



### MY ART STORY by BIVIANA FRANCO

Roswell, Georgia

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Biviana Franco helping participants create a bracelet. Photo courtesy of Feel Beautiful Today



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My name is Biviana Franco. If you were to look at how busy, full and often crazy my life is, you might be tempted to ask me, "Is it worth it?" But there are two things that drive me: A love for people, and a love for seeing how art helps and heals others. My background is in art. I started my degree at a university in Columbia and then finished at AIU in America. I spent five years studying classical art with Chris di Domizio. I've taught art to students and volunteered my skills at both The Ronald McDonald House and The Foundation For Hospital Art. All those things led me to my present, which is being the president and founder of the non profit Feel Beautiful Today.

When my close friends were diagnosed with cancer, my immediate response was art. Somehow giving each of them hand-made jewelry was a tangible way I could say, "I'm here; I love you; I support you." It was this tangible gift of hope and encouragement that served as the catalyst for Feel Beautiful Today. Suddenly, a desire to bring the love and encouragement I had given my friends through art blossomed into a realization that this was a very practical way to reach other women and girls affected by cancer, and thus Feel Beautiful Today was born.

We started out small: a couple events here and there with people coming to make pieces of jewelry that would be delivered to cancer patients in local hospitals. The vision then expanded to providing workshops for patients themselves in the hospitals and cancer centers. This is when I fell in love. This is what I was born to do. To watch as patients who come in with a blank expression, their body language showing they are clearly in pain, leave our workshops smiling and interacting with us and each other is nothing short of miraculous and every reason I could ever need to keep moving forward and exploring how we can continue to use art to bring hope, healing, and encouragement into the lives of women and girls battling cancer. Feel Beautiful Today now offers a third program which provides an opportunity for the hospital staff to create one half of a necklace that a patient then finishes and keeps, and hopefully we will be rolling out a fourth program in the next two years.

When I committed my talents to be used for the benefit of others, I had no idea the journey it would take me on. Every day I wake up knowing my life is full of purpose, that the work that no one sees allows precious women to experience something that for a moment takes their mind off their cancer and reassures them they are stronger than they think. Designing the jewelry, setting up the meetings, dreaming of what comes next for Feel Beautiful Today could never compare to the satisfaction that comes from locking eyes with one of those precious women whose life is so beautifully impacted by art.