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Grants allow art teachers to travel and expand their own horizons

By *Chris Harding*

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Jozeph Zaremba, a longtime Dorchester art teacher will at last get in touch with his artist roots – by studying in Florence.

“Wow! I am so excited to receive a Teachers as Artists grant! It allows me to become a student again and validates the importance of art in teaching and learning,” he said this week.

On April 1, Zaremba was one of three art teachers in Dot schools who got confirmation that one of their lifelong dreams would come true. Boston Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Carol S. Johnson, The Boston Foundation President and CEO Paul S. Grogan, and Boston Arts Academy Headmaster Linda Nathan announced Teachers as Artists (TAA) fellowship grants to Zaremba, Constance Bigony and Lynn Rosario, as well as to five other teachers from other parts of the city.

Zaremba taught art at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Dorchester from 1982 to 1997 and was active in the former Dorchester Arts Council of the '80s. As a founding teacher of the Harbor School (the former Grover Cleveland where he went to middle school), he has been working there since its opening.

“My own documentation of my experience in Italy, including journal entries, drawings and sketches will be the nucleus of an exhibit of artwork inspired and painted on location. Using my work as a model, students will learn to use ‘the sketchbook- journal’ as a tool to observe the natural world and their community, identifying significance, making inferences, and synthesizing meaning.”?

Constance Bigony, who calls the Middle School Academy where she teaches “an incredibly wonderful nurturing environment,” will use her fellowship to study in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. She’ll be mentored by a “retablo” master who paints stories and prayers on tin in supplication or in thanks for prayers answered.

“I plan to use retablos with the students in a contemporary urban format minus the religious overtones, but with healing in mind. This skill will allow students to develop insights into personal, often troubling and confusing life issues.”

Lynn Rosario feels being an art teacher at the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School is “both an honor and a challenge. The diversity of cultures, languages, religions, and life experiences reflect the abundance of humanity.”

This summer Rosario will go west to take two workshops that use art as therapy. Art4Healing is a one-week intensive in California. Touch Drawing in Seattle involves using paint and one’s fingers, so it’s a method especially suited to non-artists.?

“These two different expressive art techniques help people process or move through trauma or obstacles in their life. My hope is that by learning such skills my students and peers will have access to tools that will become helpful in the future.”?

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Besides giving the honorees \$5,000 for their studies, the TAA program awards an additional \$1,500 to each recipient’s home school to support the work of the fellow in his/her classroom during the following school year.

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