Physicians find healing and enrichment through new Medical Arts Program

Every day, physicians face stressful, emotionally-charged situations. Studies show that physicians who participate in the creation of art find it to be a healing practice that enriches their lives and helps relieve some of the pressure and tension associated with their roles. Michael Brooks, family medicine physician at Adventist Hinsdale and Adventist La Grange Memorial hospitals, can speak firsthand to the benefits of tapping into his creative side.

Brooks states, “Painting is liberating for me. I believe that a successful painting not only reproduces the visible, it brings to light emotions and meanings the artist wishes to convey. When I once thought I had to give up art to be a physician, my aunt reminded me that I am more than a doctor and I could pursue my painting without sacrificing my profession.”

As the healing arts director for AMITA Health’s Adventist hospitals, Sue Kett understands the joy personal artwork can bring to both artist and audience. She spearheaded efforts to showcase the artistic talents of employees, volunteers and family members of AMITA Health Adventist hospitals through the annual 2014 National Arts Program Healing Arts Exhibit.

The resounding success of the exhibit has led to development of a new Medical Arts Program, managed by Kett and sponsored by the Physician Wellness Program, under the auspices of the regional Mission and Ministries Department. The initiative specifically targets physicians, illustrating how creative outlets can be used to offset the stress associated with their demanding practices.

According to John Rapp, regional vice president of Ministries and Mission with AMITA Health, “This new program recognizes the proven benefits of adopting a creative arts practice and offers our physicians access to a rotating gallery of artwork produced by their fellow doctors in the hopes of inspiring them to develop their own artistic talents.”

The official opening of the Medical Arts Program and its rotating gallery took place in April at Adventist Hinsdale Hospital with an evening reception in the Doctors Lounge where the artwork was on display. The program premieres its rotating gallery with a showing of the beautifully detailed, classical oil paintings created by Brooks. The gallery eventually will move on to other Adventist facilities in the region, beginning with Adventist La Grange Memorial Hospital.

According to Kett, physician interest in the new Medical Arts Program is high. “Doctors are already reaching out to me to share their own art pieces and stories. What’s particularly rewarding is the opportunity for physicians to view their fellow practitioners in a new light. Even people who have known Dr. Brooks for years are amazed to learn of his talent as a painter and excited to view his work.”

Additional art pieces reflecting other creative modalities, such as photography and poetry, will be featured in the gallery in the months ahead, with plans to bring in new artwork every two to three months as more physicians share their creative gifts through this inspirational, healing program.

Julie Busch, assistant vice president for communications, AMITA Health