

1 Million Leaves Across Kansas



THE POWER OF CONNECTION

**Using Art to Foster a Sense of
Belonging & Connection within
Our Schools & Community**



Introduction

When you walk throughout the Kansas Family Advisory Network (KFAN) Wichita office, you can't help but notice the evergreen display of 40 plants ranging from peace lilies, to spider plants, to striped dracaena. But there is one perennial that dazzles the eye in a striking manner.

One morning, Min. Shaw-Woody observed how vibrant and healthy the leaves were on that particular plant. She thought, if you were to remove a single leaf, that leaf would quickly wither and die. It would lose its source of sustenance—its lifeline. She realized how this plant illustrated the power of connection, and how we are all enmeshed in families—connected by blood, and by community, and by this gift that is the human experience. And out of this realization, the 1 Million Leaves: The “Power of Connection” was born.



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The Power of Connection

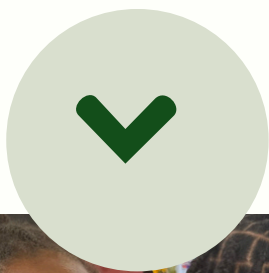
We are all connected. You've probably heard it a hundred times before. But what does that expression really mean? Conceptually it might make sense that we humans are all interconnected on this great big planet. Still, it can be hard to see these connections day in and day out. To help make things clearer, the Kansas Family Advisory Network (KFAN) is making our connections visible for everyone to see and experience for themselves.

1 Million Leaves: The "Power of Connection" is a school project that provides a tangible display of how we are all, indeed, quite linked together. Through a collaboration with KFAN, schools throughout Wichita and Kansas are empowered to get kids to personalize their very own colorful leaf. A student is asked to write their name or initials first. Then they can add stickers and color or draw animals, sports, and foods they love. The leaves are then affixed to the vine that hangs from their sponsored classroom sign. The teacher tapes the vines and leaves on their classroom door. Every day, students see their leaves and feel a certain pride every time they walk by it.

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The kids can clearly see and understand that they are tied up with their classmates, teachers, and school community. This emotional and social art activity is a fun project based on the 8 dimensions of wellness. By asking for everyone to get involved, the children are thereby intertwined with not just their school but the wider community as well.



Student Reflections



In addition to their personal art projects, students are invited to think about how their support system is like a sturdy tree with strong roots. In the post-activity reflection, students are asked if the activity was a good reminder of who in their lives supports them. One student wrote, “yes, it shows that even if I’m going through something, the people in my life care and have my back.”

During the artistic process, students are asked to identify a quote or something meaningful that people would remember them by. This gives students true agency to show the world who they are and what their life philosophy is. When asked “did you enjoy taking the time to decorate something that reflected your personality?” one student sincerely wrote, “yes, because I wasn’t being judged.” When asked “was it difficult for you to find something meaningful to share?” another student confidently wrote, “No, not really. I know a lot about myself.”

This reflecting the students do after creating their art is a crucial component to the activity. Getting their realizations and opinions down on paper can help our students internalize the lessons learned and become more self-aware. Read more student comments on slide 11.

Support the Power of Connection Donate Today

We want as many people as possible to be a part of this exciting campaign. You can donate and sponsor a class & their teachers by purchasing a “My Child’s Class Leaf Package” for just \$40. Every donation provides a class set of 30 leaves and a box of colorful art supplies such as an assortment of stickers, vines, classroom signs and an instructional guide. Then the classroom teacher and support staff will set aside a time—usually at the beginning of the new school year—for each child and staff to decorate their leaves. Each of the unique fronds and their plant families will be put on display for the community to view and enjoy.



KFAN PAYPAL



Nina Shaw-Woody

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Cash App account
is under the name
Nina Shaw-Woody

Your sponsoring contribution of \$40, \$120, \$200, \$480, or \$800 helps KFAN immensely by providing free food and clothes monthly. Proceeds also provide free and/or reduced prevention and intervention services for the individual, children and their families, including in-home support.

What Research Says

According to the Social Biobehavioural Research Group's findings from major cohort studies in the UK and USA from 2017-2022, engagement in creative arts helps children develop imagination, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, leading to broader life benefits. Children aged 7 who demonstrated greater creativity in arts activities (like free writing, storytelling, crafts, painting, drawing, or drama) had a lower risk of behavioral instability, and lower risk of social and behavioral maladjustment in adolescence.

The studies found that school aged youth who actively engaged in artistic activities had the benefit of a greater ability to cope with mental health problems in everyday life.





What Research Says

Increases in arts engagement were associated with increases in "flourishing," a positive mental health state characterized by feeling good and functioning well in individual and community life. This was mainly driven by improvements in psychological wellbeing and feeling like an integral part of a positive community. Students had increased autonomy and felt personal growth.

Like our schools in Wichita, Penn State University holds space for an artistic community art project called the Stompers Project. Their art workshop fosters community engagement and a sense of belonging, emphasizing that individuals are "not alone in our struggles; rather, we are part of a larger tapestry of experiences". Similar to Penn State's project, KFAN's Power of Connection activity creates a platform for the youth to express emotions and experiences through art, promoting strong community ties and mental resiliency.





The Power of Connection

KFAN's Power of Connections supports our young people's social connections to each other and the adults in the community. Active participation in the project allows our children to flourish at school and home, and it helps our kids become healthier and happier adults. By coming together to create something beautiful and personal, our young people share their stories which increases their sense of belonging. This powerful experience reinforces the idea that we are interconnected and that our mental health is a community issue that requires collective participation.

Speaking of community participation, when former Wichita Public School Superintendent Dr. Alicia Thompson participated in the Power of Connection activity, she gave the project a resounding endorsement, stating, "Every school needs to do this activity!"





Our Vision & Goal

This powerful connection created through this creative arts project is changing things for the better in and around Wichita. Students report feeling more connected to each other and to their teachers. Donors say they feel good about giving to this cause because they can see a direct impact on the students and the school environment. Through this effort, supporting families are now connected to the students who are connected to the schools who are, in turn, connected to their communities.

Our vision is that this cycle continues to bear fruit for years and decades to come. Our goal for this campaign is to raise enough funds to have the Power of Connection art activity be available for free to schools at the beginning of each school year across Sedgwick County and throughout Kansas.

STUDENT COMMENTS

BELONGING & CONNECTION ART ACTIVITY

DID YOU ENJOY TAKING THE TIME TO DECORATE
SOMETHING THAT REFLECTED YOUR PERSONALITY?

Yes! I got to make
it my own and
I think
it shows on it

Yes
I got to
express
myself!

Yes
I love
being
creative!

Yes it was
fun and I
got to
learn a little
about myself!

Yes!
It brought
out my creativity

Yes
because
it's me!

Yes! it helped
me focus and
was overall a
good way
to debrief with
myself

Yes,
because I
was not
being
judged!

Yes!
because I like
reflecting on
myself every
once in a while

Yes
I like
my things
being pretty

Yes, this
was a creative
and fun
activity to
reflect who I am!

!! I loved it!!
I like
expressing
how I feel
in
art form!

SOCIAL SUPPORT ART ACTIVITY

WAS THIS ACTIVITY A GOOD REMINDER FOR YOU TO REMEMBER THE PEOPLE
IN YOUR LIFE WHO "HAS YOUR BACK" AND ARE THERE FOR YOU?

Yes, to know
really who are
the most important
people for me.

Yes because I
know
automatically
who has my
back.

Yes, because it
helped me know
who I trust
and value!

Yes, it made
me realize how
much people
I have in
my life!

Yes, because
sometimes I
forget who is
there for me!

Yes, I
know things
I didn't
know before!

Somewhat
but it will
always be
my Mom!

Yes, because
it had me
reflect.

Yes, I had
to write the
names so it
makes me
remember.

Yes, because
I thought and
wrote about who
is important
to me!

Yes, because
in that opportunity
you will see how
people believe
& stand up
for you!

Yes, it helped
me realize, who is
really there
for me and
who isn't.

The Power of Connection

“The most simple things can bring the most happiness.” Izabella Scorupco

The 1 Million Leaves: The “Power of Connection” project is more than just an arts-and-crafts activity—it’s a research-backed, heart-centered movement that fosters social bonds, boosts emotional well-being, and builds the foundation for lifelong mental health. With every leaf, students feel more seen, valued, and connected. This visible tapestry of belonging isn’t just good for our schools. It’s essential. We invite you to be part of this transformational journey. Sponsor a class or an entire school. Share this campaign with 5 friends and family members who believe in the power of connection and investing in healthy projects for our children while assisting children, individuals and families in need across Kansas. It really does ‘take a village’.



We are asking for your support today!



By Credit or Debit



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at PayPal



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Cash App
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Nina Shaw-Woody

Or you can donate by
visiting our website



OR send check or
money order to:
917 S. Glendale St.
Wichita, KS 67218

Taking 1 Million Leaves Across Kansas

The Power of Connection is a positive force that brings together individuals, organizations, businesses (large and small), churches, colleges, and other community partners to support students, teachers, and school staff. Through this fun and engaging back-to-school art activity, we aim to foster a strong sense of belonging and connection within our schools across Kansas.

Kansas is home to 1,016 public and 145 private elementary schools. Our goal is to launch this initiative in 200 to 300 schools across the state in this 2025/2026 school year, expand to 500 schools by year two, and reach all public and private elementary schools in Kansas by year three.

We are asking for your support today!

Together, let's grow a million leaves across Kansas to help raise a generation of students who are flourishing, resilient, and deeply rooted in their communities.



THANK YOU!

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