



3rd Annual NOAH ARTS IN HEALTH AWARDS

Arts Building Resilience: First Place Winner

Hamsa Hands are Healing Hands for Michigan Medicine

The challenge for Gifts of Art (GOA) this past year was how to best support our overwhelmed and exhausted staff with arts-based interventions intended to calm, comfort, and help refresh them for the continuing work at hand. Furthermore, we needed to make any such programming available for nearly 30,000 employees, not only in patient care, but also in support roles over many sites as well as working remotely.

We carefully shifted resources to make more of our arts programming available to faculty, staff, and learners to reduce stress and build resilience to better face the challenges of Covid-19. We did this by building on our existing programming for patients for which we had data to demonstrate desirability, efficacy, and satisfaction.

We reached out to partner with several key hospital stakeholders: Nursing, Human Resources, The Office of Counseling and Workplace Resilience, The Office of Patient Experience, Decedent Affairs and Volunteer Services to create and roll out the hospital-wide program - Hamsa Hands are Healing Hands.

We brought art, music, and storytelling to staff with greater intention beginning in August 2020 when we were able to return to the hospitals in person. But we chose to launch the Hamsa Hand project in May 2021 because that month contained three major staff initiatives – Nursing Week, Employee Appreciation Week and Grief Awareness Month.

We researched and chose the Hamsa Hand design as the center piece of the initiative because of the Hamsa's diverse cultural and rich symbolism. For thousands of years, people have embraced the ancient Mesopotamian Hamsa symbol of an open right palm as a sign of protection and good fortune. In recent times, the symbol has been shared among many faiths and represents prosperity, peace, and happiness.

Each stakeholder partner promoted the availability and distribution of free art kits based on the Hamsa Hand design to their staff – at their events, convenient pick-up locations, and distribution directly to staff work locations. Our GOA Communications Coordinator promoted the art kits on Michigan Medicine websites as well as in targeted emails, newsletters, digital signage, and hospital news blasts.



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We responded to over 1,000 requests for kits in May and continue to make them available today. Half of our requests came directly from the hospital, and the other requests were from Michigan Medicine off-campus clinics throughout the state of Michigan. The kits included all necessary art supplies - colored pencils, pencil sharpener and four different designs for all skill levels.

We also created an animated, fun, four-minute Hamsa Hand instructional video: <https://youtu.be/nMWS0MGTO9w>. Over 50 University of Michigan student volunteers created the many colorful Hamsa Hand designs that were featured in the video. A common thread we heard was how relaxing and enjoyable it was for them to create the images. The link to the video was listed on each art kit for easy access.

A special and much-loved feature of Grief Awareness Month were the decorated "Grief Windows." Faculty, staff, and learners were invited to post messages about grief and loss they might be holding or processing. Due to the pandemic, participants could not write directly on the windows this year, so GOA Bedside Artists scribed the comments sent in electronically. To enhance these notes, we output oversized (40"x 50") Hamsa Hand designs onto transparent cling film. Those colorful images were displayed on large hospital windows near the very busy cafeteria promoting the art kits and other Grief Awareness programming for the month. The sunlight coming through the Hamsa Hand images on the windows created a stained-glass effect that cast a beautiful warm glow that numerous staff and guests told us made their day. We have since been asked to do more of these cling film installations on windows.

Also assisting with content for Grief Awareness Month was another popular GOA program, Story Studio, that launched the initiative Reflections on Covid, where staff, faculty, and learners were encouraged to record and share their experiences during the pandemic. On May 21, 2021, GOA hosted a live, hospital-wide Zoom webinar introducing and sharing more about Reflections on Covid, as well as the Hamsa Hand project. We were honored to feature one guest, a staff member who participated, who came on to talk about her experience of being a Covid long-hauler, and how having the opportunity to record and share her story helped in the healing process.

At the close of the thirty days, we collected data, photos and stories from faculty, staff, learners, guests, and hospital departments to determine the success of the Hamsa Hands for Michigan Medicine. It is summarized here:

- Comments and thanks are summarized in the media supplement.
- Hamsa Hand video – 233 views



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- Hamsa Hand kits given in May to:
 - Nursing: Nurse Appreciation Month – 350
 - Decedent Affairs: Grief Awareness Month – 200
 - Human Resources: Hospital Employee Appreciation Week – 250
 - Volunteer Services: University of Michigan Student Groups – 75
 - GOA: Individual Staff Promotions – 125

We continue to use that data to inform and assess current staff initiatives. For example: Relaxation rooms are being added to patient care areas as well as other staff areas. We are exploring how we might enhance the limited scheduled 15-minute visits to these regenerative spaces.

The Hamsa-inspired kit, video and programs reached far beyond our projected expectations. We connected on a creative level with a variety of staff ranging from Traveling Nurses working in the clinics throughout Michigan, Clinical Risk and Data Collection staff working from home to Food and Nutrition Services staff located at the hospital. Many from those groups were new participants to our arts program.

We were very pleased that this diverse, collaborative project was so successful at providing a small but meaningful break for faculty, staff, learners, and the health system community at large to help to prevent burnout and cultivate resiliency. Recently Spiritual Care told us the Hamsa Hands window displays exemplified the kind of universal spiritual support they believe to be powerful and much needed by all, especially in these challenging times.

Creative Credits:

- Elaine Reed- Michigan Medicine Gifts of Art (GOA) Bedside Art Program Coordinator and Artist in Residence
- Carrie McClintock- GOA Communication Coordinator
- Jessy Butts- GOA Bedside Artist in Residence
- Sam Vandiver- GOA Bedside Music Practitioner & Story Studio Writer in Residence
- Ami Walsh- GOA Story Studio
- Missy Gabriel – Staff Story- Gastroenterology Hepatology Program
- Jessica Burkle- University of Michigan Student Videographer
- Dustin Gilbert- Art Production, University of Michigan Sign Shop