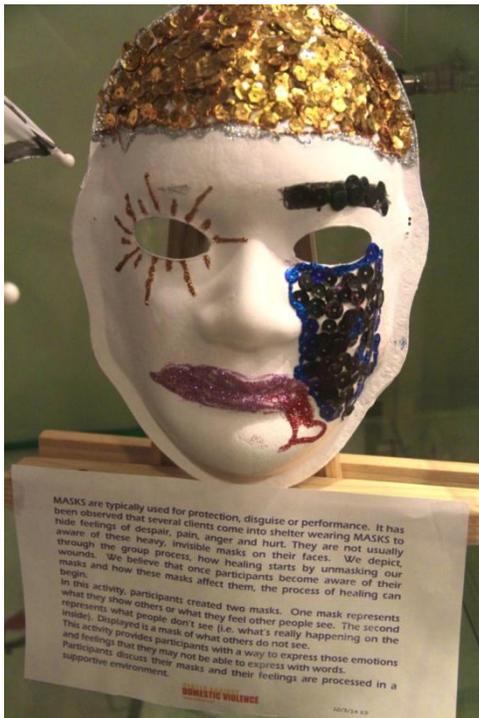




## HRA Exhibits Artwork by Survivors of Domestic Violence

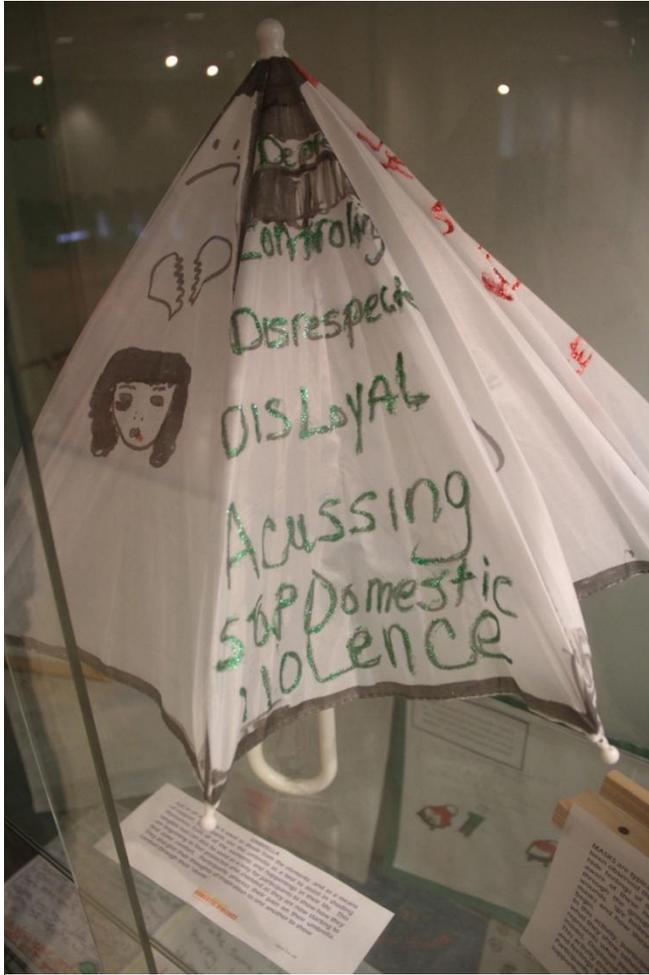
Art therapy can be a vital part of recovery for survivors of Domestic Violence. As part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, HRA is hosting an exhibit of art by survivors of domestic violence at HRA's main office, open to HRA and related City agency staff. The artwork is a striking mix of media, including drawing and painting, painted masks, writing, even homemade books and an umbrella decorated with images and text. The pieces were created by shelter residents of all ages as part of the art therapy program, which helps survivors tell their stories and rebuild their confidence and self-image.



Creative therapy, which includes art but also dance, exercise, poetry, fashion, beauty, and other forms of self-expression, is a way to help survivors of domestic violence break away from the ordinary and forge a new identity. Creative therapy is often very effective at helping child survivors of DV express feelings they may not know how to verbalize, and can overcome barriers to communication, whether from trauma, culture or language.

“There’s probably a single thread running through these programs,” said Jennifer White-Reid, Vice President of Domestic Violence Programs at the Urban Resource Institute. “Anything to empower clients and help them express themselves.”

Art can also play an important role in the recovery process because it is permanent. Pieces of art, poetry, and other creations from former DV shelter residents can help new arrivals feel they aren’t alone, and that others have faced what they have and overcome it. Art also serves as a legacy— a chance for DV survivors to tell their stories and share them



with people who've lived through similar experiences.

Clients often play a big role in shaping these programs, lending their voices and talents to the curriculum. Pamela Isaac, a teaching artist and DV survivor, shared her artistic talents with her fellow shelter residents when she was recovering, and has since returned to teach art and crafting at other shelters.

"Art saved my life," she said. "Going to court, reliving my experiences, losing my home—it was art that calmed me down. I'm always creating something, and it's nice when you can share and encourage other people."

DV Shelter Service Providers participating in the exhibit include Safe Horizon, the Center Against Domestic Violence, the Urban Resource Institute, Jewish Board of Family & Children's Services, and Volunteers of America. The artwork will be on display at HRA's main office throughout the month of October. Domestic abuse can include emotional and economic abuse, controlling behavior and stalking in addition to physical and sexual violence. If you or someone you know are living in a situation like this, help is available through the 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-621-4673.