caregivers were also asked to complete evaluations. Results indicated that 66% of family caregivers found that their perception of their relative changed after participation in OMA. Evaluations were completed at the art show and sale. The results of those evaluations indicated 100% of attendees believe that people with dementia can express themselves creatively. The program has also created a level of excitement, understanding and desire amongst others in the community to want to be part of supporting people living with dementia. An example is a local business owner who is interested in displaying some of the artwork.

