

The universe has kept leading me back to working with children. Starting in 2013 I was awarded The Edmonds Arts Foundation Visual Arts Scholarship. A component of the scholarship was working at the Edmonds Arts Festival. I could have chosen various positions including checking in the juried art, helping sell art during the festival, staffing the information booth, delivering food to the artists, and checking in volunteers. I decided to work at the festival making art with children for six years in a row. What I enjoyed most is how all children create the best art because no one has told them they can't be an artist. I loved nurturing the seed of creativity in each child, and how they inspired me.

After graduate school I thought I would be an art teacher at a community college. Spirit led me to work as a Group Leader at the YMCA and I was left wondering, why am I being led to work with children again? As I began working with the children (ages kindergarten through fifth grade), it has been one of the hardest and the most rewarding experience.

One day a mother who had been struggling with the school and past Y-care employees based on racial inequality asked me, "Are you the one making art with my son?" I said yes and she said, "You really are inspiring him." But the truth is *he* was inspiring me. As we made comic art together, he shared with me stories of loss in his family, his favorite animals, and what he liked and disliked. To my surprise by drawing his favorite comic hero he opened up to me. I was able to be a source of support and encouragement by listening, being curious, having compassion, and enjoying making art together and sharing our love of comics.

My creativity in my professional life and personal life has multiplied working with children. The environment and energy of children is filled with energy, intense emotions, humor and laughter, creativity, anger, learning boundaries, kids helping each other, curiosity, life lessons, respecting one another, and learning lessons in every area imaginable. To my astonishment I found that my place in the team of YMCA coworkers was making art with children, building trust, protecting, and being willing to go beyond my former abilities into an ocean of clammer, getting ready, scheduled activities, kids going home with parents, learning, all the fun, craziness and I enjoy it. I feel more alive.

When children ask me to play a game with them, make them an art picture, watch them on the monkey bars, listen to their stories, I get the opportunity to give them attention, compassion, kindness, respect, and encouragement. I get to tell them they are doing a great job and help them solve problems. I constantly reflect on how I can improve and how they are shaping me to keep growing and how they are teaching me to be the best teacher I can be.