

**Peace is in the Air: 1,000 origami cranes
empower Hope Artiste Village visitors**







In December, The Empowerment Factory (TEF) debuted their latest art installation in Hope Artiste Village, located in Pawtucket, and it features 1,000 paper cranes - all in a flight pattern - flying as though they're in a flock.

The inspiration for the 1,000 Cranes was brought into the limelight when a two-year-old child survived the bombing of Hiroshima but fell terminally ill. Her name was Sadako Sasaki and she passed away, at the age of twelve, from the long-term effects of the bombing. While she was in the hospital someone told her a legend - that if a person folds 1,000 paper cranes, they will be granted a wish from the gods. The number of cranes that she was able to complete before her passing is debated, with some saying she achieved her goal, and others saying she fell short.

Still, what was born out of the legend, and what Sadako Sasaki brings to the limelight, is a story of hope. This need for hope brought the idea to TEF, who felt that it was exactly what we all needed during the pandemic. Executive Director and Founder of TEF **Gail Ahlers** said, "In times like these, it's important to know that there's hope, and when you're thinking positive thoughts - and being hopeful - there's the possibility for joy and happiness."

In 2020, after a partnership with the United Way, TEF had children in one of their Zoom art classes make cranes. It was such a popular endeavor that they decided to explore what else could come of the cranes - and the plan was hatched to make an art installation.

The cranes came from many of the children that TEF serves, but the goal of the cranes really took flight. Ahlers can't express how many people either made or spread the word about cranes, "It was beautiful, boxes would show up in our mailbox... and we had a lot of volunteers who helped string them, we had volunteers from the Center for Nonviolence, with a crew of teenagers that helped string them."

She estimates thousands of person hours went into the exhibit, from folding the cranes, to stringing them, to hanging them. Volunteers and crane makers were also encouraged to write a wish on their crane, to hopefully come true once the 1,000 were put together. All-in-all, TEF ended up with 1,300 cranes, from all over the United States. Ahlers said, "It's beautiful to bring people together for the positive."

The cranes will hang at 999 Main Street (in the Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame) for the foreseeable future.

In addition, TEF also offers four main programs to help promote positivity, healthy living, and creativity in RI youth. They also offer a quarterly art contest, where artists can showcase their work. The focus is, as the name says, on empowering those who need it most. Or, as Ahlers said: "I believe in the sisterhood of prosperity; we all don't have to have everything or know everything, we just have to help each other. TEF is a community of people helping other people. And I feel that if ever there was a time where children needed guidance on how to be supported and joyful, it's now."