



Art from the Inside (AFTI) was founded by Antonio Espinosa with the goal of fostering transformation, healing, and forgiveness after the tragic death of a friend and colleague at the Minnesota Correctional Facility–Stillwater, at the hands of an incarcerated person. With the help of a one-time appropriation from the Minnesota Legislature, AFTI created a program that brought art and wellness facilitation to participants inside two prisons, benefitting the incarcerated participants individually and, in turn, fostering a safer community for the incarcerated population and correction officers.

38

Fellows supported in 2024

22

Fellows from Faribault men's facility

28

Fellows are parents (*5 choosing not to answer)

16

Fellows from Shakopee women's facility

The Art from the Inside program has had a profound impact on participants, fostering a deeper sense of connection, personal growth, and community. Through the program, participants from both Shakopee women's and Faribault men's facilities have formed meaningful relationships, gained confidence, and found new ways to engage with others inside and outside the facilities.

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS

The program provided a platform for individuals to share their creative processes, give and receive feedback, and build friendships with like-minded peers. Many participants noted that the fellowship allowed them to overcome barriers to socializing, making it easier to engage with others.

For instance, one participant expressed that the fellowship allowed her to become more comfortable asking for critiques on her work and offering the same to others. Many also emphasized that the program helped them see beyond surface-level differences, deepening their understanding of and empathy for one another.

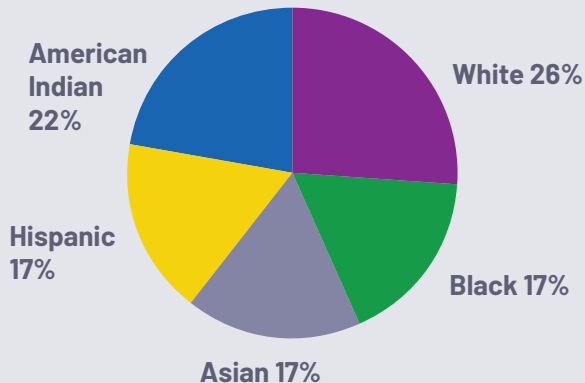
How has participating in this program influenced your emotional well-being?

“IT HAS HELPED ME TO FIND HEALTHY COPING SKILLS. IT HAS TAUGHT ME THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY AND FELLOWSHIP. YOU’RE NEVER ALONE.”

–Alicia, Shakopee Fellow

STRENGTHENING BONDS

The program's impact extended far beyond the facility walls. Many participants highlighted how the fellowship allowed them to reconnect with family and friends in meaningful ways. For some, art became a bridge to engage with loved ones, facilitating conversations that were not previously possible.



One participant shared how the program nurtured her artistic connection with her child and inspired her to explore aspects of her culture she had previously overlooked. Another remarked that sharing her work with family, friends, and community members provided a platform for dialogue and confidence-building.



Minnesota Attorney General, Keith Ellison attending a Shakopee workshop with AFTI program participants.

Community engagement also played a significant role in strengthening participants' sense of connection. Several participants expressed gratitude for the program's facilitators and supporters, acknowledging that the involvement of individuals outside the facility made them feel valued and cared for.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

The program fosters a strong sense of belonging to an artistic community. Many participants described the relationships

formed through the fellowship as vital to their artistic and personal growth. Additionally, participants appreciated the opportunity to showcase their art and receive recognition for their efforts. Sharing their work not only boosted their confidence but also reinforced the value of their creative expression.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

The program's impact was overwhelmingly positive with many expressing a strong commitment to continuing their artistic journeys and nurturing the relationships they have built.

Participants also highlighted how the program equipped them with tools to sustain their personal and artistic growth. Many expressed plans to use art as a coping mechanism, a source of income, or a way to stay connected with their community. The program's emphasis on collaboration and support provided participants with a foundation for long-term success.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The Art from the Inside program has had a transformative impact on participants, fostering a sense of connection, community, and personal growth. Through the fellowship, individuals built meaningful relationships, strengthened bonds with family and friends, and developed a supportive artistic community. The program encouraged inclusivity, broke down barriers to social interaction, and inspired participants to continue their artistic and personal journeys.

"I FEEL MORE CALM, AND IN ANY SITUATION THAT CAN BRING ME STRESS, I WORK ON MY BREATHING AND I FIND CALMNESS AND PEACEFULNESS. I DON'T REACT TO THE MOMENT ANYMORE."

-Benjamin, Faribault Fellow

"I NOTICED MY MENTAL HEALTH IMPROVE RAPIDLY OVER THE 12 WEEKS."

-Victoria, Shakopee Fellow

Thank you for engaging with this transformative and healing work that benefits those within and beyond facility walls.

Help us continue to provide these valuable services into the future.

Learn more about our work at artfromtheinsidemn.org

Or contact Antonio Espinosa at artfromtheinsidemn@gmail.com