

Feeling Beautiful

A cancer diagnosis can turn lives upside down, and the effects of treatment leave many women feeling less than beautiful. Local artist Biviana Franco helps women and girls regain their sense of beauty inside and out with her nonprofit Feel Beautiful Today. The organization taps into the healing power of creativity through handmade jewelry workshops with patients, their medical team and their supporters.

Franco says, "As I was looking for a way to bring a simple smile to two close friends who were going through cancer treatments, I decided to use a handmade and unique piece of jewelry. The fact that it was made by my hands would solidify the love, hope and prayers that I wanted to send their way." She realized in addition to bringing a smile to patients' faces, making the jewelry themselves can help patients relax and focus on something other than their current circumstances. And even better – the materials are portable. Franco brings simple patterns and all necessary supplies to the patients, allowing them to easily enjoy the activities with their families and friends. Franco says the project quickly became "a way to possibly encourage those in the midst of the battle that, regardless of the circumstance, they are still beautiful."

Feel Beautiful Today also offers ways for people who aren't



Feel Beautiful Today workshop participants admire their new jewelry.

patients to get involved. Through their "Boxes of Love" program, anyone can create jewelry from their prepared kits and send handmade jewelry to patients. "In three years, we have donated more than 2,000 Boxes of Love," Franco says.

In August, Feel Beautiful Today's new "Joined in Hope" program kicks off at Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital. This program gives the medical team – everyone from doctors and nurses to social workers and family members – a chance to join in the creative process by assembling half of a jewelry piece. Then at a later workshop, the patient receives the unfinished piece and gets to complete the second half. To host a Boxes of Love party or get involved in other ways, visit www.feelbeautifultoday.org.

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