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Maryland GIVE Team Grant Helps Arts Nonprofit Aid Disadvantaged Youths

eBay GIVE Team member Brian Sims helped launch HeARTwares, creating arts opportunities.



Thanks largely to Maryland-based eBay GIVE Team member Brian Sims, the nonprofit organization [Art with a Heart](#) has opened a shop called HeARTwares to create economic opportunities for disadvantaged youths in Baltimore by selling their art and employing them to help run store operations. Brian is an attorney at Bill Me Later in Timonium, Md., and in his spare time serves as Treasurer and President of the Board of Directors at Art with a Heart.

Brian got involved with Art with a Heart five years ago through Business Volunteers Unlimited Maryland, which connects leaders in the Baltimore business community with nonprofits that share similar interests. When he met Randi Pupkin, the Executive Director of Art with a Heart, her mission and organization really resonated with him. He's been actively involved ever since, and in 2010, when the organization wanted to open a retail branch, he made the case for them to receive a GIVE Team grant. The team conducted a site visit

and selected Art with a Heart for a \$10,000 grant from eBay Foundation.

Because of Brian's recommendation, the grant helped launch HeARTwares, which sells one-of-a-kind jewelry, gifts, and home and garden decorations — all handmade by program participants. "The eBay Foundation grant has been hugely important because it helped to completely fund the initial buildout of the retail store," Brian said. "The GIVE Team can attest to the fact that the store started as an approximately 650-square-foot blank slate. Now it's a vibrant store with all of the style of this wonderful arts organization."

For a decade, Art with a Heart has brought visual arts classes to Baltimore residents who most need inspiration and care: battered mothers, low-income senior citizens, pregnant teenagers, the disabled, and young victims of disease, neglect, and abuse. The organization transports its supplies and staff directly to participants, conducting workshops in homeless shelters, community centers, group homes, hospitals, and schools. In addition to learning painting, pottery, and other skills, aspiring artists get creative with donated and recycled items, turning vinyl records into bar stool tops, paint can lids into coasters, and fabric scraps into placemats.

For years, Art with a Heart has sponsored a summer job training program for youths in low-income neighborhoods. Now the organization has a venue to offer year-round job-training opportunities, providing these young adults with experience in customer service, pricing, and sales, along with pride in creating and selling their own artwork. In addition, HeARTwares provides a revenue stream for Art with a Heart's community partners, and organizations including the Madison House shelter receive a portion of sales proceeds.

In 2010, the Maryland GIVE Team also awarded a grant to [Moveable Feast](#), a community organization in Baltimore that provides nutritional counseling and home delivery of free, nutritious meals to people suffering from HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening illnesses. This year, the team is planning to support Habitat for Humanity, and to volunteer with dozens of fellow employees at an annual holiday program called Adopt a Family.

To learn more about the GIVE Team program, and find out how you can get involved, visit eBay Foundation on [The Hub](#).

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