



SOCIETY FOR THE ARTS IN HEALTHCARE



### Member Spotlight - September 2013



#### **Biviana Franco**

Founder & Director

Feel Beautiful Today

Member since 2013

Roswell, Georgia, USA

#### **What makes your organization unique?**

Feel Beautiful Today (FBT) uniquely uses the power of creativity to support women affected by cancer. I am a professional artist with a fundamental understanding of the importance and effects of faith, beauty, and the creative process in the healing process. The FBT foundation is a 501(c)(3), established in 2010, staffed by volunteers, skillfully guided by a diverse board of directors I recruited from the professional community, and partnered with many of the well known cancer treatment centers and hospitals in the metro Atlanta area. My organization is rooted in our understanding that recovery of physical health goes hand in hand with a peaceful soul and a positive state of mind.

The FBT mission is to provide hope, love and encouragement to women of all ages affected by cancer through three programs known as "Jewelry Workshop for Patients", "Boxes of Love", and "Joined in Hope". Each program takes a uniquely creative approach toward delivering the patient in crisis a critical boost in their overall well being. Our programs remind them that they are much more than a body that is going through the physical changes due to treatment. We seek to assure them that they are not alone in their battle against cancer. By developing three programs that, separately and together, involve the patient and caregiver(s), the medical profession, and the community at large, FBT successfully delivers a positive message of hope, support, and emotional encouragement. Our activities deliberately complement the medical community's effort to foster a positive healing environment for patients undergoing treatment.

The FBT foundation is absolutely committed to answering the call to expand our programs as we provide love, hope, and encouragement directly to women of all ages, races, and creeds. Through the gift of a box of love, the momentary distraction of participating in a creative workshop, or the creation of a symbol of the united effort of the patient team, we uniquely deploy the positive power of the creative process to accomplish our mission to remind women to "Feel Beautiful Today" (and everyday).

For more information, visit [feelbeautifultoday.org](http://feelbeautifultoday.org).

### **How does being a member of the Global Alliance for Arts & Health help you to meet the goals of your organization?**

I am the founder of Feel Beautiful Today (FBT) as well as an artist and art instructor who has witnessed the power of creativity. My understanding of the positive effects of "creating" during challenging periods of life, together with a strong belief in the connection between soul and body, guides me as I develop the FBT programs. My volunteer staff and board of directors endorse and support my vision and creative implementation of the mind-body connection in the healing process. I am excited to be a part of the Global Alliance for Arts & Health where our common philosophy and collaborative commitment to educate, share information, and promote the arts in support of health is an exact match. Our participants have consistently commented on the emotional joy to be found in a quiet moment of creativity during which they are supplied with quality materials of beauty and guided through to creative process by an artist in a peaceful setting. Our medical professionals have offered testimony time and again to the positive effects of a creative opportunity on patient

well being and constantly request more patient workshops, seeing them as an effective tool in the healing process.

### **What advice would you give to someone new in the field?**

I have found that when art is your passion and serving is your call, you will find that offering a creative project to someone going through a crisis is inspiring. The extraordinary effect on the patient is very powerful for all involved. The personal sense of well being derived from helping the patient may, indeed, drive you to look for further ways to artistically augment the healing process, making this your passion and a new way of life. This is exactly what has happened to me.

### **What is the biggest challenge you face in your work and how are you working to overcome it?**

Feel Beautiful Today, like most non-profits of its size, continues to be challenged to find sources of financial support needed to continue offering these programs totally free of charge. We know that it is important to educate the community and those in a position to help and sponsor these programs. I use our website and our community workshops to highlight the amazing and positive impact art can have on health. I take advantage of every opportunity to network with local businesses, community members, beneficiaries-in-kind, and like minded organizations as we seek to support existing programs and create new ones.

### **What keeps you motivated to do the work you do?**

The FBT foundation is inspired by my own experience in art, faith, and healing. I am doing what I always wanted to do, what I feel equipped to do, and what keeps my soul feeling happiest. I have the opportunity to use my creativity, my skills, as well as develop new ones as we of FBT confront the many challenges of offering our programs. Every time we conduct a patient workshop, I see the positive impact of a simple creative project on the participant. I observe the stress relief that it provides. I feel the relaxation experienced by patients, family, caregivers, and staff members. I witness the positive power of facilitating a moment in which someone is once again just themselves, not a cancer patient. I welcome patients who timidly enter a workshop unsure, perhaps even a little afraid to try something new. Later, I rejoice in their smiles, I am heartened to hear patients talking quietly, opening up in conversation. I feel hope enter the room, and watch as a positive memory is

being created. I am fortunate to observe a patient's moment of happiness as they benefit from the power of being creative and come to understand the value of spending time in the creative process. When I see that they know that they have the right to "Feel Beautiful Today," I am inspired to do more.