

# Creating a *creative life*

Artist's work displayed at HART

By Jessi Stone | Guide editor

**N**ina Howard, artist, massage therapist, esthetician, entrepreneur and interior designer, has returned to Waynesville and is making her art showing return at HART Theater this month.

Howard's artwork will be on display at HART during the theater's production of "The Heiress," which runs through Nov. 3. She once had her own art gallery and studio on Church Street in downtown Waynesville until she moved away in 1994. After a very successful career in Michigan, she has returned to the mountains to slow down a bit and to pursue her first love — painting.

But before returning to her home in Jonathan Creek, Howard said she found a way to incorporate all of her passions and talents into one business. She opened a day spa in Ann Arbor, Michigan that would later become a million-dollar business.

She is the founder and currently the chief creative officer at Bellanina Day Spa, Bellanina Institute and Bellanina Guesthouses.

"With a lot of elbow grease and boot strap financing, I built a million dollar spa out of nothing," she said.

Howard was trained as an interior designer and also is a massage therapist and licensed esthetician. While developing the second location for the day spa, she purchased Belavi Institute, a spa training school, and joined it with Bellanina Day Spa.

The purchase allowed her to perform and teach an anti-aging facelift massage technique to the spa. She has since taught more than 6,000 estheticians how to use the holistic approach.

If that wasn't enough to launch her spa into greatness, she also developed her own skin care product line.



***“I finally found a way to combine all my talents — modern art, massage, skin care, interior design treatments,”***

***- Nina Howard***

In 2007, her spa was chosen by the National Day Spa Association as the Day Spa of the Year because of the unique spa/galley design.

“I combined art with the spa and came up with a unique concept,” she said. “I rotated art on the walls and people would come in and want to walk around and see the art.”

“I finally found a way to combine all my talents — modern art, massage, skin care, interior design treatments,” Howard said.

In 2011, she was ready to take a step back and enjoy her success by returning to the mountains she loves. She sold 50 percent of the company to another successful businesswoman and moved back to Haywood County. With her new position of creative officer, she still gets to travel around the country teaching other estheticians and massage therapists the Bellanina facelift massage.

But it is painting that she always comes back to — even since her early days learning interior design at F.I.T. in New York City. The freedom of painting helped her escape from the monotonous design work of drawing tiny pieces to scale all day.

“When I painted, my energy would be com-



busting from tedious design work on a drafting table,” she said. “It freed me from the constriction that my body was in all day while drawing floor plans. That’s how I balanced my creativity. If there’s a tangible connection to God — that would be it.”

In 1982 she received her first commission for Merrill Lynch’s offices in Manhattan and has continued for 34 years to produce commissioned pieces while pursuing other interests in the healing arts.

While people are always welcome to come by her art gallery and skin care studio in Jonathan Creek, the HART exhibit is the first time she has shown her work since she has been back and she couldn’t be more excited. She said it is also exciting to see how downtown Waynesville has grown since she had her studio on Church Street and participated in the second annual Church Street Art & Craft Festival.

***To make an appointment with Howard, call 734-476-0101 or email [ninahowardstudio@gmail.com](mailto:ninahowardstudio@gmail.com). For more information about her art, visit [www.ninahowardstudio.com](http://www.ninahowardstudio.com).***