

Volunteer Edmonton

Local artist shares passion

Evelyn Pham
Special to The Examiner

When Corey Hamilton isn't painting, photographing or writing poetry, he can be found volunteering at the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts, working with fellow artists to help them hone their skills.
"Volunteering at the Nina Haggerty Centre, that's my

favourite volunteer experience," Hamilton says emphatically.

With tattoos snaking across his skin and a self-admitted lover of punk music, this multi-disciplinary artist has been producing art for more than 10 years.

He originally came to the Centre to submit artwork to be displayed at a show and was approached by a staff member who asked if he was interested in lending

his talents as a volunteer.

"I started volunteering in November and I've liked doing it ever since," Hamilton explains.

Paul Freeman, a lead artist at the Centre, asked Hamilton to join as a volunteer because Freeman saw it as a win-win situation.

AN INSPIRATION

"He was making interesting stuff and we thought he would be good to have involved at the organization," Freeman says. "Being here and helping others can really be inspirational."

The Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts is a non-profit organization that supports individuals with developmental disabilities to become practicing artists, but Freeman also notes that the Centre is a place where a person with a developmental disability can start to shift their thinking about who they are.

"Often these individuals are given standard employment options. They think they can only do certain things. This place offers them a chance to start recognizing themselves in different ways that goes beyond their disability," he explains.

"It's a place where you can make art that matters and have an impact on how people perceive art."

Hamilton's volunteer work teaching print-making and helping two artists – a poet and a visual artist – with their craft has given him the opportunity to see how individuals with developmental disabilities grow and learn as artists.

"The people I work with seem very appreciative of what I'm doing," Hamilton notes.

Recently, Hamilton has partnered with the visual artist he mentors, Kim Hung Ho, to launch an art exhibit in March called *Uncommon Threads* that showcases both their work.

"There are narratives happening between Kim and I that you'll see in the art at the show," he says. Hamilton hopes more people will volunteer.

A MISCONCEPTION

"I think people's misconception with the Centre is that you need an art degree or know a lot about art, and that's not true," he reassures. "I like the atmosphere and the people here are cool. It's a fun place to be. I've had very few bad days here."

The *Uncommon Threads* art exhibit runs from March 4 to March 26 at the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts. Opening night starts at 7 pm with refreshments, readings and art on display.

To learn more about the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts and how to become a volunteer, visit their website at www.ninahaggertyart.ca or call 780-474-7611.

For more information or suggestions for story ideas, please contact Evelyn Pham, Communications Co-ordinator, at epham@volunteeredmonton.com, call 780-732-6655 or check out our website at www.volunteeredmonton.com. Volunteer Edmonton is a program of The Support Network.

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