

Glass Gives Back— The Fire Divas' Mission

by Michelle Veizaga

If ever there were an art form with a purpose it would be glass, from protecting us in our cars and homes to the wonder we catch in children's eyes as they see the handblown ornaments on a Christmas tree. There is no end to what glass brings us, but what if it could do more? What if glass could actually make people come together for the greater good of an entire community? What if glass could help make a hurting parent's heart heal at the loss of a child? What if the people who dedicated themselves to this art form came together as a group and made it part of their glass journey to make a small but significant contribution on behalf of meaningful causes?

Making a Difference

I have had the distinct pleasure to become a member of a group of talented and diverse glass artists who, aside from promoting one another's artistic endeavors, have also dedicated a large part of our hearts and glass talents to causes that make a difference in the lives of people from every walk of life. The Fire Divas, as we are known, have made it a mission to give back to charities that have a worthy cause, such as Breast Cancer Awareness and Beads Of Courage. Impact! That is what our collective glass talents are doing in the lives of the people who receive the benefits from these charitable works in which the Divas participate.

Throughout the year, we host several special events to help raise awareness for the causes we would like to promote and contribute to. One event is to promote Beads Of Courage, which provides handmade beads to children with serious illnesses as they go through treatment, and which many in the glass community hold very dear. The Divas volunteer to make special beads that are strung together into two strands. One is auctioned off for monetary profit to benefit the program, and the other is donated directly to the Beads Of Courage Organization for distribution to the children. Working together as a unified group through our Facebook fan page and blog has greatly enlarged our efforts to further this cause. Imagine, though, what would happen if several other artists and companies came together with the Divas to make this one of the largest donations that the Beads Of Courage receives annually. One bead turned into, dare I say, thousands? The Fire Divas are working hard to make this a reality.

As mainly women members, the Fire Divas also know the huge magnitude of breast cancer and its impact on everyone. Sons lose mothers, husbands lose wives, and brothers lose sisters. Our co-chairwomen, Lori Bergmann and Kathleen Robinson-Young, have been striving toward enlarging our group efforts to raise more awareness, funds, and outreach. Glass can do this if we make it a part of the awareness effort. What Lance Armstrong and biking have done for cancer research, so too can glass. The Divas participate as a team with individual shop sales and challenges throughout the month of October, where a portion of our proceeds are donated back to Breast Cancer Research. We are also planning on creating auctionable items that will gain notoriety in the arts communities as well as being known as the items that help Breast Cancer Research Funding.



Karen Klomparens



Rosemarie Hanus



Lori Bergman



Sharon Driscoll



Kathleen Robinson Young



Patrice Shepherd



Michelle Veizaga

Growing a Caring Community

We are always looking for new and innovative ways to show that the glass community, and the Fire Divas in particular, can pull group efforts and prove that where there is one person willing, there can be two, and four, and so on, until the chain is long enough to wrap around the problem and become a solution.

As a team, we spend many discussion hours planning out the best ways that our individual talents can

become one for whatever project we have taken on. This is why we also feel so strongly about issues such as the ones that affect poverty-stricken communities worldwide. There are several groups trying to provide a sustainable income resource for women and their families. One such project involves creating jewelry items that are then sold under the Fair Trade Commission. We Divas would love to see our glass beads and other glass items become a part of this. The beads that are donated by the Divas would not only be used to make the jewelry that is sold but is also used as bartering and currency within the jewelry-making community. A glass bead from one of our artists may actually bring more material resources for the women who are able to trade them for new jewelry-making items. It is incredible that glass beads have this potential.

The Divas have made glass and glass art a huge part of our lives and hearts. Our philosophies on group support, encouragement, and growth have made the Divas what we are today and are making these changes possible by strong beliefs and hard work. It's amazing to look back and see what we have accomplished and will continue to do with the support and love from the entire art glass community!

www.sundoorbeads.com



The Fire Divas

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