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# Husker alum uses art to tell veteran's story



Until Thursday, Jordan Lambrecht and Melissa Ewing had been strangers.

Now, Lambrecht is intimately familiar with Ewing's life story, having spent two days working together at Nebraska Innovation Studio to artistically represent Ewing's life and service in the United States military.

As Lambrecht sketched a rough draft, he explained how themes from Ewing's story prompted his creative process.

"Raising your hand, saying 'I'll do it,' I think, speaks to your sense of duty," he said. "And this idea of network and connection to others, I'd like to show that radiating outward, like a fabric of connection."

The final design is Ewing's outstretched hand, pointed upward, encompassed by a swirl pattern – representing positive energy and connection with others – that Ewing made herself with a Spirograph that Lambrecht provided.

It was a collaborative effort, which is how Lambrecht, a Husker alumnus and founder of Pixel Bakery Motion Studio in Lincoln, prefers to work with teammates and clients. And it parallels the mission of the organization that brought Lambrecht and Ewing together: **Has Heart**

(<https://hasheart.us>).

A veterans organization based in Michigan, Has Heart is in the midst of a [50-state tour](https://hasheart.us/projects/50states/) (<https://hasheart.us/projects/50states/>) to bring veterans and artists together to tell the stories of the men and women who have served. At each stop, they pair a veteran with a local graphic artist to create an original piece of artwork representing the veteran's life story and service to their country. The organization was founded in 2010 by Michael Hyacinthe and Tyler Way, with the belief that art had the power to heal and bring diverse people together.

"Michael and I both wanted to bridge the disconnect between the world of a veteran and the world of an artist and civilians," Way said.

Ewing said she definitely formed a connection with Lambrecht, as he was able to hone in on the traits that propelled her to join the Nebraska Army National Guard at age 32. She was deployed to Bagram, Afghanistan, in 2008.

"I am the type who wants to help, wants to serve, wants to do the good thing," Ewing, an Eagle resident, said. "It was just always in me, something I wanted to do. I got married and had children young, and so at one point I realized (that) if I don't do it now, I'll regret it."

The hand in the rendering is also intentionally open as an offer of help to all veterans who are struggling with mental illness, especially PTSD, Ewing and Lambrecht said. Ewing volunteers at the Veterans Administration in Lincoln and works with many veterans who have PTSD.

"We talked about the large number of service members who are suffering from PTSD, and it has a really negative stigma in our nation, and we want to conquer that and spread awareness," Lambrecht said.

When the artwork is finished, it will be available for purchase as a T-shirt or patch on the Has Heart website. Way and Has Heart's communications director, Kendra Clapp Olguin, are also compiling photos, blogs and videos for each project on the website and the organization's social media channels so that anyone can follow the journey.

Ewing plans to put her patch on her VA volunteer vest as a conversation starter and as a representation of her willingness to help her fellow veterans.

Nebraska marked the 30th state for Has Heart. By Oct. 18, the organization will be in Des Moines, Iowa. Once the two-year journey is complete, the 50 designs, stories and design processes also will be compiled and published into a coffee-table book and curated into a traveling art-museum exhibit. All proceeds from sales are divided among the veterans who helped create the design and with Has Heart.

by [Deann Gayman | University Communication](https://news.unl.edu/written-by/deann-gayman-university-communication/) (<https://news.unl.edu/written-by/deann-gayman-university-communication/>)

## Source

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