

Intergenerational Creativity



Gyotaku

Aisha Jandosova hopes for years full of life rather than a life full of years, but recognizes that a lot of elderly people don't get that experience. "When you become a certain age, you're out of sight out of mind. Especially when you move to assisted living. Suddenly, you're on the margins of society," she said.

To help people add life to their years, Jandosova and Jeff Warren began holding weekly intergenerational art making workshops at Tockwotton on the Waterfront, an assisted living facility in East Providence.

"One thing we noticed straight away," said Jandosova, "was that when you live in a long-term care facility, you receive a daily schedule from 8am to 9pm. And just seeing that really made a big impression because it's not how most of us live our lives. Instead, your schedule is written for you. Most activities are, many times, repetitive. And when we started these workshops, we wanted to be an antidote to that."



Drawing using touch

Pre-pandemic, residents, artists, grandchildren and friends would gather around tables in Tockwotton's cafe for the workshops. "There's an intangible feeling of getting people into a space," said Warren. "We put on music. We have a portable record player and give it a loungey vibe. We make a space."

Recognizing the different abilities of Tockwotton residents, Jandosova and Warren choose projects that are more about the process than the end result. "We use all the senses," said Warren. "Touch, smell, feel. Maybe a different temperature. Those are all part of the process."

In one workshop, makers were given a flower and invited to draw it blindfolded, using only their sense of touch to recreate the object. Another day, Jandosova and Warren hauled in a cooler of fish and led a gyo-taku workshop, a traditional Japanese method of printing making.

Over the last year, Jandosova and Warren have run virtual workshops through Federal Hill House, a community support facility in Providence, but they're eager to work with people in person again. "The pandemic really showed us the value of sharing space with each other, being next to each other to make things and build memories," said Jandosova.

Follow Aisha Jandosova at towardsanidealplace.com; For information on their programs, go to tockwotton.org or federalhillhouse.org