

For the first time this year, Kilpatrick Funeral Homes held a program entitled:

“Painting with a Purpose”

Grief Recovery through Art

Since 1927, *Kilpatrick Funeral Homes* has been a family owned and operated business and located in West Monroe, Louisiana. It is nestled between Shreveport, Louisiana and Jackson, Mississippi with Interstate 20 connector.

Kilpatrick Funeral Homes, offers the Biblically based hybrid grief program called *GriefShare* to all families that we serve and to the community as well. This is a 13 week course which is part seminar, part video, and part share group. It is a wonderful program that allows those grieving the aid they may need through their journey. For the first time this year, *Kilpatrick Funeral Homes* held a program entitled: “*Painting with a Purpose*” for mothers that had lost a child. As one mother stated, “*This is not a club I wish to belong too!*” The importance of this program was to give an outlet and allow mothers to continue their journey through grief and to also help them adjust back into society. This program was designed for any age mother and the goal was a two-hour “Art workshop” to give the ladies the emotional support and an outlet in a casual environment.

Why was “*Art*” selected? If you ever studied Fine Arts in school, you probably know that artists have used their Art to express human misery, find meaning in life, and improve on their own emotional struggles. Just walk through any art museum and you will find that human suffering has inspired some of our greatest artworks. We find relief from fears, anxiety and depression through “*Art*” expression.

To assist in the project, Director of Family Support at *Kilpatrick Funeral Homes*, *Pam Lavender*, retained instructors from a local *Painting with a Twist* facility to work with these ladies in a private class setting. Postcard invitations were mailed to all ladies that had lost a child that we had served during the year. Approximately twenty ladies registered for the class. Once registered the ladies were contacted and asked to view pictures on *Painting with a Twist* website and vote for a picture to paint in the class. One mentioned that one picture looked like the “*Gate into Heaven*” all other ladies were in agreement and the selection was made.

As the ladies entered the *Painting with a Twist* facility, they received an apron from our funeral home directors to put on as well as instructions on the class. Our instructor was kind, gentle and energized and she encouraged creativity among all of the ladies. It was time for the ladies to relax and have fun. The beauty of this program is that no one is a failure. It was an opportunity to express oneself free of judgment.

All grieving mothers feel responsibility and shoulder some of the blame for their child’s death regardless of how it occurred.

The key was to just relax and have fun. One of the things about art that is really healing is that it makes you focus on something else. You could hear giggles in the room and remarks such as:

“I think I will only paint walls inside my home!” or “I am going to place this picture in my closet”.

Seeing and hearing the laughter in the room was priceless as each member of this group was at a different place in their stage of grief. For some it has been many years, for others only a few, and for some it had only been a number of months. The circumstances of their children's death, their individual personalities, their choice of religious beliefs, and their lives may be very different, but they all shared a common bond.....the loss of a child.

Once the masterpieces were complete, Kilpatrick Funeral Home Directors served refreshments and were enjoyed by all. The ladies were so excited to have their picture taken with their work of art. Much chattering was heard and was delightful to hear. The ladies left with their work of art, as well as the kindle edition of "Sunshine After the Storm: A Survival Guide for Grieving Mothers", *a collection for Grieving Mothers by Grieving Mothers*.

The program was a success and all agreed that the *Art program* gave them the opportunity to express their emotions that sometimes they cannot put into words.

Kilpatrick Funeral Homes family and staff enjoys being involved in the community in any way and wants to make sure to help our families by giving back by having creative and fun events for them and with them. This did both and was enjoyed by all involved.