

To our ArtSpring family:

The holiday season is in full swing, and we want to take this opportunity to send greetings out to all who keep our organization strong and vibrant by sharing your time, talents and treasures. We had a tremendous year, and we remain in awe over the energy, momentum and impact created by *Any One of Us: Words from Prison: Miami*. We are sure you will enjoy seeing some of the highlights included in this newsletter. We regret not being able to represent everyone who was involved in the extraordinary event, as it was truly a team effort of consistent support and commitment and **we are incredibly grateful**. Thank you to Eve Ensler and all at V-Day, Amy Carol Webb, the fabulous staff and board at Women’s Fund of Miami-Dade, Eventures staff, the Girls Advocacy Project, the Departments of Juvenile Justice and Corrections, all of the remarkable women who performed, everyone in attendance, and of course, all of the women brave enough to share the stories brought to life at the Gusman Theater.

Former Women’s Fund Executive Director Eileen Nexer said it best:

“Last night's performance created a shift in the earth plates of every one in the audience's consciousness.... Straight from your hearts with pin-point precision into our hearts.... There will be a time that we will look back to October 18, 2007, and recall it was a benchmark in how our community views women living with childhood horror and trauma who are now being further victimized in the prison system. And there -- at the point of awareness -- change begins.”

So let the change begin! Wishing you a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year,

Vicki Bible, Executive Director

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Just a Rose.....

Over a year ago, I was invited by Vicki Lukis to attend an ArtSpring presentation at Broward Correctional Institution in which the *Bridging the Gap* (BGAP) writing workshops were performed. It was an amazing experience to see the women perform their own words. A number of individuals from the community attended including an official from the Department of Corrections whose decision was the reason for my gift. At the end of the performance, much like Broadway, Joy Moore, who attended the performance on behalf of the Annie E. Casey Foundation during their filming of the BGAP Documentary, gave each of the women performers a rose. Unlike Broadway, the women were not actresses but INMATES and were not allowed to keep their flower. I recall Vicki saying: “in a perfect world you would be able to keep your flower, but this is not a perfect world. Smell your flowers and remember it. In view of the DOC rule, you are asked to give a flower to a member of the audience.” I recall having introduced myself as a daughter of inmate number 29227-004, my father. At the end of the performance this aged, long grey haired,



Incoming ArtSpring board member Betty Llorente (left) with Inside Out alumna Arlie Phaneuf



by Betty Llorente

humble, content, peaceful woman approached me and gave me her rose.

For a year, I kept it as a reminder of that day, never imagining that I would ever see that woman again. October 17, 2007, I was walking down from the stage at the Gusman center after a rehearsal and sitting by herself was this woman. She was different. She was now happy, a red head and more importantly FREE. I remember looking at her and her at me and saying: “You gave me your rose.” And she replied: “And your dad went to prison like me.” She was invited to perform at the *Any One of Us: Words from Prison: Miami* performance. I knew her as an inmate and I then found out that her name was Arlie.

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Just a Rose....

by Betty Llorente

(Continued)

I contacted my mother and told her to bring me the rose that was dried that had been sitting on top of my Baby Grand Piano. My mother not only brought it, but she went out of her way to decorate it. She placed it in a shadow box with gold leaves and a note that read: "Today I return to you, what you gave me a year ago." I gave it to her wrapped in vibrant red wrapping paper, which she opened as if it was the first gift she had ever received. She cried and could not believe that I had kept her rose. To see Arlie's face was priceless, but to see the face of Dr. Laura Bedard, the DOC representative who enforced the rule that the participants not be allowed to keep their rose while Arlie was incarcerated, was even better. Arlie showed her the gift the night of the performance on October 18, 2007. Seeing the makeup run on Dr. Bedard's face was like the face of the women that were not allowed to keep their flower.

Who would have thought that the decision of the rose would cause so much pain. But in the end, the rose brought two worlds together and maybe now many will not see inmates as animals, but as human beings who did not make the right choices.



Highlights
from

Eve Ensler (center) with formerly incarcerated women answer questions after the performance

(L-R) Miami-Dade County Commissioner Katy Sorenson, Women's Fund Executive Director Claudia Kitchens, V-Day Founder Eve Ensler and GAP Statewide Expansion Director Vicki Lukis

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ArtSpring Founder and Artistic Director Leslie Neal and *Inside Out* alumna Marcia Frazier accept roses and applause.

Florida Dept. of Corrections Deputy Secretary Dr. Laura Bedard (2nd from left) with *Inside Out* alumnae (L-R) Mary Ellen Digiacommo, Marcia Frazier and Deborah McEnteggart



Any One of Us: Words from Prison: Miami (Continued)



Pictures - Top Left: Janice Billie and Amy Carol Webb; Top Right: Jessica Gibbs, Betty Llorente, Arlie Phaneuf, Hunter Reno and Mary Ellen Digiacomio; Center Left: Maria Bell; Center: Eve Ensler; Center Right: Jessica Gibbs, Alison Austin and Denise Rainey; Bottom Left: Ilien Hechtman, Hunter Reno and Leslie Sternlieb; Bottom Right: Sophie Brion

Upcoming Events

Inside Out Community Presentation at Homestead Correctional

Tentatively scheduled
for 2/24/07.

Please contact
ArtSpring if you are
interested in attending:

305.278.1601
artspring@artspring.org

V to the 10th: New Orleans

V-Day celebrates 10 years of ending violence
against women April 11-12, 2008

V-Day will stage a once in a lifetime event this April in New Orleans, featuring international performances of The Vagina Monologues, musical guests, V-Day activists from across the globe including Kenya, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Philippines, Democratic Republic of Congo and Eastern Europe, men standing up for women and much more. **Salma Hayek, Oprah Winfrey, Jane Fonda, Jennifer Hudson, Glenn Close, Julia Stiles, Ashley Judd, Marisa Tomei, Calpernia Addams, Rosario Dawson, Kerry Washington, Ellen Degeneres, and musicians Joss Stone, Common, Eve, Charmaine Neville** have already signed on. More info will be posted on V-Day's website soon, but in the meantime....

Several involved in *Any One of Us* expressed interest in attending, and we know others in our ArtSpring circle may also like to go. ArtSpring has inquired about group rates to the event. If you are interested in helping to organize the Miami contingent, or even if you would just like to be included once arrangements are made, please contact the ArtSpring office: 305-278-1601 or by email at artspring@artspring.org so we can start a list of interested individuals.

Inside Art

After the *Any One of Us* event, ArtSpring was honored to present to Eve Ensler a plaque featuring a drawing by Catherine Withington, an *Inside Out* participant at Homestead Correctional Institution.

Standing to the right of Eve is ArtSpring Board Member Janice Billie, who accepted the Diamond Sponsor appreciation plaque on behalf of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. To the left of Eve are (L-R): Women's Fund Executive Director Claudia Kitchens and Immediate Past Board Chair Ellen Shishko, and ArtSpring Founder and Artistic Director Leslie Neal.





ArtSpring's mission is to support self-growth and effective life skills through art-making. ArtSpring believes in the power of art to transform individuals and communities, promoting the value of the arts as tools for community empowerment and social change. Offering interdisciplinary arts programs primarily in correctional settings, ArtSpring serves a diverse ethnic, age and racial demographic who have an overwhelming number of needs that are not being met adequately by community resources. ArtSpring is nationally recognized for the longest ongoing arts in corrections programming in Florida and since 1994 has offered specially designed arts-based workshops in female prisons and juvenile facilities through two principal ongoing programs: *Inside Out-Expressive Arts Workshops for Incarcerated Women* and *Breaking Free-Arts for Adolescent Girls*. Because the populations served are incarcerated, victimized, and often forgotten, these gender-specific programs encourage a process of personal reflection: self-awareness, acceptance, commitment, tolerance and personal choice-making, that provide participants better tools for survival inside and upon their release. In 2005 ArtSpring expanded programming to include *Rites and Passages-Theatre and Drumming Workshops for Male Inmates* (RAP). ArtSpring's unique interdisciplinary arts programs incorporate movement, theater games, writing, drawing, music, storytelling, meditation, guided imagery and performance as transformational tools for self-reflection and personal change.

ArtSpring programs utilize the arts as vibrant tools for intervention within these communities to provide a safe, positive space for individual reflection and potential healing. Offenders in correctional settings have very limited educational and therapeutic programs to address the issues that have resulted in their incarceration. Without programming that addresses behavioral change, they often lack the skills and self-esteem to survive upon release and often return to the same criminal behavior. By providing arts programs that innately encourage self reflection, promote self esteem, and support individual accomplishment, ArtSpring is ultimately creating healthier and safer communities.

Year-end donations welcome to support ArtSpring initiatives in 2008

ArtSpring is involved in many exciting initiatives that we hope will come to fruition in the coming year. It is not too late to donate in 2007 to assist ArtSpring as we embark on an exciting new year. As a nonprofit public charity, we rely on grants and contributions to provide a sustainable future for ArtSpring. Please help us today with a charitable gift, which will ensure the continuation of our programs in our Florida communities.

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If you would like to support ArtSpring with an individual or corporate donation, please send your check or money order payable to "ArtSpring, Inc." to:

ArtSpring, Inc.
P.O. Box 343432
Florida City, FL 33034

If you would prefer paying by credit card, you may do so through PayPal by visiting our website at:
www.artspring.org/donate.htm

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ArtSpring is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. ArtSpring receives support from the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners. *Breaking Free* is funded in part by The Children's Trust. The Trust is a dedicated source of revenue established by voter referendum to improve the lives of children and families in Miami-Dade County.



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