

Healing power of art on display

By NICOLE HUTCHESON

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Karlana Morgan traces the inspiration for her painting back to her own experience as a survivor of sexual abuse.

The massive tree in the middle of the canvas symbolizes life and growth. Her whimsical depiction of the Greek goddess Artemis stands for her newfound love of nature. And the winding road in the distance alludes to her own tumultuous journey to happiness.

"It's really a celebration of my freedom and finally having a voice," said Morgan, 32, of Belleair, one of 10 sexual assault survivors whose art will be auctioned Thursday during an event called artHeals.

For the second year in a row, the nonprofit Family Services Inc. teamed 10 victims with professional artists associated with Florida Craftsmen. The eight-week collaboration required trust, something that's often hard for abuse victims. Experts say art therapy is especially helpful for victims of sexual assault - a form of abuse that destroys self-confidence and often is associated with keeping secrets.

Morgan's painting, Magnificent Freedom, was done in about a month with the help of multimedia artist Lynn Carol Henderson.

Morgan said she suffered sexual abuse from a family member throughout her childhood. But it wasn't until she was raped in 2005 that memories of the abuse resurfaced, something experts say is not unusual. "For me the artwork opened up so much more I didn't know about my creativity," she said. "I've created something that for a moment captures all those past emotions and my newfound peace."

If you go

artHEALS 2007

When: 6:30 p.m. Thursday

Where: [Studio@620](#) 620 First Ave. S, St. Petersburg

Price: Tickets are \$30, four for \$100

For information: 727 531-0482

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