

# The Creative Forum

September 2019

A Monthly Publication of Creative Wellness Opportunities  
A Peer Run Service of the Mental Health Association

## First Friday Artist : Jill Brown



### "FLUX"

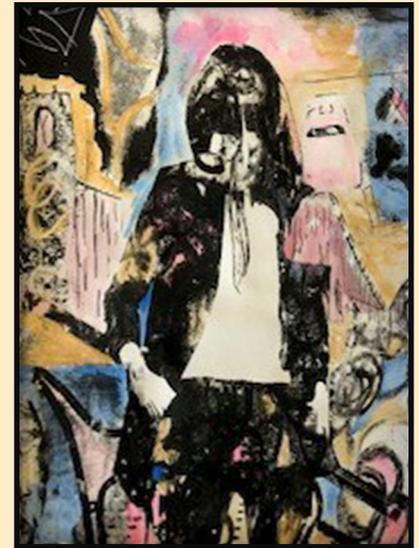
My art is simply an expression of how strong I have become. I use bold lines and colors in much of my art, to have my strength and boldness come through in ways I never knew possible. Art is a curious concept, there is no defining black and white way to approach a piece. I find that sometimes I have intention but, as the piece develops it takes on a life of its own. In turn it really is an expression somewhere deep within that has broken through on the canvas displaying yet another facet that I did not know existed.

My show this Year is titled "Flux" as I find myself in the midst of transitions that are in motion. I have found myself graduated and gainfully employed in a position that

allows me to be who I am in my best moments and my not so perfect moments. Continuing on my mental health recovery journey does not mean I am instantaneously healed and no longer have moments of struggle. Sure, I still have moments of struggle, but it is on the other side of those moments that I am able to truly see how far I have come and the many resources, tools and supports I have in place.

Prior to attending workshops at the CWO I had walked through life not addressing any of my deeply unresolved hurts. This made me over time angry and bitter in my emotions and the ways I responded to situations around me became increasingly unhealthy. I struggled with self-worth, incompetence, and uncertainty. While I had made the decision to dive into treatment and resources that helped aid me in my mental health recovery journey, I was completely unaware of how the CWO has really helped me grow within myself along with other peers. The "safe guards" I had established for myself began to get stripped away when I immersed myself in the culture of the CWO. I continue to be grateful for what the CWO teaches me and what the community pours into me every time I step foot through the doors.

- Jill



Please join me and Susan Plank at our First Friday show from 5:30PM to 8:00PM on September 6th, 2019 at Creative Wellness Gallery, 320 N. Goodman Street

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# First Friday Artist : Susan Plank

This is my first art show at CWO and I am very excited to present some of the best of my photographs, writings and ideas that I have had over my lifetime. I have never considered myself to be an artist, but over the years I have had feelings and thoughts that warranted cathartic expression. I have seen beautiful and evocative things, had things to say, and ideas to manufacture that I found myself wanting to capture or present.

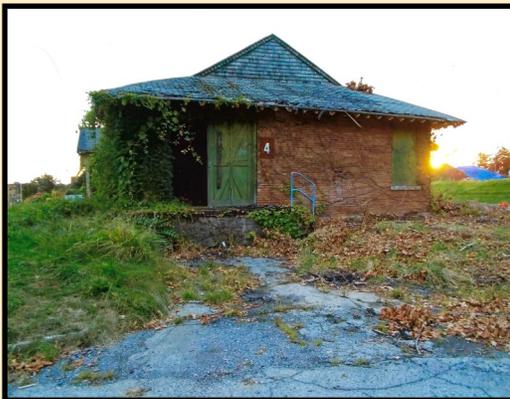
I don't have much of an artistic background or education, but over time I have come to enjoy and appreciate art very much, from the "classics" to modern graffiti. I grew up collecting Archie comics and watching TV and movies, all of which give a collateral training in visual language. Also, my grandmother was an English teacher, and I have always had a love of words and how they can be used to create a myriad of expressions.

My story includes experience with anxiety, OCD and some negative thought patterns. I isolated for many years. I began therapy in 2009 and after three years was referred to a PROS Program. Initially I balked when it sounded like the program I was being referred to would be too many hours. Luckily Ventures PROS was willing to be flexible with me. I needed the help, more than I realized, but I needed them to meet me halfway also. I cycled out of PROS after four years and then CWO was recommended to me. I've found the people and experiences at both places to be so valuable. CWO is so important to me as an available connection to others and as a resource for myself. I have met so many good, supportive people in such a nurturing, vibrant community.

Creativity can be like a muscle we exercise, or it can come at us like a bolt out of the blue. I feel gratitude about the things I have created, like I didn't create them alone. I had to be in the right place, be allowed to come up with the right words. It is so wonderful whenever it all comes together. Coming to CWO and being given the opportunity to have this show has helped me to

realize that piece by piece, year by year, everyone of us is an artist. Art is life, thought, exploration, illumination. Going over my lifetime of writings, photos and ideas and the prospect of presenting them in this show has motivated me, enlightened me and improved my self-esteem. I hope you all enjoy the show!

- Susan



*Please join me and Jill Brown at our First Friday show from 5:30PM to 8:00PM on September 6th, 2019 at Creative Wellness Gallery, 320 N. Goodman Street*

## Life Skills Services



### Discussing Work Benefits

**Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>**

Working While Receiving Social Security Disability (SSD/SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

**Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup>**

An Introduction to the Department of Human Services:  
A Brief Overview of Temporary Assistance,  
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP),  
Medicaid, and Emergency Assistance

**Come Join Us in our new  
classrooms!  
Please Call: 325-3145**

CREATIVE WELLNESS OPPORTUNITIES (CWO)

## Coming soon!

### Artist Bazaar

A Collaborative Art Exhibit & Artist/Makers Market

Collaborative  
Exhibit:  
Nov. 1- Dec. 21, 2019

2nd Saturday Art Markets:  
Nov. 9 & Dec. 14, 2019  
10:30 am-2:00 pm

A gallery style exhibit and artist market opportunity for CWO artists and makers to display and sell their artwork and wares.

The circle gallery will feature a collective of artists and two artist market days featuring a variety of artwork, goods & wares.

Gallery and table space are on a first come first serve basis. If you wish to participate, applications will be available in September. Please apply along with sample images via email to the art coordinator.

# Gift of Story : Lorraine Gunning



My name is Lorraine Gunning, I have struggled with major depression for most of my adult life and have been affected by the illness in many ways. Several times, during more severe periods of depressive symptoms, I have been hospitalized in psychiatric units. Over the years I have made use of partial hospitalization programs multiple times, have been treated with Electro Convulsive Therapy, and have been prescribed the full gamut of antidepressants.

In spite of my depression, I have achieved much that I am proud of. I have earned a Bachelors Degree in Psychology and a Masters Degree in Education. I have had a successful career as an Elementary School Teacher, a career that gave me much satisfaction even though I needed to take early retirement because of the impact of my mental illness. I have several friends who are caring and supportive partners on this wellness journey and I enjoy a successful marriage of 25 years.

What I would like to emphasize is the recovery I have been able to make are due to the measures I take to work on my mental health balance in spite of the depression I experience. Just a few examples of these measures are pursuing individual therapy for many years and working with a psychiatrist who monitors my anti-depressant medications and adjusts and changes them as needed. I am actively involved with support groups and additionally facilitate two depression groups for women. I have also become a contributing member of my community as a volunteer in a day program for senior citizens. It is gratifying and beneficial to me to draw from my own experience of depression to support other women who also live with this illness. I have always believed that to give is to receive and in facilitating these groups I am provided with that opportunity.

One of the major factors involved with my recovery has been Creative Wellness Opportunities at the Mental Health Association. I cannot say enough about how much CWO has affected my pursuit of mental wellness. Through a safe supportive environment, CWO offers a variety of workshops and support groups. Workshops range from Art, Meditation, Mutual Support, Exercise, Journaling, Creative Writing and Martial Arts to Emotions Anonymous, Guitar, Hoarders/Clutterers and Yoga as examples. My participation in many of these resources has been influential in my recovery and also in the recovery experienced by others. Know that opportunities at CWO are available for anyone open to working on their own recovery in a mutually supportive environment.

*We are not alone.*

*The Woman's Depression Group meets at CWO on Wednesdays from 12:00 to 1:30 with Lorraine.*



"46Climbs" mission is taking positive action to overcome suicide and mental illness by challenging individuals across the country to set both physical and fundraising goals during an annual week climb events.

## SENECA PARK SEPT. 7th 11AM

- ◆ Meeting up @ 11AM September 7th in Seneca Park by Longhouse
- ◆ Bring Sunscreen and Bug spray accordingly
- ◆ Water provided
- ◆ Trail is about 1 mile in distance
- ◆ Donations optional

## CWO "CLIMB"

Taking strides for suicide awareness...



For more information call:  
325-3145 x 144

# CWO's Community Circle SEPT 19th @ 12:00 "Finishing Touches"

## Readying yourself for a show or event?

Join us and brush up with some pointers or tips on...

- Writing Your Artist Statement
- Finishing Your Work
- Prepping for Submissions
- Photographing Your Work

# CWO's ARTIST'S FELLOWSHIP MEETING

Share and provide constructive insights on pieces of work that are still "works in progress" or "completed"!

Sept 19th @3:00

**Mental Health Association's  
Drop-In Center  
539 South Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14620  
(585) 454-3530**

*Need to talk to someone but your therapist's office is closed?*

*It's not an emergency room situation yet, but if you don't find someone to talk to it could be?*

**The Drop-In Center may be just what you need!**

**The Center is open seven (7) days a week  
5:00PM - 9:00PM**

**No referral or appointment necessary.  
SIMPLY DROP-IN!**

Support is provided by individuals who have overcome mental health concerns and now offer support to others as they find their own path to mental wellness.

#5 South Avenue Bus will bring you right to our door at the corner of South Avenue and Hamilton Street



# MHA Benefits Highlight

As the Work Incentive Benefits Advisor for MHA, I have the pleasure of assisting peers with a wide range of needs. From assistance with applying for SNAP benefits to discussing how to be working while receiving Social Security Disability (SSD/SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or even what any of that even means. When "Maria" came in seeking representation for an appeal of a denial of her Social Security benefits, I rolled up my sleeves to see how we could help her.

Maria needs the supplemental income that would allow her to work fewer hours to slow the progression of a debilitating disease that has taken a toll on her physical and emotional well-being. Social Security had challenged her need for supplemental income for two years, deciding that her earned income was too great for her to receive any benefits. While working with her and with the court system, I was able to finally provide information and evidence on Maria's behalf to a presiding judge who ultimately issued a "Fully Favorable Decision." We were ecstatic that she would be getting the help that she needs in order for her to live her best life. However, this decision alone didn't allow Maria to get her benefits immediately. So, after waiting and receiving another cut off letter, we went to the local office with the documentation from the judge, spoke to staff, spoke to a supervisor, called the Central Office of Social Security, contacted the Albany Hearing Office and the Office of Hearing Operations in Virginia and faxed and faxed and faxed the judge's decision to a variety of places.

After many more days and weeks of work, Maria did finally call me to tell me that she had received a lump-sum check for all the applied social security benefits that had been held from her. She also shared that with those additional funds and readily accessible transportation, she would be able to get her name added to tristate donor lists that were previously unavailable to her for a kidney transplant with no notice, should one become available.

Maria is now truly able to have a shot at her best life!

- Meghan Moore

## MHA PEER COMMUNITY OUTREACH



### Find Your True Self

#### Building Your Self-Esteem

A safe, caring, non-judgmental group to facilitate finding and building ones' own voice both inside and out.

**Out Alliance - 585-352-1077**

100 College Ave #100, Rochester, NY 14607

**Meeting every 1st & 3rd Mondays @ 6 - 7PM**

### Healthy Connections

A group that uses the 8 Dimensions of Wellness to build and cultivate connections and strengthen ties.

**Pinnacle Place Apartments - 585-442-9440**

919 S. Clinton Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620

**Every Thursday @ 9:45 - 11:15 AM**