

Sculpting clay, fueled by hope

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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Artist shares his heart-opening journey with depression

For Steve Marti, overcoming obstacles in his life all began with the simple art of making things out of clay and other materials since he was a child. The love of pottery making began in high school, but soon this love affair fell to the wayside amongst the array of a busy life.

With fear being his biggest enemy, and having gone through his own traumatic ordeal, he quickly rekindled his passion for the arts. He realized that fear had stopped him from doing things and going places, but since becoming an accomplished pottery artist – fear no longer has a place in his life and he now passes this healing trade to others.

Marti calls his art “Hope Pottery & Arts” because he uses his art to give hope to those who may suffer from depression which may ultimately lead to suicide. Marti says it’s not too common to find that art opens a person’s inner self or pathway to experience some healing. He emphasizes that pottery opens a person’s heart and this is what people need.

“People working in art are able to focus and it opens them up,” he said. “Here’s all this trauma and stuff that is holding them shut ... because of them focusing it loosens them up. Now they can see into something better where they couldn’t before, it opens up their heart.”

Marti says creating in an atmosphere of love can bring with it a sense of hope, and can destroy “hope-killers,” which are abundant in this area—violence, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, domestic violence.

“Without hope, an individual can easily resort to bad choices that make even daily life difficult,” he said.

His adventure fully began in 2009 when he was the chief financial officer for Western Indian Ministries, a Christian organization. Marti says he was working so much that he was hardly ever home. Ultimately, due to his tedious schedule, he wound up in the hospital.

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“I thought I was having a heart attack. I couldn’t breathe, my chest was tight, but it was stress,” he said. “I told myself this was enough and decided to just quit. It was then that at that time I received a little money from my mother’s estate and bought my first potter’s wheel deciding that I wanted to do something with this.”

With support from his wife, and his faith in God, he decided to brush up on pottery skills and began to practice on it, so maybe he could someday teach this this newfound art of his. This is what brought Marti to Gallup.

“I am a potter. I am an artist. The results of the creating are not what is important, but the experience of the creating in an atmosphere of love, touching God and being touched by God,” he said.

He made some friends because of his art and one of them was the Laura Jijon, director of UNM-Gallup North Campus. She invited Marti to set up a studio at the campus to integrate art and the healing aspect of it with the adult education program.

“I work with adult education at the UNM-North campus and find that a lot of my students, about 85 percent, come from some sort of trauma life,” he said. “Alcohol, drugs, violence – all that kind of stuff in their lives makes it very difficult for that individual to talk about it. Overall, it’s been coming along nicely and now I have four potter’s wheels to teach the students.”

Marti says when the students are in a loving environment they become to come alive and begin to thrive.

THRIVING IN GALLUP

Since moving to Gallup, a little over four years ago, he’s opened his own makeshift small pottery studio and gas kiln. He’s become an active potter, displaying his work in ART123 Gallery, Makeshift Gallery, Gallup Coffee Company, as well as in the ArtsCrawl.

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Marti helps students prepare to for their high school equivalency diplomas. He's also studied the Navajo language for many years, teaching reading and writing to Navajo speakers, and Navajo language introduction to non-Native speakers.

Marti says Hope Pottery & Arts exists to provide a creative environment in a community of love that can lead to the transformation and healing of those in the area. HPA will be a place for classes, workshops, and seminars in pottery and other arts for people of all ages.

For more info on Hope Pottery & Arts contact Steve Marti at (505) 409-7973 or hopepotteryandarts@gmail.com

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