

How Nykia Jackson is Going from Idea to Reality

By Lorrie DeFrank



Dark times set the stage for what promises to be a bright future for artist Nykia Jackson. Creative and resourceful, she is using her talents to start a small business to help herself and others overcome mental health challenges through art and discussion.

Her ambition, ability, and dedication to her vision are so impressive that she was selected to receive a scholarship to participate in the Jacksonville Women's Business Center's Entrepreneur Certificate Program, which was perfect timing for the new entrepreneur. When Jackson learned she was among the applicants chosen, she was excited about the opportunity to gain insight and information to help get her business off the ground.

JWBC Director Annie Grogan and the rest of the ECP team were impressed by her capabilities and enthusiasm for learning. Jackson, surprised to be selected for such a competitive honor, praised Grogan for her genuine desire to help and described the entire

program as being beyond her expectations.

Through its guidance, she has begun selling her colorful and powerful originals and prints that tell stories and send messages of life's struggles and beauty. NDJ Artistry, LLC, also offers workshops that use art to heal and inspire.

Born and raised in Jacksonville, she got serious about art in third grade when the students learned about Pablo Picasso and Vincent van Gogh and were challenged to recreate the great artists' most famous pieces. In fifth grade, she auditioned and was accepted into LaVilla School of the Arts and briefly pursued a college degree in art, but, for the most part, taught herself to paint in various mediums.

"What really got me started in artistry as I am now is Covid-related," she said about the pandemic. "I had major depression and was in intensive therapy. My therapist asked me to put the emotions I was feeling into something I loved. Since then, I have been growing and expanding into more mediums and working with a lot of creative people."

Furthermore, she said she was able to use her artwork to bring awareness of mental health to the African-American community, where it was often "swept under the rug."

"When I was creating artwork in 2021, a lot of people were able to look at it and relate to where I was coming from," she said of the second year of the pandemic, when many people were suffering from depression and anxiety.

Jackson began offering workshops for children and adults where participants express their feelings through painting and talk about them with a professional facilitator. She founded Mindful Mondays, a series of art and wellness workshops where she partners with a therapist to foster mental health awareness and healing through self-reflection while providing a creative outlet. For example, the group recently collaborated on a mosaic painting representing pieces of themselves.

She has painted public murals in the garden of John Love Elementary School and on the exterior of Grounds of Grace coffee shop in Arlington. She partners with the Jacksonville Arts and Music School on student murals.

A lucky break, as she was attempting to turn her creativity into a career, was spotting an announcement for JAX Bridges, JAX Chamber's educational program for small business owners. She applied and was accepted into Cohort 22 in spring 2025. In addition to learning about the Entrepreneur Certificate Program, she said she appreciated JAX Bridges for providing a plan that really helped her map out her business. "It made me more comfortable with the idea that I had for my business. It made me more confident to structure my business as an LLC," she said.

Following the JAX Bridges training with the ECP's five courses verified that she was on the right track and helped her build a solid foundation for her business endeavor. Jackson said the most impactful course for her was Marketing Matters, where she learned to rebrand and relaunch her dated website. Proficient in social media, she still needed that platform where potential customers can view her gallery and find sales, workshop and other information.

Financial Matters was beneficial for stressing the importance of keeping business and personal financial records separate and for providing templates to keep track of cash flow and revenue.

Legal Matters made her rethink her LLC business structure and consider becoming a corporation, which has firmer guidelines. It also helped her understand contracts and ensure that her partnership contracts are clear.

Customer Development and Discovery opened her eyes to the importance of building relationships and following up with people after providing services. She anticipates the Venture Leadership class helping her be a more confident decision-maker.

"The Jacksonville Women's Business Center is great. They have a lot of opportunities not just for building your business but also for networking," she said.

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