

To: American Art Therapy Association Chapters

From: Susan Corrigan, Executive Director, American Art Therapy Association

Date: December 19, 2009

Subject: 2010 National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, May 6, 2010

The American Art Therapy Association is a champion-level sponsor of the National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day (Awareness Day), an annual celebration to be held this year on May 6, 2010. The federal sponsored Awareness Day is a day for everyone to promote positive development of infants, toddlers, children, and youth. Communities across the country will observe the day with events, youth demonstrations, and social networking campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and increase understanding of the mental health needs of children and their families. There will be a special focus on the topic of early childhood for 2010.

The American Art Therapy Association is taking a major role in coordinating one of the key strategies for Awareness Day. This is the Nationwide Art Action, in which young children across the country will create art expressing their feelings. Art work will be featured in the community and captured for on-line display. Please note that while young people will be engaged in expressing their feelings through art, the activity will not be a formal art therapy program.

We invite your American Art Therapy Association Chapter to participate. Many chapters are already taking the lead in developing collaboration with highly visible youth and art-related community facility, such as a museum, in order to stage an Art Action event. The programs will be showcased in the national information center accessible through the national website at: americanarttherapyassociation.org, and managed by the national Association for the national program. (See information below to confirm your Chapters involvement.)

A benefit to participation in the Nationwide Art Action is the opportunity to network with community organizations and federal grantee programs. Thus far, there are a number of federal programs participating across the country including Administration for Children and Families (ACF) funded programs: Head Start and Indian Health Services Head Start, and the Child Care Bureau; and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funded programs: Systems of Care (SOC), Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS), Project Launch, and National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). We will also be reaching out to YWCA, YMCA, and Boys & Girls Clubs.

Another benefit is that the activity can be a strategy to promote your chapter to local media. The important role of a credentialed art therapist can be conveyed in your press release and media interviews. If there is someone in your membership who is a member of the American Art Therapy Association's Ambassador's program, they are well prepared to handle the media interviews.

To take full advantage of this opportunity, Chapters will be provided with:

- A Press Kit in March 2010
- Planning Tips (see below)
- An option to be included in the Association's free Donate Now service on-line donation service. (Send an email to mbasham@arttherapy.org to be included in the "Art Supplies for Art Action Day event" donation program and receive the funds designated for your Chapter within 90 days after the contribution is received. These funds will be used to purchase art supplies for local chapters to conduct Art Action.)
- Access to a monthly conference call with SAMHSA for planning purposes (You will be informed of the day and time when the call has been set by SAMHSA)
- Links to all those participating in your local community through the American Art Therapy Association's web site

It will be important for your Chapter to begin planning for the event as soon as possible in the New Year. Here are the steps to follow:

1. Work with your Board and others to develop the signature event. Look to partner with a well-known facility with a lot of visibility in the community where the event would take place and that could help publicize the event. Be sure to confirm the event on their annual planning calendar.
2. When you have identified the signature event and have formed the partnership with the local museum or other community center, please complete the National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Participation Form which is on the national website under the Children's Mental Health Awareness Day section. Your program will then appear on the list of programs noted under Community Programs being planned around the country.
3. You should also inform the entire Chapter membership about this opportunity and ask them to inform the organizations they work with about this exciting event to gain their involvement. Review the list of organizations above and others that will be added to the website throughout the coming months. These are other groups that your Chapter should connect with to offer credentialed art therapist for their programs.
4. Inform your membership of the importance of updating their information on your on-line locator system. (Some of your members may choose for confidentiality purposes not to be listed.) You might also want to let agencies know how to contact your Chapter so they can find an art therapist for their programs.
5. If you do not have a Locator please refer requests to the ChilrensDay@arttherapy.org.
6. You will receive a media kit about 2-3 weeks before the event so that you can work with your partner groups to provide information to the community to raise awareness of your work and the importance of mental wellness for young people, and to provide information to the public on how to access services.
7. You will also be informed of an opportunity to work in partnership with other lead groups to have May 6th declared Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. An instruction packet will be sent prior to the "Proclamation" activity. Do not take any action now on this aspect of the program until you received the approved proclamation and the list of other groups who will be involved.

Please send any requests for additional information directly to me via email at scorrigan@arttherapy.org. We welcome your Chapter's involvement in this important national art therapy and children's mental health awareness event which should have long term benefits for those you serve.