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Nassau Museum Launches Innovative Trauma Therapy Program
A Museum in the Community's Service

Roslyn Harbor, NY [05/30/2020] The Nassau County Museum of Art is mobilizing a year-long effort to provide therapeutic help and inspiration for those who have suffered trauma, anxiety and stress during the pandemic, including survivors, medical personnel and first responders, people with disabilities and their families and friends. Throughout the crisis, the Museum continued to maintain its 145-acre campus of grounds and trails, including our sculpture garden, and we even planted new native flower gardens for the future. Thousands of visitors have enjoyed, free of charge and safely distanced, the spectacular arboretum and world-class sculpture. In that same spirit, to fulfill the needs of the region hit hardest in the nation by the crisis, the Museum is committing its exhibitions and educational efforts, mobilizing the full staff as well as expert advisors, to an innovative effort to become a "trauma-aware" institution.

This means cultivating a safe space to help process the effects of the crisis. Whether out on the grounds, in our galleries, art studios, or in virtual learning engagement opportunities, we want to foster empathy, trust and openness so that visitors feel comfortable to share their stories. In collaboration with established experts in the field of art therapy and mental healthcare, we are launching a series of programs, for people of all ages, interests, and abilities that we hope will empower visitors through their experience of art. Our entire staff is engaged to make this vital goal our priority in the months to come. The Museum is well-positioned to make a difference in the recovery effort. With our many wonderful resources, including our bucolic grounds and the art in our galleries, we provide opportunities for contemplation, joy and wonder and a respite from the harsh realities of our daily lives. In more normal circumstances our day to day work is about bringing people together for social interaction in programs that using art as a tool to make connections and share ideas. Now we are finding ways to specifically address the effects of trauma.

We are launching a series of creative programs that address and support the social emotion wellbeing of families, teachers, adult learners, and people with special needs. Programs are offered in the museum (when we re-open) on the grounds of the museum and through virtual learning experiences until then. We will offer them multiple times to accommodate small groups to ensure that social distancing mandates are met. These programs include:

Gallery Tours and Talks – In the museum and out on our grounds, these programs invite participants to look at and discuss works of art as a means of processing their own difficult life experiences. Group discussions around works of art can help fight against the emotional impact of social isolation.

Open Studio / Art Classes – Hands-on art making gives visitors the opportunity to make visible their experiences in both open-ended studio experiences and in scheduled art classes that explore a variety of artistic media and inspiration. These programs will provide the support and resources for participants to work through self-guided and class directed creative responses.

Open-Air Painting - The act of putting brush to paper is a meditative and soothing experience. Making art on the grounds of our museum will engage participants in an exploration of line, form, and color. Out in nature and using the power of art as a non-verbal mode of communication to explore and express emotions.

Mindfulness – Inspired by staff training in mindfulness that we took at the Rubin Museum in Manhattan, I have joined my colleagues in our education department to design guided mindfulness meditations that focus on observation and reflection as we gather together for a walk through the Museum's sculpture park and garden. Participants will unplug and unwind, using our grounds and sculpture to focus on our breathing, notice our reactions, and practice the art of looking on purpose without judgment.

Yoga Outdoors– Bird songs, the touch of a gentle breeze and the smell of cut grass and blooms will help people activate their senses in the serene setting of our garden as they use breathing and movement to alleviate stress.

Resources for Students and Teachers – Offered online and designed to provide teachers with teaching resources, this series of lessons bring the museum into the classroom. Lessons will focus on interdisciplinary lessons that look at art through the lens of social studies, science, and literature. Education staff are assembling a panel of teachers and administrators to discuss and collaborate on developing classroom curricular for virtual learning experiences and activities that teachers can use for themselves and their students to address the social emotional stresses that impact their personal health and educational goals.

Engaging People on the Spectrum – Through a series of interactive videos that engage participants in art making, interactive storytelling and movement activities NCMA's Art Therapist will engage people on the Autism Spectrum and provide a vital resource for family and care partners who are navigating the challenges of adapting home instruction for their child.

Drawing Lessons- Drawing videos engage people of all ages in drawing prompts that encourage participants look closely recording what you see. Everyone is encouraged to join in with no focus on making a perfect work of art. We also acknowledge that people might not have access to art supplies, so they are encouraged to use what they have at home.

Virtual Gallery Tour and Exhibition Guide – These resources invite people to explore the museum virtually and offers an in depth look at the museum's current exhibition *blue*. to help build a deeper understanding of the artists, their process, and their work.

Building On Our Track Record

The Museum and its professional staff have considerable experience in the fields of disability and art therapy. For more than a decade, we have hosted programs for people on the Autism Spectrum as well as people with Alzheimer's and for groups from local organizations, for whom a visit to the Museum has been a welcome break in their daily routines. Among the founders of the museum three decades ago, Joan Saltzman was famous for her support of people with disabilities, and her legacy of compassion continues in the building that bears her name. Our director, Charles Riley, has been a nationally known advocate for people with disabilities in the political and business spheres, including those with PTSD. He is the author of two books on the subject, and the recipient of honors from the White House, the Mayor

of New York's Office for People with Disabilities, Easter Seals, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness. We are working with two extremely talented and experienced experts in the field of art therapy, Pam Koehler, Molly Bassett and Deborah Adler.

Coming out on the other side of this, whatever that looks like, the Museum is here to help and I hope that when life regains some normalcy the Nassau County Museum of Art can offer some measure of comfort and certainty to members of our community. Until then we will continue to open our doors virtually and will await the time when we can meet again.

Nassau County Museum of Art is located at One Museum Drive in Roslyn Harbor. The museum is open Tuesday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-4:45 p.m. Admission is \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors (62 and above) and \$5 for students and children (4 to 12). Docent-led tours of the exhibition are offered at 2 p.m. each day; tours of the mansion are offered each Saturday at 1 p.m.

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