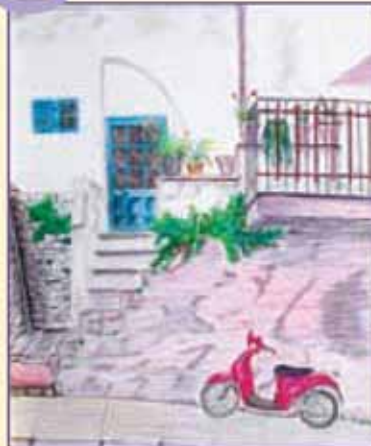


Local Diabetes Patients Discover the Healing Arts

Controlling diabetes can be difficult enough without the added stress, anxiety and, often, depression that can surface as a side effect. Against these odds, many anxious diabetics have been gaining a new lease on life, discovering that yes, they can take charge of their destiny in spite of their disease. They're learning all this in an unlikely place: **art class.**

The IDEAL program is believed by its creator, diabetologist Dana Green, PA-C to be among the first, if not the very first support group in the nation to use art therapy to help people cope with diabetes. "It has been used successfully by people with different kinds of cancers, chronic pain and other ailments to help them cope," says Green, a physician assistant at St. Joseph Healthcare's Diabetes and Nutrition Center. "But we were the first to use it for people with diabetes." IDEAL is an abbreviation created by Green. It represents the five core elements of the program: Individual



often become anxious because they feel the disease is controlling them. This helps them change their focus about themselves. It helps put them in charge."

Successes? There have been many, says Green, who gets emotional on the final night of each six-month session, when

(Each class member has received positive results.)

learning; Diabetes decision making; Education in coping and behavior skills; self-Assessment; and quality of Life.

Whether a seasoned artist or someone who has never tested their creative talents before, each member of the first two IDEAL support groups has received positive, often astounding results from the experience.

"You don't need to be an artist to do this," says Green, who facilitates the six-month program with his wife Eileen and diabetes educator Sheryl Bouchard. "On the first night, each group member usually starts with a straight line on a drawing pad and it progresses from there," Green says.

"It works for them because it improves their outlook," says Green. "Diabetics

all the participants share not only their art projects, but also their stories.

One group member in a recent course admitted that she had been so discouraged she attempted suicide, but the group sessions and therapy made her realize "my life is valuable."

The first two sessions of the IDEAL program were so successful that a third session is planned for spring 2007, says Green. "It's a great way of staying in touch with your patients as they change and grow."

For more information:

St. Joseph Healthcare's Diabetes & Nutrition Center - (207) 262-1836

Dana Green's blog:

arttherapyfordiabetes.blogspot.com