

**Kalamazoo Institute of Art: Dawn Long Haul Productions // MCACA Creating Connection project**

CYNTHIA CANTY:

Making art can be a fantastic career or hobby. But making art can be so much deeper than that: It can be healing, it can build confidence, it can shape communities.

We continue our series Creating Connection, which features personal stories from Michiganders about how local arts programs have changed their lives.

Today, a student in jewelry making at the Kalamazoo Institute of Art shares her story.

AMBIENCE

DAWN BENNETT-DAILEY: I sit down to the torch, and I just start creating.

AMBIENCE FADES

My name is Dawn. My grandpa was an artist. He taught at the Chicago Art Institute. He wanted one person in the family to be an artist. And he kept wanting me to be the artist. He had a brush in my hand probably when I was about 4 or 5. And so I've been in the arts my whole life.

AMBIENCE/MUSIC

My husband was on route for work and the vehicle went off the road and hit a big giant electrical thing. He passed away. And they kind of think that it was a heart attack. It was just sudden. We'd been married for 35 years. We knew we were together for the end. And that's basically what happened.

MUSIC

He was my brother's best friend, forever. They were in Cub Scouts together, and my brother kind of went off the deep end and then he just got worse and worse and worse and they committed suicide. So I was really super super low. So depressed. There's a lot of memories in the house. And I stopped doing all my artwork. I lost myself completely.

MUSIC

My girlfriends gifted me the beginning jewelry class to try to get me out of the house.

AMBIENCE

This is the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, KIA. I think I was really overexcited to be there compared to lot of the other people. This is my first piece that I ever made at my beginning class, the Ginko. It really felt good because a lot of the students really like the Ginko. So it was kind of a feel good thing.

AMBIENCE

Getting away from the house and meeting new people and being able to take my mind off it. It just made me feel better.

CROSSTALK: I'll give you a call ... bye, bye!

There's like a little community of all these people who do the same thing. People that have gone through divorce or their husband is really sick. It is very therapeutic. I think it helps all of us just to talk about it.

AMBIENCE

I was coming every night. I'd get out of work and I was here in class. Even if there wasn't a class I was here working. I worked on the weekends too. So I was just literally trying to change my life.

AMBIENCE

It is a big healing process to be able to do your artwork. Some of the teachers here have mentioned how different I act. I'm happier.

AMBIENCE

If I wasn't gifted that class, I think I'd still be really stuck. Creating helps you get on with things. And I know that everybody grieves differently but I think that I'm doing pretty good for what's happened. I'm in the right spot. This is where I should be.

MUSIC

BACK ANNOUNCE: Dawn's story was produced by Dan Collison and Elizabeth Meister of Long Haul Productions, as part of the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs "Creating Connection" project. Thanks to Emily Wohlscheid and the jewelry making students at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.