

# The Herald News

## Healing power of art on display at Greater Fall River Art Association



Herald News Photo | Dave Souza Miko Paul and some of his art work done at Studio 35 a creative arts program of Fellowship Health Resources.

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FALL RIVER — A mandala — loosely translated as “circle” in Sanscrit — is a symbol of life and all it contains, from the shape of the earth, sun and moon to the infinite band that represents love and friendship.

That makes the mandala the perfect artistic expression for inspiring the patients of Fellowship Health Resources patients, where they believe in art to help heal “beautiful minds.”

The organization, for individuals with mental health issues, uses the arts in its Studio 35 program as a creative pathway to self-discovery and wellness.

“There’s a stigma,” said Therese Bernier, Studio 35 rehabilitation and recovery group coordinator. “They have a heart like we have. They feel like we do.”

When art is part of the process, Bernier said it opens their minds and promotes self-confidence.

“We see them bloom,” Bernier said.

Everyone is invited to see the artwork of Studio 35 in an exhibit “Art of the Soul: Mandalas from Studio 35,” at the Greater Fall River Art Association, 80 Belmont St., from July 11 to Sept. 9.

An opening reception will be offered on Saturday, July 11, from 2 to 5 p.m.

Six individuals participated in the art program, run by local artist Alison Horvitz, in a number of sessions over the past couple of months at Town House Clubhouse, 1706 President Ave.

The mandala art program was supported with roughly \$3,000 in grant funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Fellowship Legacy and the United Way.

Horvitz hung the exhibit in the lower rooms of the Art Association’s historic Highlands house earlier this week.

She showed off the students’ artwork with pride, pointing out their use of color and their comprehension of the true meaning of mandala.

“It’s a Buddhist form of prayer,” Horvitz said. “You start in the center and work your way out. It’s healing.”

Patient and artist Angela Arsenault and Miko Paul said the class had healing effects, and was also educational on other levels.

“It was very relaxing and helped me to socialize with people,” Arsenault said.

Bernier said many of Fellowship Health Resources patients live at home or in group homes and can really benefit from activities that include socialization and being out in the community.

Paul, who said he enjoys all types of art, especially the abstract, had good things to say: “It was really fun. We learned a lot.”

For Bernier, seeing their work hung in an exhibit was very gratifying.

“I think it’s wonderful,” Bernier said. “For me, it’s just seeing them find their purpose and bloom.”