

Hi everyone. My name is Tova Speter and I am so happy to be participating in the CowParade as an artist, art therapist, and the granddaughter of dairy farmers. I have actually been dreaming of this since I first heard about the CowParade 20 years ago, but all these years later, my engagement in it has been even more meaningful than I could have ever imagined.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Jimmy Fund and the 120th anniversary of my family farm in CT. I remember visiting the farm and noticing that these were not just cows to my grandfather, they were his friends. He treated them with respect and love and they offered him that and more in return. These cows that we see here, so beautifully painted, are not “just public art.” If they were that would be amazing itself, but as one of the artists I know they carry so much more than that. They each have a story, were created with love by these talented artists, and represent something bigger because they are here to make a difference.

I have multiple friends and relatives who unfortunately have been diagnosed with cancer, many of whom have received or are currently receiving treatment at Dana Farber. Making art to help raise money to support this life-saving work, is the least I can do to offer a thank you for what Dana Farber has offered them.

Also a community muralist, I love public art because it can often make people stop and pause, share an untold story, or bring color and creativity to an unexpected place. My cow, Heifer-vescence, a pun I’ve been holding on to for 18 years by the way, is meant to be playful, and I hope she brings smiles to those who see her.

In addition to painting Heifer-vescence, I also had the honor of mentoring a young artist to create a mini moo. Yael Schulman is a family friend who was only 9 when she was diagnosed with cancer. She and I made some art together during her treatment and she often spoke of how much she enjoyed painting while in the hospital. As an art therapist I know that art can be powerful and transformative and I love that the nurses encouraged Yael's creativity and in turn really inspired her. Yael has repeatedly said she wants to be a child life specialist when she grows up because of the difference they have made in her life. Coming upon a painted cow on the streets of Boston and beyond will surely make you smile, but likely not as wide as the child life specialists helped Yael smile even when she was having a challenging day.

Thank you to all of the staff at Dana Farber and The Jimmy Fund who are healers, both medically and emotionally. Thank you to all of my fellow artists for sharing your creativity with the community. And thank you to the Cow Parade for inviting me to participate in a community project that is meaningful to me as a public artist, art therapist, descendant of dairy farmers, and as a family member and friend of past and current patients whose strength will always inspire me more than they know.

One of those inspiring past patients is here with us tonight. With great joy and pride, I want to introduce you all to the youngest cow parade artist - Yael Schulman.

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Hi. My name is Yael Schulman and I am 12 years old. I am so honored to be here today as an artist and as a cancer survivor. Art has always been something special to me but when I was in treatment it also became something that was very therapeutic for me too. When Tova asked me if I wanted to paint a cow with her I said of course, because it was the perfect opportunity for me - I love painting and I will always want to give back to the Jimmy Fund.

The Jimmy Fund means so much to me; they basically saved my life. Everybody there was so kind, loving, and supportive of me and my family through our whole journey. I want to share with you some of my story. On Oct 27, 2020 I was diagnosed with osteosarcoma which is a rare bone cancer. My whole world turned upside down in a matter of a few weeks. I was taken away from my friends, school, and my happy life and was pulled into a life of chemotherapy, hospitalizations, and long hours every day at the Jimmy Fund clinic. Treatment for my osteosarcoma was very brutal. It consisted of 6 cycles of extensive chemotherapy - almost a year of chemo - and more than one major surgery to remove the tumor and rebuild my leg. I'm not gonna get into all of the details now, but as hard as it was, I feel very lucky to have gotten my treatment at the Jimmy Fund, and I am proud to say that I am now at 2 years with no evidence of disease. I still carry a lot of scars, but I also carry the happy experiences throughout that time that the Jimmy Fund gave to me.

I named my cow Yatziry which means creative and joyful in Hebrew and it starts with a Y just like my name. I used my favorite colors and painted her using a technique called syringe painting, which I learned while in the hospital getting treatment. It was super fun to meet in Tova's studio and to fill syringes with paint and squirt them onto the cow. I gave her a glittery tail and hooves to reflect her sparkling personality. She also has 9 spots because I was 9 years old when I was diagnosed, and I filled each one with a cow joke to help people smile. I hope she makes you smile too. Thank you.