

For Immediate Release

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**SMITH CENTER
FOR HEALING AND THE ARTS**

community. creativity. cancer support

Donated Mural will be the Centerpiece for New Community Lounge at Smith Center for Healing and the Arts

*Local arts and health nonprofit welcomes a new, floor to ceiling mosaic installation
as a gift from generous donors to provide a healing space for those living with cancer*

April 4, 2013 - WASHINGTON, DC—Local artist Valerie Theberge recently completed the installation of a sizeable mural at Smith Center for Healing and the Arts. The mirrored, mosaic piece will add life to a new community lounge at the Center, providing a comfortable place where program participants can socialize, relax, meditate, read, and escape—at least for a time—the challenges of life with a cancer diagnosis.



Generous contributions from the artist, Valerie Theberge, the Family and Friends of Roz Zitelman, and Art Works School Studio, have made it possible for the giant mural to have a permanent place at Smith Center. Barbara Johnson, President and Founder of the Art Works School Studio, saw the parallels between the missions of her organization and that of Smith Center—recognizing the importance both organizations place on integrating art into the process of life and healing.

“As a cancer survivor, I have memories of the unpleasant places that became part of my life - doctor's offices, hospitals...” Johnson explained. “When I think of that luminous work of art created by Valerie, providing so much light and joy in a gathering space for those dealing with cancer, it feels like justice. At a time in our lives when we are dealing with illness, more than any other, we should be surrounded by beauty.”

The transformation of the space will be complete later this spring. It will be positioned in a sunny room towards the back of the Joan Hisaoka Healing Arts Gallery, which already serves as the entrance to the program facility at Smith Center. Program participants will be invited to visit and enjoy the new space before and after programs and during regular business hours.

ABOUT SMITH CENTER FOR HEALING AND THE ARTS

As DC's only stand-alone cancer support organization that serves the entire population, Smith Center is a pioneer in promoting the role of the arts as a fundamental tool for healing. Founded in 1996 by local artist Barbara Smith Coleman, Smith Center offers a variety of supportive programs for people with illness, including therapeutic arts workshops at their U Street center and creative expression sessions at weeklong cancer retreats. The nonprofit has partnered with local hospitals to offer a bedside Artist-in-Residence program for cancer patients and wounded warriors. In 2008, Smith Center proudly opened the Joan Hisaoka Healing Arts Gallery -- a community arts space that for the past four years has worked with over 400 artists, produced more than 30 exhibitions, and developed a citywide arts festival marking the 10th anniversary of 9/11. Smith Center also recently launched an Art Advisory service to help healthcare facilities choose healing art for their spaces.