



rosecrance
life's waiting

February 10, 2012

Press Release

Valentines for Vets project at Rosecrance celebrates role of art therapy in treatment

February is national Therapeutic Recreation Month

ROCKFORD, IL – Patients receiving inpatient treatment at Rosecrance's adult campus on Harrison Avenue worked on their own recovery while reaching out to thank veterans who otherwise might be forgotten on Valentine's Day.

The project began when recreational therapists at the campus read about an initiative started by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to reach out to patients in VA medical centers. The VA promotes the annual salute to veterans and encourages civilians to volunteer at the hospitals, visit vets and create cards of appreciation.

Rosecrance patients and staff produced more than 120 hand-made cards for the effort. Some were presented to vets receiving care through Rosecrance, and the rest were delivered to the VFW Post in Loves Park, which participated in the federal program to distribute the cards.

A patient wrote this message inside one of the colorful cards: "Thank you for your service to our country. You are in our thoughts and prayers. You bless my life with your courage to fight for our freedom. I wish you nothing but love this year."

The project hit home at Rosecrance, which offers a treatment track for veterans with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. In addition, Rosecrance manages programs that provide transitional housing for homeless veterans in need of mental health services.

Jada Miller, art therapist at the Harrison Campus, said the project created an opportunity for patients to talk about the personal sacrifice of loved ones who had served in the military. The project also sparked conversation about freedom from addiction and the value of a healthy lifestyle, she said.

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(2)

“Projects like Valentines for Veterans give patients an opportunity to show their gratitude for the things in life they may not have thought about during their active addiction,” Miller said. “It gives them a chance to look at the bigger picture in sobriety, while also feeling a sense of pride in helping others.”

In general, art therapy gives patients tools to help them better understand their own motivations and behaviors, she said.

“Patients take a metaphoric look at themselves, their future goals, current road blocks, subconscious thoughts and current feelings,” Miller said. “Patients come to embrace learning about themselves and their recovery in a visual way.”

Nationally, Therapeutic Recreation Month, annually observed in February, brings attention to how such therapy can improve quality of life, increase independence and promote health and wellness.

Rosecrance embraces these concepts through nationally recognized Experiential Therapies programs at the adolescent and adult campuses. Keri Fager supervises the Experiential Therapies Department at the Harrison Campus. Skills patients learn in treatment can help them sustain recovery when they go home, she said.

“We specifically help them to explore the benefits of leisure, physical activity, and relaxation skills through learning yoga and other meditation techniques, as well as teaching the connection between wellness and recovery,” Fager said.

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About Rosecrance

Rosecrance is a private not-for-profit organization offering behavioral health services for more than 14,000 children, adolescents, adults and families each year. Rosecrance provides addiction treatment through inpatient and outpatient programs in Rockford, IL, and services at six satellite offices in Chicagoland. In addition, Rosecrance offers community mental health services in Rockford and

Belvidere. The organization was founded in 1916.
(More information at rosecrance.org.)

