



Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 107th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 147

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2001

No. 163

Senate

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton Floor Statement on Art Therapy

Mr. President, since the terrible tragedies of September 11, many Americans, both adults and children, have been forced to deal with a level of pain and anxiety that most people have never had to endure before. Art therapy (the process of using art therapeutically to treat victims of trauma, illness, physical disability or other personal challenges) has historically been under recognized as a treatment. However, since September 11, many of us have witnessed its enormous benefits in helping both children and adults alike express their emotions in a very personal, touching way.

While nearly every person in our country has been irrevocably changed by that day's events, we know that children are particularly vulnerable to the long-term emotional consequences that often accompany exposure to trauma. One of the ways in which children have coped with the aftermath of September 11 is by reaching for their crayons, pencils and paintbrushes to express some of what they're feeling. Children all over the country have created images of World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon decorated with hearts, tears, rainbows and angels. These simple, yet heart-felt, drawings, which do such a wonderful job of expressing the complex emotional terrain that these children are navigating, have moved us all.

And adults too have used creativity to help cope with the difficult emotions that so many are experiencing. I heard the story of a woman who was one of the last people to be rescued from the World Trade Center rubble

after being trapped for more than a day. She drew a picture while in intensive care of herself under the rubble with angels and God hovering above her. Another victim of the disaster drew pictures of flowers and spoke about how grateful she was to be alive.

Last June, I had the pleasure of viewing an art exhibit here on Capitol Hill in which all of the art was created by patients who were being treated by art therapists. It was a remarkable feat for people coping with such immense personal pain to be able to produce such works of passion and beauty. Although sometimes the healing qualities of art may be less tangible or obvious than its aesthetic qualities, they may be even more important.

I want to thank art therapists, in New York and every community in America, who are assisting survivors, rescuers, and the bereaved. Throughout the country, there are almost 5,000 trained and credentialed art therapists working in hospitals, nursing homes, schools and shelters. They are among the army of mental health professionals who support those suffering from psychological trauma from the attacks, and undoubtedly will continue to serve the needs of individuals coping with subsequent stress disorders.

And that is why I rise today to encourage my colleagues in Congress to support the field of art therapy and expand awareness about this creative form of treatment. At this time of heightened awareness about the importance of maintaining mental health, we should recognize art therapy as a way to treat those among us who have experienced trauma.