

Art Workshops Assist Troubled Youths in Lima, Peru

Posted by [Della Hareland](#) / August 09, 2011



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How do you reach out to troubled teenage girls at a juvenile detention center? Can art build self-esteem, even in difficult conditions? U.S. painter, art educator, and costume designer Valentina DuBasky, along with Andrea Piccolo and Gwen Shockey from the nonprofit organization *Art in a Box*, knew exactly what to do during their recent U.S. Embassy-sponsored visit to Peru. Based on prior experience in Cambodia working with victims of human trafficking and children affected by AIDS, the artists developed an art workshop that inspires creativity and promotes self-esteem. They have devoted themselves to this work as a way to use their artistic talents to reach out to and assist troubled youth. DuBasky, Piccolo, and Shockey held two workshops in July for 30 female residents, ages 14 to 17, of the Santa Margarita Juvenile Detention Center in Lima. This is a detention center for young women involved in crimes ranging from drug abuse to murder.

The artists taught the young women how to unleash their creativity and tap into Peru's unique traditions to create and sell handmade artistic note cards. Anchoring their designs in the fashion and textile traditions of Peru, the group created paper doll note cards in dozens of designs that they plan to sell to earn money for themselves and their families. The girls, many of whom are young mothers, developed a sense of self-reliance during the workshops and took inspiration from each other. They plan to exhibit and sell their artwork during a fair in Santa Margarita this month. The director of the center was pleased with the workshops. She said, "These classes will help our young ladies to gain self-esteem and will inspire them to have a positive attitude in life."

Art in a Box is a new program that is part of Embassy Lima's partnership with Peruvian law enforcement to implement restorative justice principles and to give young offenders a second chance. The Santa Margarita Center is a terrific example of how restorative practices can rehabilitate criminal offenders to become productive members of society.