

To the 5000 kids that have enriched my life and the more than 500 teachers and administrators that have laughed, loved and cried with me. Thank you!!.... I am blessed to have crossed paths with you.

Each moment during these 31 years as an art therapist, I have poured my heart out with passion and conviction. The vessel emptied and then it filled always preparing me for new learning and new adventures. The pouring and filling expanded my horizons. Almost everyday I was excited to come to work. I love my job.

In 1973 I wrote a valedictorian speech on, "What is essential is invisible to the eye" Armed with this conviction, I headed off to Georgetown University to be a doctor. BUT, I took my first art course with Daniel Brush; our first assignment was to draw the "sound of the heart beating" and I have never been the same. The art became medicine. AND I have spent the last 31 years igniting the inner healer through art that lies within each person. The chi that heals and reveals.

In 1980 I was hired as an art therapist to develop a program at Olde Creek Elementary that would become a cutting edge program in the public schools and a model for other programs. I lectured around the country, burned incense in the halls, ran art groups, saw families, for Family Art Therapy and began to educate teachers, social workers and psychologists on the Healing Power of Art.... I was out to save and educate the world..Pretty full of myself...(although some would say not much has changed...although I think I have mellowed in my years...lol)

.....In 1988, I followed my good friend Teresa to develop an art therapy program for juvenile offenders at the Juvenile Detention Center. For the next five years I saw close to 4000 kids. I presented workshops throughout the country and at the State department of Kansas on the critical need for art therapy for at-risk kids.

Every day in my work I searched for *Common Ground* with each student/artist; ...an arena to discover from which we could "grok" and do art together. I pounded on psychological armor so thick on a child that I often wondered if the child could hear; BUT there was always a soft spot, an opening to find, a place to touch these hardened kids with art and love. I am reminded of the saying in Avatar..."I see you"

In 1993 I followed my friend Teresa once again to another school to open and develop an art therapy program. Herndon Center came to fruition. For the next twelve years our program reached new heights and became well known across the country.....It was during this time that one of my most power-full experience occurred.....We had a selective mute in our program....He came in the fall and chose not to talk; in fact he spoke very little at home....

Each day I saw him ; I did silly things...and I loved him with consistency and an art room that was a sacred place; an oasis of sound; a "healing place" where each child felt safe and alive.....In February, Chris uttered his first sounds in my room.....In a deep voice that sounded like a 40 year old man he said; "You won't make fun of me if I talk , will

you" The kids in the room about fell over, the look on their faces was if they has just heard god speak....

We had been gifted by Chris' voice; spoken in my room;..... I cried
.....There were many other stories.....Inclusion took over the
"Center" and I brought my art world over "to the other side" I moved from room
269 to my present art room. I built a bigger oasis....and so it goes.....so it goes.....

Ironically my last year has been one of my best years. So many parent letters sent my way and one student who wrote me a letter said: "After the experience in your class my entire life changed for the better. I started smiling for no reason, sounds stupid but everyday I just felt the need to have a big smile on my face every second of the day"..... This student actually gave me something amazing that she had kept since she was five...Please take a moment to read the letter she wrote to me on the web site I recently developed.

I have been working on a web site this year entitled:

<http://www.azenmoment.com>

I love it...A Zen Moment.....a moment that is here and now, no other moment...So
Please create the time to visit the site and read the amazing student letter.

I pray that each of you will have the opportunity to hear the chords of a child's heart as their spirit soars through the tangled web of pressure.

with great admiration for each of you,

James Torrenzano

<http://www.azenmoment.com>