



## Art & Soul

by Lisa Edge | September 30th, 2015

Path with Art helps people to heal and reconnect with community and society.

On any given night in Seattle, you can watch a performance ranging from chart-topping pop stars to the ballet or an art show. But a recent event at the Richard Hugo House in Capitol Hill showcased the talents of a group often overlooked, the marginalized and the disenfranchised. More than two dozen Path with Art (PwA) students showed off their artistic abilities at the “Autumn Voices Showcase,” a culmination of what students created and learned in their respective classes during the summer semester.

“When people create art, they feel differently,” Tara Hardy, poetry teacher and emcee for the event, shared with the crowd.

The mission of PwA is to reduce homeless recidivism, eliminate barriers to art access and raise awareness of people in recovery from various issues. Students affiliated with partner organizations such as Cannon House, Mary’s Place and Providence Elderplace can attend an eight-week class that meets once a week at no cost.

The focus ranges from creative writing to acrylic painting to ceramics, and each medium is taught by a professional in the field. “It’s empowering to make art and tell your story,” PwA Program Director Jennifer Lobsenz said. “Classrooms are a place where they feel safe and part of the community and can be themselves.”

That safety net extends to performances of their work. The students showed courage by opening up and sharing a part of themselves with the audience — taking them through a range of powerful emotions evoking laughter and applause. An aura of support, respect and encouragement enveloped the students.

In one of the most moving performances of the night, one by one, the PwA singers sang the simple verse, “I will believe the truth about myself no matter how beautiful it is.” It’s what all the students are doing, one piece of artistic expression at a time.

“Access to art is beneficial to everyone, especially vulnerable populations,” Lobsenz said. “Creative expression is a powerful way to connect with oneself.”

The program goes a step further than other organizations by taking care of the soul of its participants. “Path with Art has given me the opportunity to feel pride,” one PwA student said. “I experienced a sort of transformation by writing about something that I had never talked about with anyone, and it opened up the door to talk about this subject even more.”