



ENERGIZING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES

A Pathway to Prosperity



Source: *The West Virginia Hub*, July 16 2019, provided by [The Hub](#)

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Lincoln County Friends of the Arts promote e-commerce through Etsy workshops, *by Cynthia McComas*



The Hub’s Lincoln County-based Energizing Entrepreneurial Communities team is working to help local artists sell and market their products online.

Katie Thacker, president of the Lincoln County Friends of the Arts, collaborates with her team to sell the work of local artists at the Friends of the Arts gallery in Hamlin, WV. The artists keep 80% of the commission and 20% is donated to the nonprofit.

Now, Katie and other volunteers hope to inspire locals to expand their reach by selling their products on Etsy.

With a mini-grant secured from The Hub, Katie and other community team members planned a series of Etsy workshops to teach locals best practices for selling artwork and other handmade goods on Etsy and other e-commerce platforms. The workshops covered Etsy basics, product photography, sales and pricing, and marketing and social media.

All workshops were hosted by West Virginian artists: Kelsi Boyd of [Silver Market Co.](#), Shayla Owens of [Shayla Owens Photography](#), and Eddie Austin of [Eddie Austin Woodworks](#).

The Friends of the Arts will also manage their own Etsy page for any artists whose work is displayed in the gallery. Part of the grant funds will be used to provide Wifi to the gallery so they can maintain the Etsy page and

their marketing efforts, locals can come to the gallery to work on their Etsy listings, and the gallery will be able to accept credit card payments.

In addition to Wifi, the mini-grant funds went toward the purchase of a light box so artists may use it to take high quality product photos. Not only can locals come to the gallery to use the light box themselves with techniques they learned from the product photography workshop, but photographer Shayla Owens has taken professional-grade photos for artists who came to the gallery's Etsy Photo Sessions for those who aren't quite ready to jump into taking their own photos.

Shayla, a Lincoln County native, wants to empower rural artists to see the value in their goods. By selling online, they'll reach larger audiences, helping with making transitions to business owners than hobbyists. "The gallery's strategy to unite and display local Lincoln County artists' work in Hamlin is fantastic and puts those artists in conversation so that they can collaborate on how to best get their work out to the world," said Shayla. "Having a central online presence is going to be a huge part of that. They say word spreads quick in small towns, but word travels even faster on social media."

By encouraging entrepreneurship among artists, the Lincoln County E-Communities team is planting the seed of rural arts development in their community. "The more Lincoln County voices itself as a hub for rural artists, the more the arts community will grow and unveil itself not just to locals but to places throughout West Virginia and beyond," said Shayla.

Keep up with future workshops and all Friends of the Arts events on their [Facebook page](#).

