

July 1, 2008

Hurricane Katrina Continues To Inspire Pursuit Of Dreams In Colorado

Dear Peter:

America was caught by surprise on August 30, 2005 by the amount of devastation Louisiana suffered by Hurricane Katrina and then again three weeks later by Hurricane Rita. Thousands of people were trapped and homeless, hundreds lost their lives. The amount of destruction these two hurricanes caused has since been hailed the greatest disaster in our nation's history.

Amy O'Flaherty, an artist and marriage and family therapist, was residing in New Orleans at the time when Katrina hit the city. A year after the hurricane, Amy and her family moved back home to Colorado. All the devastation and sadness Amy experienced in her counseling practice and within the greater community in the wake of Katrina inspired her to want to use her art and counseling skills to contribute to others in a greater way.

Maureen O'Flaherty, Amy's sister-in-law, was a Montessori teacher and administrator in Denver for most of her life. In 2005, Maureen realized she was ready for a different path which would incorporate her value for being in service to young learning.

"I've long recognized the connection art had with building confidence in children," said Maureen. "With some schools cutting back on art programs, I felt this was a great opportunity to provide something to the community that was meaningful."

As a result of Amy's desire to create something special and facilitate growth for others and Maureen's inspiration to be of service in the community while doing something she loves, the O'Flahertys opened Denver Monart School of the Arts, a franchise founded by internationally acclaimed art educator and author Mona Brooks and the third franchise to open in Denver. With Maureen's history as a talented teacher, her love for what she does and Amy's degree in Fine Art, her masters in counseling and experience as an entrepreneur, both have the desire to use the arts to build strength and confidence in children and adults while building an art center that enhances lives and makes a difference in people's lives.

"I realized, after the experience of Hurricane Katrina, that I want to create a path that contributes to the lives of others," said Amy. "I've always held a passion for the arts and now I want to give back even more through creativity and expression." she continues.

Centennial based Denver Monart School of the Arts is a center that has become more than just teaching people how to draw but about helping students to explore their creativity, focus and concentrate, make decisions, solve problems, sequence and develop hand-eye coordination. Monart's key message is that in a non-competitive peaceful environment, students learn that drawing is a teachable subject in which anyone can be successful.

Peter, we wanted to approach you with this story idea as a "community interest" for the business section in Centennial Citizen. We feel your readers would enjoy a success story, almost three years after Hurricane Katrina.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
Ann Albergotti
PR Representative
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