

An evening with Art and Soul

The only person cooler than your art teacher when you're 8-years-old, is that same art teacher when you're 32-years-old. Susan Thomey is one of the reasons that I became an art teacher. From kindergarten through fifth grade, she stood before us in fabulously funky, appropriately accessorized outfits, her short red hair a testament to her Irish heritage and free spirit.

"Look at my nose," she'd say when she wanted our attention.

Then, she'd transport us to Egypt or France or places beyond our imaginations by sharing stories, posters, fun facts, and gory details (a-hem, Mr. Van Gogh) with us about some of the world's greatest works of art.

After a suspenseful couple of moments, she would introduce us to our assignment, restraining us with her famous line, "When I tell you, but not right now..." And then, our supplies materialized before us and our imaginations opened wide.

Almost a quarter century later, I found myself once again a member of Mrs. Thomey's class. This time, we weren't in the basement of the old green St. Margaret's building. This time, we were on the upper level of a White Marsh restaurant called Flameworks, who have the best burgers and pickle chips in the world, according to Mr. Thomey. (Their soft pretzels are incredible!)



My classmates included the restaurant's hilarious proprietor, Rose, several members of her family, two of Mrs. Thomey's daughters (including my St. Margaret's classmate, Caroline), another old friend from St. Margaret's, Conor, and even my mom!

In addition to Susan Thomey, current St. Margaret's School art teacher, Peggy Hart, instructed us on how to paint the details of the crab outline before us. "Even though we're working on the same project, everyone's art is going to be different because

you're all different," Mrs. Thomey said.



Joy bubbled throughout the air as we dabbed our brushes in complementary shades of orange and blue. Our teachers praised us and offered us solutions as we stumbled upon problems. As time passed, confidence grew, and the canvasses that started out identical were now representations of the art and soul of each member of the class.

Painting classes like these have been popping up all over the place. It's an environment where anyone, regardless of talent or experience, can release his or her inner artist. But, in the other places I've participated in social painting activities, I've found the instruction lacking and the environment stifling. That wasn't the case on this particular night.



When you spend an evening with Art and Soul, you're receiving real instruction from two fabulous art teachers. (It takes one to know one.) Susan and Peggy have started this enterprise as a way to expand their educational reach to adults. They'll come to your event, bringing easels, canvasses, brushes, paint, and over 40 years of combined knowledge. They'll even clean up for you. And if you're looking for an exciting birthday party idea for your artsy child, Susan and Peggy can help you plan an unforgettable event.

Schedule your next painting event by contacting Susan Thomey at sthomey1@verizon.net or 443-243-1261.