

Full story

Barnstone Art for Kids **Cultivating Connections, Building Resilience**

It's often said that art is a universal language, able to evoke feelings and cultivate connections, among other things. Those concepts are part of the Barnstone Art philosophy. The Phoenixville non-profit gives children who have experienced adversity the opportunity to work 1 to 1 with a trained mentor while creating, exploring and building resilience in children who have experienced adversity in childhood.

Since it began with just seven volunteers and six children participants in 2011, Barnstone Art has grown to include more than 35 volunteers working with four class sections divided by age group, yet the core of the program remains the same. The organization uses the power of art to help children heal, cope and grow.

"It's been exhilarating to see how committed the mentor volunteers are, and how much the children get from the program. They're empowered," said founder Lynn Detwiler. "We see such progress. Some children may come in very socially introverted, but they open up and within weeks we see them use communication skills and their artistic voice."

Detwiler and executive director Sean Halloran say many of the children enrolled in the program have developmental delays. Between 30 to 40 percent are on the Autism Spectrum. Many are referred to the art program by their school district or mental health providers. Some have anxiety or just lack confidence, but as they create in the nonjudgmental atmosphere, children can blossom.

Visit the Barnstone Art for Kids website to learn more about the program and what they do. <https://www.barnstoneartforkids.org/>