

National audiences eager to hear about Herron School of Art and Design's unique approach to Art Therapy

This summer and fall, professionals at national conferences from Seattle to Chicago and Louisville to New York will listen to Juliet King, Herron School of Art and Design's director of art therapy, share tales from the frontier.

She'll be speaking about art therapists' pioneering work in developing sound clinical interventions that help people get better. She ought to know. She's doing some pioneering of her own; for starters, by building an art therapy program housed in an art school.

Her speaking engagements include a June American Art Therapy Association Conference in Seattle; October presentations at the Illinois Art Therapy Association Conference in Chicago, and the Coalition for Urban and Metropolitan Universities in Louisville; and a November appearance at the Expressive Therapies Summit in New York.

Creative arts therapies are hot—whether visual, kinetic or musical—like a rock band laboring in obscurity, honing its chops for years before bursting onto the scene “overnight”. After decades of research, scientific evidence is forming a critical mass pointing toward art therapy's efficacy. Continuing and deepening this research is important in a world where only outcomes-based evidence will do for healthcare and insurance providers.

Public awareness has preceded some of the science, but governments have not caught up with the public. “We as professionals are facing a practical and existential crisis regarding employment and authenticity of professional identity,” said King. “In some states, anyone still can hang up a shingle and call themselves an art therapist, even though Art Therapy is a master's-level medical and healthcare profession.” She continued, “We are eligible to be licensed as professional counselors and are actively advocating for independent licensure. We have a lot more work to do in educating the public on what to look for in their practitioner.”

Despite a lag in ideal licensure requirements, strides on the clinical side continue. Wounded warriors are seeing the benefits of art therapy applied to their own struggles with sense of self and re-entry into civilian life. King's presentations will include discussion of her work with combat veterans at the Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center in Indianapolis.

“Veterans returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom volunteered to be part of a mindfulness-based art therapy group,” King said. “Originally developed as a pilot project to provide a service that does not yet exist at the VA, indicators are encouraging that from this group our participants felt ‘some’ or ‘great’ positive change in hopefulness, and also in the belief that they could improve their own emotional health.”

King also will be sharing highlights from her graduate students' experiences working alongside clinical staff, developing and providing art therapy in Indianapolis-area settings from prisons to hospice programs.

“With the technological resources and expertise Herron has available by being part of a large, urban, life sciences campus, we are poised to make significant research contributions to the study of Art Therapy as it relates to Neuroscience,” said King. “Intervening with Art Therapy and being able to assess its impact—especially on post-traumatic stress in veterans and children who are victims of abuse and neglect—is an exciting prospect for our graduate students and clinicians alike. There is so much promise for helping people in this field.”

For more information about Herron’s Art Therapy graduate program, visit www.herron.iupui.edu/art-therapy. -30-

