

# Arts for Healing show at Miami Dade College to feature dozens of breast cancer survivors



Heroines Choir's musical director Analy Mendez leads a rehearsal for the event Arts for Healing on a recent Saturday. | **Maria Serrano** - South Florida News Service

BY MARIA SERRANO  
*South Florida News Service*

In 2012, singer Mary Jo Garrity and art director Alice Billman produced *The Heroines Show* to promote healing through arts in the Miami area.

Three months into the production process, the show came to a halt – Garrity, 53, died. A 10-year breast cancer survivor, she had been diagnosed with another rare type of cancer.

“After Mary Jo’s death, I did not have funding to continue with the project because she had the money for it, but I had the willingness to, one day, do an event honoring her and other people’s health battles,” said Billman, now 55.

Billman, executive director of Heroes Unite, a nonprofit organization designed to promote community empowerment through arts, has worked as an art teacher and therapist for more than 20 years.

Saturday night, Billman is assembling dozens of breast cancer survivors to participate in Arts for Healing, a free program to be held 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Miami Dade College Wolfson Campus.

“I have dozens of breast cancer victors singing their way back onto a path of advancement, empowerment and superior health, so it is time,” Billman said.

“I have been fortunate enough not to have cancer, but you witness people going through conventional therapy, chemotherapy, radiation and all that kind of stuff though that only covers the physical part”, said Nancy Donohue, 67, who is planning to go to the event after seeing her mother go through cancer. “The point is to focus on the positive aspects life and to enjoy and share the fact that music and other kinds of art are helping on the integral recovery of a person.”

For several years, art has been used in therapy sessions to alleviate health-related conditions on patients in some medical facilities.

Medical centers, such as South Miami Hospital and Holtz Children’s Hospital, offer facilities to conduct therapy.

“The arts can help to relax a person and can improve mood which has shown to assist in improving immune functioning,” said Dr. Amanda Alders Pike, 31, one of the art therapists lecturing at the event.

Several artistic activities will be held, as well as lectures about recovering from a chronic disease, led by art and music therapists.

A Chinese arts master, mixed-ability dancers, a cancer-survivor choir, live painters and musicians will perform.

“Although my own untrained voice has been damaged by the harsh chemo-radiation of triple negative breast cancer, I began to learn how breathing and chi gong, a Chinese art, incorporated into the beginning of each rehearsal, could help me despite the residuals of treatment,” said Marilyn Van Houten, 68, a registered nurse and one of the members of the cancer-survivor choir.

The event will also include a Q&A session and educational entertainment.

“As more people seek alternatives to invasive surgeries and prescribed medications, the types of modalities shared in the “Arts for Healing” event will be mainstream in the near future,” said Billman.

Seats for Arts for Healing are limited. Reservations can be made through Facebook at [www.facebook.com/TheHeroinesChoir](http://www.facebook.com/TheHeroinesChoir).

If you go:

What: Event “Arts for Healing”

When: From 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturday Jun. 13, 2015

Where: Miami Dade College Wolfson Campus, 300 NE. 2nd Ave., Miami, FL 33132, Building 1, main auditorium, second floor

The event is free of charge and open to the public, but seats are limited.

Reservations: [Facebook.com/TheHeroinesChoir](http://Facebook.com/TheHeroinesChoir)

For more information: email [info@heroesunite.org](mailto:info@heroesunite.org), visit [www.heroesunite.org](http://www.heroesunite.org) or call 305-948-6878



## MORE HEALTH & FITNESS

---

### You May Like

Sponsored Links by Taboola

**Why you should get a new credit card every 21 months is explained**

NextAdvisor