

HELP FOR GOOD

Shaun



Stark County
Board of
Developmental
Disabilities



Shaun

My name is Shaun Higgins I am 36 years old. I grew up in Baltimore, Maryland and moved to Canton when was 26. I have struggled with Bipolar Disorder for most of my life and am diagnosed with Aspergers (Autism). My diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder had caused me to have anger issues and sometimes outbursts. Throughout my adolescence and early adulthood I struggled with the disorder and at one point was sent to live in a group home because it was too hard on my family. Shortly after, when I was 29, I found the right medications, my SSA at Stark DD helped me find Silo Arts Studio, and I found good friends and my life has changed dramatically.

I have a huge support system at home - my mom, my brothers and my niece. My older brother, lives in Akron, Ohio with his family. He has always been the one who helped calm me down, he was the diffuser of outbursts early on. Mom has been a strong support even when things were really hard, she keeps me active, she is always supportive of my artwork and my friends. She teaches me how to cook and always makes sure I have everything I need and good food to eat. My niece, helps take care of my little brother every week, she has been a great support for the entire family, I love when she comes to visit.

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[Silo Arts Studio](#) has offered me lifelong friendships, great opportunities, a safe work environment, and many connections within the local Art Community. They help me to get to all my medical appointments including the appointment where I get the main medicine that helps balance my bipolar disorder. The staff at Silo helps me emotionally, physically and mentally. They help me with all my artistic pursuits and we respect each other as friends and fellow artists.

I met my best friend at Silo we have been friends now for 5 years. We can talk about artwork, we joke a lot, and we play games together. It was great to have a friend during the pandemic that I could talk to when everything was shutdown. I also met my girlfriend at Silo, we have been dating for about a year. She cheers me up, and she supports my artwork even though our tastes are dramatically different. My girlfriend and I get to see each other on the weekends, and we attend the Gallery Crawl on First Fridays in Downtown Canton Arts District.

My biggest passion is SPFX (Special effects) specifically horror and creature creations. I am a fan of the Friday the 13th movies and they influence my art. I build masks that replicate characters like Jason Voorhees from Friday the 13th and Michael Myers from Halloween. I take mold castings of the Jason mask and make my own version. For the Myers mask I use a 1975 Captain Kirk mask and do the conversion to the Myers mask, it's called "The Shape". I also do paintings as well as photo transfers, which is something I learned from a local artist in Canton. Being able to do art and pursue my passion for mask making has been a huge outlet. It keeps me focused, on task and I'm continuing to evolve as an artist and person.

In 2019 I had my very first Solo Show at [Silo Arts Studio](#) during the Gallery Crawl on First Friday in Downtown



Canton Arts District. I learned about budgeting my time and money and I worked towards a goal. I spent almost a year and half preparing for the show. I had my friends collaborate and I had about 17 masks and 4 paintings and I nearly sold out in one night. My older brother purchased one of the paintings and it's hanging in his home.

The support from the community helped promote my show, our neighbors at Arrowhead Vintage Goods, and Happy Pappy's Toy Store have become amazing friends and strong supports of not just me, but all of my friends at Silo too. Another support at Silo is our Teaching Artist, she teaches us new skills, works with us one on one, and continues to connect us to the local art community. The connection with the local art scene has helped bring awareness to what we do and help us grow as a gallery and studio space.

I am currently working towards my second solo art show, which is on October 7th, 2022. I have been working on it for almost two years, I took what I learned from my first show and applied it to new skills to make higher quality items. I plan to have photo-transfers and about 20 masks, prints, t-shirts, and other merchandise at my opening.

I would like to thank my Mother, Sharon, my brothers, Josh and Matt, my niece, Autumn, nephew Zach and my sister-in-law, Krissy for being a strong support and always being there for me.

Thank you to all the staff at Silo, Laura, Todd, Erin, Kat, and Treva for creating an environment that helps me grow as an artist and human being. Thank you to my best friend, Darick, for always being there for me. My girlfriend, Kasey for being the light of my life. Dave Sherrill, from Arrowhead Vintage, thank you for being a great friend an



awesome person in the community and treating everyone with respect. Clifton, from Happy Pappy's, thank you for being a strong supporter of my artwork and supporter of my friends. Thank you to Kat for coming to Silo and teaching us unique skills and continuing to show us how to be kind and respectful towards our fellow artists. Thank you to all the artists who have come into Silo to share your skills and knowledge, including Michelle Waalkes, who taught us about photo-transfers.

Thank you, Karen, my Service and Support Administrator (SSA) from Stark DD for helping me find Silo and continuing to help me navigate any opportunities that come my way. Finally, I would like to thank the Stark Board of DD for helping me tell my story.

From Karen Winans, Stark DD SSA:

"I knew when I met Shaun that he was eligible for a Level 1 Medicaid waiver. He uses that waiver for a variety of support. He has Vocational Habilitation (Voc Hab) services. He is working some community hours at the Silo because he has done such a good job there. He tried out some other places for voc hab and was very unhappy. He found his place through free choice of provider.



Shaun was struggling from mental health issues when I met him. It was having the waiver and having places to go that drew him out of his isolation. His mental health became much better. Shaun is using Homemaker Personal Care (HPC) services to go out with his brother, friends and his girlfriend. HPC has also helped Shaun connect with mental health services through Family Disability Services. Shaun is a completely different person since he got his waiver."

