



## HERRON SCHOOL *of* ART + DESIGN

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## CINDY SIMON SKJODT ENDOWS CHAIR IN HERRON SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN'S ART THERAPY PROGRAM

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*Cindy Simon Skjodt*

Philanthropist and advocate for mental health Cindy Simon Skjodt has endowed a chair in Herron School of Art and Design's Art Therapy Program. The \$2 million gift will help Herron respond to Indiana's need to educate master's-level art therapists, positioning them to obtain nationally-recognized professional credentials.

Herron's Art Therapy Program aligns with Simon Skjodt's interest in therapeutic counseling, mental health and neurological research. She was particularly drawn to the trailblazing work the program's director, Juliet King, MA, ATR-BC, LPC, is conducting with returning veterans through the Roudebush VA Medical Center. The collaboration is providing an opportunity for the veterans to benefit from art therapy for the first time in Indiana.

An Army sergeant who in 2007 was the only survivor when the Humvee he was driving hit a roadside bomb in Iraq eloquently summed up his feelings about the value of his participation: "I understand the importance of therapy for veterans and the uniqueness of using art to negate a reluctance to talk about trauma. There seems to be a language barrier we veterans create when confronting these issues. I

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think, through art, we basically are constructing a bridge to better understand our psychological wounds. I believe (art therapy) to be an excellent medium to reach intangible emotions.”

Herron’s graduate art therapy students must log 1,000 hours of clinical experience to complete their degrees. Simon Skjodt’s gift, made possible through her personal Samerian Foundation, will help accelerate the establishment of art therapy internships in settings throughout Central Indiana, touching many lives—among them, families grieving the loss of a newborn, people in hospice and palliative care, those seeking respite services in adult day care, victims of rape and violence, the homeless, prison inmates and the mentally ill.

Simon Skjodt also recognized the advantage Herron has in aligning its instruction with resources at IUPUI and the neuroscience work of the IU School of Medicine, where advanced technology is providing new opportunities to observe the brain’s response to art therapy interventions. By learning more about the way the brain works, Herron-taught art therapists can develop techniques that help the most.

“Our goal is nothing less than moving Herron’s Art Therapy Program to the pinnacle nationally,” said Dean Valerie Eickmeier in announcing the gift. “We are deeply moved by Cindy Simon Skjodt’s vision and passion for this important work. Her gift will provide substantial, essential funding stability as this new program evolves, advancing the field of art therapy and making a practical difference in the lives people who are experiencing pain.”

For more information about the Art Therapy Program at Herron School of Art and Design, please visit <http://www.herron.iupui.edu/art-therapy>.

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