**Poverty and the Arts provides supplies, support for Nashville artists experiencing homelessness**

Poverty & the Arts provides art supplies and studio space to Nashville artists

experiencing homelessness but, more importantly, a support system allowing them to

gain independence in a creative way.

Nicole Brandt Minyard founded P&A in 2011 while studying at Belmont University. The

organization gained nonprofit 501(c)(3) status in July 2014 and recently moved from the

Wedgewood area to 1207 Dickerson Pike.

Minyard said she noticed the need for a marketplace in Nashville for poor artists.

"Our artists are able to gain more marketable skills and confidence that I learned through

the Nashville arts community," Minyard said.

Beth Gunn, an artist who specializes in jewelry and sewing, finds P&A different from

other communities in her life that may see her only as homeless.

Gunn's artwork includes beaded earrings and wooden angels with religious quotes or

Bible verses. She also makes cards, sewn coasters and paintings.

Gunn's "Shades of Green" depicts a bright yellow tree surrounded by green and blue

foliage. The piece is acrylic on paper.

Another, "Dayspring," is more abstract. A bold, dark yellow line separates fighting sides

of deep blue and earthy green. The shapes surrounding the barrier are vague, implying

either a cross or a telephone pole. The piece is acrylic on canvas.

"At POVA, I am able to talk about issues in my life that involve poverty and

homelessness and see other artists," Gunn said.

Minyard said when she met Gunn she wondered why she was homeless.

"She's 35 and has a bachelor's degree," Minyard said. " But she was victim to sex

trafficking and domestic violence. When she got out of that situation she walked to

Nashville. It took her six and a half months and she was homeless when she arrived."Gunn said finding words can be difficult while expressing her thoughts artwork comes

more naturally.

"Because I wasn’t able to be my whole self, I have come across as entertaining at best, or

crazy and drug-addicted at worst," Gunn said. "I don’t get heard anyway, so why bother?

At POVA, they understand me better because they don't restrain who we are as artists."

P&A holds fundraisers and participates in monthly art crawls. People can purchase

artwork at their gallery or in businesses that display their artwork (full list on their

website). Artists receive 60 percent commission for original artwork and 25 percent for

merchandise.

The grand opening for the Dickerson Pike location is on Saturday, June 9 from 6 to 8

p.m. The organization will hold a Birthday Bash fundraiser on Saturday, July 14 from 6

to 8 p.m.

Minyard said one difficulty for artists is the stigma surrounding homelessness.

"You're in survival mode and everyone around you is in survival mode," Minyard said.

"Your environment is driven by that behavior. Oftentimes the only places you're allowed

to go are where other homeless people are. Because of that you only see the stereotypes."

Gunn said she has been grateful for religious organizations that provide help in Nashville

but she does not find pride in being homeless because she did not choose to be.

"I just want to live in my own apartment, that I pay for, cook my own meals, and decorate

my surroundings in any way I want to," Gunn said.

Gunn said she wants to be seen as an artist.

"God has more for me," Gunn said. "I think there is a difference between those who call

themselves artists, and those who call themselves homeless."

In Nashville, inconsistent public transportation and increasing rent prices have made life

for the homeless community difficult.

"We see our artists lack a lot of the basic social skills that it takes to maintain a

roommate," Minyard said. "And it's really hard to maintain housing in this city right now

without a roommate of some sort."

With help from a donor, P&A purchased a van to transport artists and artwork.

"For one of our artists the bus didn't run in her location on Sundays. I don't know what

people do when they have jobs on Sundays," Minyard said. "We were using Lyft and

Uber to take them home."

Minyard said she appreciates art's ability to "reshape the narrative."

"Art, media, and entertainment reshapes the story in a digestible, easy way that is not

threatening for people," Minyard said. "We hope to use art to not only reshape narratives

about homelessness but how we can center our artists' voices and allow them to create art

about things they're passionate about."

By overcoming the barriers and stigma of homelessness, artists who work with P&A have

an outlet for creativity that allows them to discuss other important issues in their lives.

"I appreciate it when my art touches someone in such a way that they want to buy it,"

Gunn said. "For whatever reason, I really like it when the art can do the talking."