

# Hope Crane Project

The Hope Crane Project was inspired by a small purple origami crane I have sitting on my desk. It was a gift from my roommate during my last stay on the psychiatric inpatient unit. She was from Japan and made beautiful origami art. She shared with me that traditional legend says if you make a thousand cranes in a year you can manifest a wish often around health and healing. I was truly touched by the gift, especially the color, since she'd heard me say purple was my favorite in one of the therapy groups.



As a National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) member and volunteer patient advisor in the University of Michigan Department of Psychiatry Patient & Family Centered Care (PFCC), I've been part of discussions on how to create and implement peer programs and connect with people living with mental illness. In my life, creativity has always been a medium for connecting with myself and the world around me, whether through movement as a dancer and massage therapist or words as a poet and teacher. I wanted to find a creative way to offer a symbol of connection and support especially to those people needing acute care. The Hope Crane Project was born.

The project offers University of Michigan psychiatry patients an origami box and crane handmade by volunteers as a gift from Psychiatry Patient & Family Centered Care whose mission is to promote, cultivate and celebrate health care guided by patients and families. An accompanying note expresses the wish that the gift inspires hope during the person's hospital stay and beyond. Recipients are patients on the Child/Adolescent and Adult Units and in the Electroconvulsive Therapy and Eating Disorders Program.

The project engages the community through individuals and organizations donating time to learn and make cranes and boxes in workshops that incorporate mental health awareness education along with a healthy dose of origami fun. A future vision is to include the project as an option for Ann Arbor high school students to fulfill volunteer hours. There is definitely a therapeutic aspect to folding paper and to "paying it forward." PFCC in partnership with Art and Activity Therapy are developing the project in the Eating Disorders Program to invite patients, loved ones and staff to make boxes and cranes to pass on to future patients.

The cranes and boxes are really enjoyable and easy to make after the initial learning curve. With practice, folding them has become almost meditative for me made more meaningful by placing good intentions into every crease. It is satisfying to think of the patients that will receive these gifts; I know how much I cherish my little purple crane perched on my desk as I write this.

Please feel free to contact me at [hopecraneproject@gmail.com](mailto:hopecraneproject@gmail.com) with comments, inquiries and if you or your organization would like to participate in the Hope Crane Project.

