

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG LAUNCHES “PICTURE OF HEALTH”
WELLNESS INITIATIVE**

*Programs include onsite therapy dogs, tours inspired by emotions and
doctor-prescribed visits to the MFA*

ST. PETERSBURG, FL (June 24, 2021) — Inside the galleries at the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, visitors are captivated and inspired by its world-renowned collection. Now, through a new innovative initiative called **Picture of Health**, the artworks at the MFA are being utilized as a source of healing.

The concept of the program is based on multiple studies in recent years that have found a direct link between viewing art and positive health benefits, such as decreased cortisol levels (our stress hormone), and a normalizing of heart rate patterns typically associated with light to moderate exercise. By working with art therapists and physicians, the museum has curated a trio of new programs to address the social, emotional, and wellness needs of MFA visitors and members, and foster increased well-being within the Tampa Bay community.

“The MFA has researched wellness programs since 2019,” said Curator of Public Programs Margaret Murray. “We have attended conferences, visited other museums’s well-being programs around the country, and hosted focus groups to learn directly from our community how the MFA could meet their wellness needs. With Picture of Health, we are so excited to harness the power of the Museum of Fine Arts’ collection and gardens as a place to enhance wellbeing, and a space for healing and solace.”

Picture of Health consists of three programs: **Museum on Prescription, Sit, Stay, Heal, and Mood Tours.**

MUSEUM ON PRESCRIPTION

The first of its kind in the Tampa Bay area, the MFA is partnering with local physicians and therapists to identify patients who would most benefit from a visit to the MFA. After receiving the physician-provided museum prescription and a well-being questionnaire, patients can visit the museum free of charge to enjoy the MFA in two ways: explore the galleries on their own or using a variety of self-guided tours with art activities based on a range of emotions visitors

might be experiencing, or striving for, during their visit. All visitors are encouraged to complete a well-being questionnaire, a self-care tool to further serve as an emotional check-in.

SIT, STAY, HEAL

During this monthly program, therapy dog teams with [Alliance of Therapy Dogs](#), [Pet Partners](#), and [Project PUP](#) spend the day in the MFA's tranquil Membership Garden to offer stress and anxiety relief for members and visitors. The program has a special focus on the community's hospital and frontline health care workers, who receive complimentary admission to the museum during Sit, Stay, Heal. The MFA recognizes the overwhelming responsibility they have endured during the COVID-19 pandemic, and wanted to offer respite and relaxation to them in a way that supports their self-care. These fun and therapeutic sessions take place from 12-8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month. Health care workers use the discount code "WOOF" when reserving [advance tickets online](#), and must present their employee badge to Visitors Services upon arrival. The program is also free for MFA members, or with the cost of admission for visitors.

MOOD TOURS

These self-guided explorations are inspired by specific artworks in the MFA Collection selected to connect with feelings such as calm, empowerment, grief, joy and celebration, relationships and self-reflection. Within each Mood Tour, visitors are encouraged to complete an art activity designed to allow deeper engagement with the art and their feelings. To design the tours, the MFA collaborated with two professionals in the arts in health field, Jasmine Parker and Mason Gehring. Parker is a registered art therapist, and founder of [Listen to Your Art Therapy & Empowerment Services](#) in St. Petersburg, FL. Gehring is a studio artist, drawing and painting instructor and an [artist-in-healthcare professional](#).

"Now, more than ever, museums are embracing our vital role to be a space for healing and contemplation, and I'm so proud that the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg is leading the way with Picture of Health," said MFA Executive Director and CEO Kristen A. Shepherd. "We want to utilize our diverse and expansive collection to provide avenues to wellness, as well as deeper conversation and understanding of emotional engagement."

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive NE is St. Petersburg's first art museum, and houses the largest encyclopedic art collection in Florida. The collection includes works of art from ancient times to the present day and from around the world, including ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, Native American, European, American, and contemporary art. The photography collection is one of the largest and finest in the Southeast. Kristen A. Shepherd is the Executive Director and CEO. For more information, please visit mfastpete.org and follow @mfastpete on social media.

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