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Frederick County Health Department

# News Release

**CONTACT: Todd Crum**  
**Public Information Representative**  
**Behavioral Health Services**  
**301-600-3285**  
**TTY: Use Maryland Relay**  
**TCrum1@FrederickCountyMD.gov**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **“DREAM BIG” ART EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTS HEALING POWER OF ART FOR LOCAL YOUTH**

**FREDERICK, MD** – The Fourteenth Annual Kids Like Us Art Exhibit, “Dream Big”, will be displayed on the Community Art Wall at the Delaplaine Visual Arts Education Center September 2 through September 24, 2017 and also October 1, 2017 through May 1, 2018 in the Auditorium at the Frederick County Health Department. The public is invited to a reception from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm on October 11 at the Frederick County Health Department.

The art in the exhibit was created by students who participate in the Kids Like Us program, a collaboration between the Frederick County Health Department - Behavioral Health Services and Frederick County Public Schools. Impacted by substance abuse in their family, 188 Frederick County students from 24 schools participated in the Kids Like Us program during the 2016 - 2017 school year.

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Barbara A. Brookmyer, M.D., M.P.H. ▪ Health Officer

350 Montevue Lane ▪ Frederick, MD 21702

Phone: 301-600-1029 ▪ Fax: 301-600-3111 ▪ MD TTY: 1-800-735-2258





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Kids Like Us is free, multi-year, school-based, counseling support group program. Selected students participate in a series of confidential group sessions led by a Kids Like Us counselor and their school counselor designed to help youth grow in positive ways and learn to handle feelings and concerns safely. Participants may also choose to attend the Kids Like Us Summer Art Adventure Camp, where art expression is a focus. The campers select the art work from camp that they wish to show in the annual exhibit.

The multimedia exhibit showcases art created on rocks, masks, and glass alongside dream catchers and more traditional media. “Dream Big reveals the courageous expression of emotional honesty and creative imagination of the artists” states art therapist Cathy Caldwell, a Kids Like Us counselor. Poignant artists’ statements are displayed beside the pieces titled “*Purple Heartbeat*” and “*I’m Fine*”. “The works of art highlight optimism, bravery and resilience within the human spirit”, continues Ms. Caldwell. Due to confidentiality, the names of the artists are not displayed with the art work.

“Research demonstrates that growing up in the care of a parent with a substance use disorder comes with unique social, academic, and health challenges, including increased risk for substance use disorders”, states licensed art therapist Julie Wood Merchant who founded Kids Like Us in 1988 and is now the director. “The annual art show is a gift to the community and a charming way to learn about the impact of substance use disorders on family members and celebrate hope and healing with the artists”. For more information about the art exhibit or the *Kids Like Us* program, contact Julie Wood Merchant at 301-600-3281.

For information about substance abuse recovery services in Frederick County, contact the Frederick County Health Department, Behavioral Health Services Division at 301-600-1755, or visit [www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/BHS](http://www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/BHS).

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