

# THE SALINE COURIER

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## Pageant winner with art mission visits I CAN! Center in East End

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The I CAN! Arts and Resource Center welcomed a special guest Thursday. Miss International 2012 Krista Wanous visited the facility to observe an art class at the center taught by Jessica Riley of Wee Little Arts. Wanous was in the area to participate in the Miss Arkansas International pageant

this weekend. According to Julie Mayberry, who founded the I CAN! program in the East End community, Wanous "found out about our program and really wanted to learn more." She noted that Wanous' pageant platform is "Art Heals." "She was so friendly to our children and was a great role model for them," Mayberry said. "We hope to have her back

to help with some future projects once her reign as Miss International is over," she added. "All the children wanted to have a picture taken with her," Mayberry said. "It was a very special treat over spring break." Mayberry noted that Wanous captured the title of Miss International 2012 at the annual Miss International Pageant at the North Shore Center for the

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## Dance

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Performing Arts in Skokie, Ill.

"With this prestigious honor, Krista is blessed with the incredible opportunity to voice her passion and personal message, 'Art Heals! Healing Lives Through Creative Expression,'" she said.

Born and raised in Minnesota, Wanous currently is pursuing a master's degree in marriage and family therapy, with an emphasis in art therapy, from the Alfred Adler Institute. She says she is "on a journey to inspire purpose, heal traumatized young souls and

As she grew older and more independent, she said she slowly gained more confidence through extracurricular activities at school like cheerleading and art programs. When she began college, she knew she had a passion for psychology and a deep love for art. She decided to combine the two and major in art therapy. Now, she wants to use the same techniques and outlets that helped her overcome and heal to help other families and children in similar conditions communicate and begin the healing process.

"When children have experienced abuse, trauma or neglect, they no longer have trust in their family, friends or community," Wanous said. "They need

piece. I love to see a child finish a project with our art mentors, stand up and say, 'Hey! Look what I made! I did it all by myself!'"

Wanous says she believes that God "put me through traumatic experiences as a child so I could grow up and help children who were once just like me."

Wanous is a Free Arts MN mentor, advocate, fundraiser, volunteer and event coordinator. She is also the Healing Arts spokesperson for the International Child Art Foundation.

She says she plans to travel to each one of the Free Arts affiliates across the country sharing curriculum and best practice methods. She will also be fundraising to meet her \$10,000 goal to enable Free

She cares for 18 mentally ill adults living in a group home. Because of this, she advocates for mental illness and volunteers with the Special Olympics.

She also is an avid volunteer with the American Heart Association. She says she has a deep love for the association and is eager to inform the public about prevention.

Wanous noted that she recently lost two grandparents to heart failure and is personally motivated to make sure everyone knows that heart disease is preventable if the patients know the symptoms, know their numbers, and live a heart-healthy lifestyle. She herself underwent heart



Special to The Salina Center

Krista Wanous, Miss International 2012, has a special visit with a young art participant at the I CAN! Arts and Resource Center in East End. Wanous has combined psychology and art into an art therapy program that she says is helpful to children who have experienced abuse, trauma or neglect.



Special to The Salina Center

Miss International 2012 Krista Wanous is shown with students attending an art session at the I CAN! Arts and Resource Center in East End. Wanous was in the area to participate in the Miss Arkansas International Pageant. Wanous' pageant platform is "Art Heals." Julie Mayberry, founder of the I CAN! program, said Wanous wanted to learn more about the I CAN! program.

expression," she said.

Born and raised in Minnesota, Wanous currently is pursuing a master's degree in marriage and family therapy, with an emphasis in art therapy, from the Alfred Adler Institute. She says she is "on a journey to inspire purpose, heal traumatized young souls and restore hope for children and families."

"It is in her very own home that her 'Art Heals' mission was discovered," Mayberry noted.

Wanous has said that after 13 years of living in fear, experiencing trauma, loss, and devastation, she began using art and creative therapy like painting, drawing, poetry and creative writing to express her feelings in a safe, healthy way.

She reportedly found that she could tell her story better through pictures than she could through just words alone. She noted that she was "insecure, fearful, and could not find the vocabulary to express these feelings."

She said she also felt as though nobody in her life could relate to her situation and that they wouldn't understand and couldn't be trusted to keep her story a secret.

and outlets that helped her overcome and heal to help other families and children in similar conditions communicate and begin the healing process.

"When children have experienced abuse, trauma or neglect, they no longer have trust in their family, friends or community," Wanous said. "They need a positive supporting role model or mentor in their lives to help remind them just how special they are. By partnering these mentors with creative activities to draw out inner feelings of fear, anger and violence, we can better understand them."

"Most children who come from a rough home life are never given the chance to be creative, or to use their imagination," she said. "Art is usually considered a luxury, but I see it as a necessity. Art is a place of freedom, there is no right or wrong and you CAN color outside the lines."

"It is amazing to watch the change in a child when they start being creative," Wanous said. "Their mood changes from timid, shy and withdrawn to excited, outgoing and proud. They need that reassurance and that chance to see themselves as capable of turning their trauma into a master-

coordinator. She is also the Healing Arts spokesperson for the International Child Art Foundation.

She says she plans to travel to each one of the Free Arts affiliates across the country sharing curriculum and best practice methods. She will also be fundraising to meet her \$10,000 goal to enable Free Arts MN to expand to a brand new facility and mentor children through the arts for an entire year.

She also will be fundraising so she can travel with the International Child Art Foundation. She has been invited to attend the International Conference on Creativity in Tokyo and to Japan to mentor children who have lost everything in a devastating tsunami.

"When 60 percent of children who have been abused will continue to be in abusive relationships, commit violent crimes, or substance abuse, it is necessary that we take action now," Wanous said. "By helping these unstable children find their footing, we can ensure that we will have a thriving community led by stable, healthy-minded adults in the future."

Wanous also works for Catholic Charities as a mental health counselor.

Wanous noted that she recently lost two grandparents to heart failure and is personally motivated to make sure everyone knows that heart disease is preventable if the patients know the symptoms, know their numbers, and live a heart-healthy lifestyle. She herself underwent heart surgery as a young girl and says she knows how important it is to be heart-healthy even at a young age.