

## **The Paintbrush's Tale: A Story of Color and Confidence**

I'm just a small paintbrush but let me tell you, I've witnessed magic.

My bristles have danced across more canvases than I can count, but nothing compares to the moment I first landed in Aliyah's small hand at Milagro Center. She was seven, her fingers unsure at first, gripping me too tight. But her eyes? They sparkled with possibility.

At Milagro, I'm not just a tool, I'm a key. A key that unlocks worlds where purple trees reach toward striped skies, where problems become adventures, and where "mistakes" simply don't exist. Every day, I help underserved children discover that they are artists, storytellers, and dreamers.

I remember Lovon, who arrived quiet and withdrawn. Through me, he painted his feelings when words wouldn't come—bold reds for anger, soft blues for sadness, brilliant yellows for the joy he was learning to feel again. His confidence grew with every stroke. Now, years later, he will be majoring in art at FAU.

Then there's little Melanie, who struggled to hold my handle. Together, we practiced wide, sweeping movements; no pressure to stay inside the lines, no "wrong" way to create. Week by week, her grip strengthened. Her fine motor skills blossomed. But more important, she learned that she could create something beautiful.

At Milagro Center, I'm part of something even bigger than art. While children paint, they're also developing problem-solving skills and making decisions about colors and composition. They're building self-esteem with every wonderful masterpiece that gets displayed proudly on our classroom walls. They're learning that taking risks is safe here, that their unique vision matters, that they matter.

I've watched the teachers encourage experimentation, seen our mentors celebrate every wild color choice and imaginative creation. I've been present for the quiet moments when a struggling child finally smiles, when academic concepts suddenly click because they've been explored through creative play, and when leadership takes root in young hearts.

The children at Milagro come from challenging circumstances, but when they hold me, they discover a unique power. In their hands, I become possibility. I help them express what's hidden deep inside, their joy, fear, hope, dreams for a future that's looking brighter. I provide them with a full-body, full-brain experience that opens up a world of creativity that encourages self-expression in ways that go far beyond the classroom.

Supporting Milagro Center means supporting moments like these; moments when underserved children discover their worth, develop essential skills, and begin believing

in themselves. Like me, every paintbrush matters in setting these children on a path to a productive, bright, and fulfilling future.

Remember my 2 mantras: There are no mistakes in art and art is everything and everywhere!