

Quilt builds healing and support for abuse survivors

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ALTON – Overcoming rape and abuse is a heavy burden for any person to handle. Survivors often feel isolated, stigmatized, or even blamed for what happened to them. Diana Dykyj, ATR-BC, LCPC, an Art Therapist at Centerstone, and her colleague Christal Gabrielson, LCPC, decided to use a creative way to help women who came forward to heal and move beyond the shame that often accompanies their experience of abuse – creating a quilt.

A project called the [Monument Quilt](#) seeks to create a public healing space by and for survivors of rape and abuse. Survivors write, stitch, paint and create their stories on red fabric. The quilts are then displayed publicly to help survivors reconnect to their communities – and to allow communities to publicly support survivors and learn about how abuse impacts their citizens. The goal of the project is for survivors to feel publicly supported, rather than publicly shamed.



“I was drawn to the Monument Quilt project because it’s a national movement that supports people who tend feel isolated by traumatic events,” says Dykyj. “It brings them together and creates a powerful space for healing.”

Dykyj and Gabrielson hosted a workshop for survivors – they supplied materials such as the red fabric, paint, embroidery thread, and other materials so that each woman could tell her story in her own way.

While the original workshop was only open to adult females, an interactive component of the display has allowed for additional participants to take part, including men and children. Centerstone’s Monument Quilt has included approximately 30 participants so far.



Completed in October, the quilt squares are currently on display in the large waiting room of Centerstone's Alton office. While on display, clients, staff, and visitors have had the opportunity to add words of support, drawings, or share their stories.

Dykyj believes that the story telling, the sharing and support have had a positive impact on the women who contributed to the quilt.

“The participants came together and found strength together – they realized they weren’t alone in their experience. Having the stories on public display – where people can still add to the quilt – has allowed the project to reach people who may not have been part of the workshop. They, too, can be part of the healing community and the movement.”

Centerstone's quilt pieces will be sent to [FORCE](#), a national art activism movement, in Baltimore, Maryland, this spring, where quilt squares from across the country will be sewn together in a national Monument Quilt. The Monument Quilt will blanket the National Mall in Washington, D.C in the Spring 2018, and travel the United States from Spring 2018-Spring 2019.

Unbroken

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