

Jody Boston has taught music, drama and dance in Hamilton's inner-city schools where she became excited by diversity, challenges and possibilities. She was also taken by the tireless passion of her colleagues. These schools and communities are now her preferred location in which to work.

By 2009, when she was first introduced to Under the Willows, Jody came to recognize her commitment to working with children who had experienced early life adversity.

After her first summer as a Willows Artist she attended *Performing the World*, an international conference in New York City. Here she encountered like-minded people from all over the world who facilitate developmental, arts-based programs.

While facilitating the Interval House "Heroes Program" (an outreach program for children who have witnessed violence against their mothers) Jody recognized that many of the children who attended the Heroes program in the evening were also in her classroom by day – an indication that they currently resided in, or had recently resided in a women's shelter.

Children witnesses of domestic violence often struggle academically, emotionally and socially in classrooms. Teachers and parents often seek professional consultation to deal with these struggles. The Confidentiality Agreements that are designed to keep victims of domestic violence safe inadvertently limit classroom teachers' knowledge about a child's exposure to violence and the teacher's understanding about what is 'really happening' for the child. This lack of shared information (during the consultation process) puts children at risk for a Psychiatric diagnosis, often followed by the prescription of Psychiatric medications, without the knowledge of the history of trauma. This conundrum inspired Jody to learn more about violence against women, to raise awareness about the effects of child witnessing and to research outreach/trauma sensitive programming.

Jody spent a year as a student of the East Side Institute for Short-term Group and Psychotherapy (Manhattan) where she studied Social Therapy. She was then employed as a Child and Youth Counsellor at Interval House of Hamilton. There she sat on the Board of Education and Violence Against Women Collaboration Committee.

Jody has worked at Under the Willows as an Artist, a Child and Youth Counsellor and, since February 2014, as Program Director. Jody is committed to group development during and outside of the program. Jody is also committed to developing broad relationships among Willows and the Hamilton community.