



Sunshine graced both sky and sidewalk in Talethia Edwards' neighborhood during their Chalk The Walk event at the end of March. TALETHIA EDWARDS

CHALK IT UP

Sidewalks and homes blossom with quarantine creativity

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Sunshine graced both sky and sidewalk in Talethia Edwards' neighborhood during their Chalk The Walk event at the end of March. Smiling suns, butterflies, rainbows and sight-word hopscotch were just a few images scattered across the concrete.

"I felt it would be a great idea for our neighborhood to stay connected without staying connected physically," says Edwards, who serves as the president of the Greater Bond Neighborhood Association. "We bought chalk and put it out at different corners and let the kids make art, then individual people took photos and posted them."

Almost one month later, creative quarantine activities like these continue to pop up across the city as stay-at-home orders are extended and a post-pandemic future remains unclear. Edwards is advocating for families to continue finding creative and artful so-

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To stay up to date on the Greater Bond Neighborhood Association, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/GreaterBondNeighborhood/>.

To learn how to join the Magic Wand Project visit <https://jumprope.com/g/magic-wand-neighborhood-installation/GdRjhuXu#>.

For information on the Sharing Tree's Resources visit <https://www.sharing-tree.family>.

lutions to combat anxiety in what feels like a never-ceasing case of cabin fever.

The Edwards' home is an explosion of sound and color as she has co-created a new normal for her eight children who range in age from 11 months to 14 years old. After their daily song, prayer and schoolwork, there is time carved out for music and visual arts.

Edwards has enjoyed watching her

children's makeshift band, The Edwards Clan, which features cello, trombone, violin, piano, drums and vocals. She witnesses her son blossom as a musician daily, creating new songs on piano, while her daughters teach one another new techniques on their respective string instruments.

Everyday DIY home décor projects keep hands and minds busy. Edwards has shared these snapshots of her quarantine routine online to spark ideas for neighbors and friends.

"I like how we've found new ways to connect, and we seem more connected by sharing," says Edwards. "I think this is our time to see great things from our kids going back to a love of the arts. We're all tapping into the creative parts of ourselves."

Dr. Sara Shields, an art education professor at Florida State University, continues to be inspired by the community's resilience in a time where it is

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difficult to stay isolated, whether home alone or with children. She is working virtually with her students at FSU to create a website of quarantine “capsules,” or activities, that gives children ways to think about world issues and their physical environments by posing specific questions and answering them with art projects.

Shields tackled her first question — how to create a socially-distant community using limited resources — with the Magic Wand Project. Families only need a wooden stick and whatever art supplies they have lying around to make a “magic wand” and then leave them outside to be discovered.

“I was thinking a lot about how everybody is doing small things that become extraordinary gifts to the people around them,” says Shields. “JK Rowling made ‘Harry Potter’ open access for teachers and students, so I thought, how cool would it be to create magic in my neighborhood?”

At home, she strikes a delicate balance between scheduled activities and free play for her almost 3-year-old daughter and nine-month-old son. Crowd-pleasers have been messier projects, which she advises should be done outside, such as using leftover toilet paper rolls to dip into paint and stamp circles.

Ice painting is another favorite. It combines water with leftover paint, or even dried out markers soaked in water, which is then frozen in trays with makeshift handles made out of popsicle sticks or spoons. Shields’ daughter uses the backs of cereal boxes or old wrapping paper as her canvas.

Shields says making a list of activities and prepping Tupperware buckets with readily available, sensory materials like oatmeal to scoop into Easter eggs or pipe

cleaners to thread through straws, have been lifesavers. While there is some prep work upfront, these simple activities — sorting a bag of 15 bean soup or stacking cups — can be just as engaging as larger art projects.

“You don’t have to take your kids on a scavenger hunt to make wands every day,” says Shields. “Not every project has to be something you frame and put on your refrigerator. Sometimes the beauty of artmaking is playing with the materials.”

While websites like Pinterest have been a wealth of information, Shields and Edwards are both grateful for community offerings like The Sharing Tree. Owner Carly Sinnadurai says they have pivoted to offer activity and supply boxes and for every box sold, another is donated.

“I thought if children couldn’t come to us, we will package up a bit of our magic and share,” says Sinnadurai, who sold 50 boxes in the first week of quarantine.

Shields feels that artmaking holds enormous potential, not just for neighborhood beautification, but for becoming a collaborative, community activity during a time of high emotional and mental strain. Edwards agrees.

“We are worried about [our kids] during COVID-19, but those beautiful rainbows are saying they are okay, and we are doing a good job of keeping them normal, healthy and happy during this pandemic which is stressful, chaotic and disorganized,” says Edwards.

Edwards smiles as her 5-year-old daughter smears another azure pastel across her paper to mimic a stunning, Tallahassee sunset. Edwards sees hope still alive inside her daughter’s bright eyes as she continues to look up.

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area’s umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).