



Brush With the Law – Re Entry Arts Program

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Maria Maneos
Director

Open Letter to Montgomery, Bucks, and Delaware Counties:

The purpose of this letter is to let you know how you and/or your community group can request our services and to figure out how we can fundraise together or find the commissions to help us continue the visual arts as a public endeavor here in Montgomery, Bucks, and Delaware Counties.

Brush With the Law started in 2013 as a prison visual arts program that was conducted at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility. It provided art classes and mural painting to the inmates within the confines of the prison itself. As Brush With the Law grew in popularity with participants, we realized that our program could help provide better outcomes for those marginalized (i.e. people with substance abuse disorders, at-risk youth, mental and behavioral health, probation/parolees) trying to re-enter their communities and wanting to make a positive impact by doing creative jobs within different cities and municipalities in Montgomery, Bucks, and Delaware Counties together. By working together, meaning Brush With the Law and those individuals who feel marginalized, a sense of community and achievement is found as well as beauty and expression, and of course the hopes for a new viewpoint from community members.

By obtaining commissions from local businesses and/or working with different cities and municipalities these creative endeavors that we seek, design and paint or build together sheds a new light on people who for the most part feel shunned from society and introduces them to the public as productive individuals who are looking for change. It gives a new positive feeling of accomplishment.

We have started this new endeavor of creating visual art in both public spaces and privately owned businesses and are continuously on the lookout to establish new sponsors as well as continue to secure the ones we already have and develop/build relationships with people and organizations who would like to be part of this exciting, new forward thinking mission. We are always looking for the next project or job and if it is something that requires permits or permissions we figure out how to or who to contact in obtaining whatever is needed from our government officials so we can get to work.

Some examples of work we do: murals, painting parking meters, creating conceptual art installations for public awareness of whatever the issue may be - i.e. drug addiction, homelessness, environment, climate change, and much more.

If it is a public endeavor, or an entity like a nonprofit for public good, and needs help with funding, we do whatever we can to help make the vision a reality by throwing fundraisers to help finance the project, or seek like minded sponsors who want to contribute.

Founder and Director, Maria Maneos, started the city beautification project calling upon local businesses and public works to commission or ask for visual art to be conducted within their cities using Brush With the Law's services. Maneos received her Bachelors of Fine Arts Degree from Arcadia University in Glenside, PA and her Masters of Fine Arts Degree from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, PA. The Academy is where she learned not only how to draw and paint, but more importantly how to take an idea and build upon it thoroughly and effectively. In 2011, she developed, sought, and implemented an art program that took place at the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Center for Rehabilitation where participants/patients (mostly elderly) thrived to express themselves with paints, pencils, crayons, etc. This program helped raise consciousness by utilizing art as a method to help promote-memory, imagination, positive/stimulating social interaction, and self-esteem. This is partially where the idea for Brush With the Law stemmed from.

As an artist who is always looking for opportunities to help both society recognize a problem that needs addressing as well as aid in change, the vision became very clear that even in a small way her education in the arts could help redirect destructive behaviors in individuals who feel displaced in the world.

Brush With the Law is a public charity nonprofit 501 (c)3 organization and works hard to find partnerships with neighborhoods/communities, rehabilitation centers, county jails, grassroots organizations, other nonprofit organizations like churches and schools, youth aid panels, and artists to fulfill our commitment of visual integrity and the making of art to help bring people together; with great hopes to transform the divided. In the end it is the act of doing the art that helps bring people together.

The average mural on a side of a building can cost thousands of dollars and can take at least 8–10 weeks to paint. Given the exorbitant cost of painting a mural, budgetary realities and our commitment to reintegrating people with society through the making of art, we ask that you help us find places that are meaningful and require the most help for beautification both visually and metaphorically.

These murals or works of art do not only have to be outside or on a wall, they can be commissioned for interiors, for parks, on the pavement or on a floor, hanging like a chandelier using “out of the box” materials, whatever you can imagine we can figure out a way to make it happen.

Let's have fun together making things!