



Museum Trip Energizes Cancer Survivors

PABLO PICASSO ONCE OBSERVED THAT “ART WASHES AWAY FROM THE SOUL THE DEBRIS OF EVERYDAY LIFE.” The students taking El Camino Hospital’s Creative Expressions painting class, all cancer survivors, experience for themselves the truth of his reflection every week. In July, they had the opportunity to reaffirm it on a special field trip to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where they saw the revolutionary paintings of Picasso, Matisse and other early 20th century modern artists that were purchased by visionary collectors Gertrude, Leo, and Michael Stein.

The trip was the brainchild of Tehila Eisenstat, the professional artist who launched Creative Expressions and teaches the classes. For Eisenstat, winner last spring of Cancer Support Community’s Star Caregiver Award, the classes are less art therapy than “art as therapy” because of the incredible connection and energy they engender between the students. Her powerful devotion to her students is matched by her love of the particular period of art history currently showcased by MOMA’s exhibit. “These artists changed the course of modern art and the Steins were geniuses for recognizing their talent before anyone else. Michael and Sarah Stein lived in Palo Alto and, in fact, their house is still here. The paintings

have positive, happy colors. I felt this exhibit presented a unique opportunity to weave all the strands together for my students and to give them a beautiful experience they might not otherwise have.”

So, on July 28, after weeks of preparation, 28 enthusiastic cancer survivor art students boarded a bus provided by El Camino Hospital Foundation, and headed into the city. They shared homemade snacks and camaraderie as they listened to Eisenstat’s informative description of Paris at the turn of the century and the impact the Steins had on the development of modern art. At the museum they were free to rent audio headsets and explore on their own before meeting up for coffee and conversation in the café at the end of the day.

The students returned to Mountain View energized, inspired, and grateful for the experience. “Thank you ECH Foundation for providing Tehila Eisenstat’s art class the rare opportunity to visit the Stein collection in San Francisco,” wrote George Gill, who expressed the sentiments of many of his classmates. “To view this extraordinary exhibit of modern paintings up front and personal was an experience that this cancer survivor will never forget.”

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