Written by Erin Jerabek
Thursday, 29 March 2012 23:00

Connie Beckers, North Minneapolis native owns and operates two exciting Northside ventures, the Goddess of Glass & Friends, a retail shop that features the art of over 85 artists and The Funky Bungalow, a glass studio open for classes. The graduate of Henry Patrick High School took her first glass class in 1995; the Goddess of Glass was born shortly thereafter.

Beckers is a highly skilled award winning stain glass artist; yet, some might also call her a goddess of social marketing. Through Cash Mob Minneapolis on Facebook the Goddess of Glass, Connie Beckers' Northside retail shop was selected for the March 24th cash mob. Cash mobs are a socially conscience consumer driven marketing phenomenon used to support local businesses with a influx of cash and visibility. Individuals commit to spend $20 at a business on a specific day. Cash Mob Minneapolis has created a Facebook page and allows the public to vote and select where the next cash mob will take place.

According to Beckers, her experience "was incredible because people came from everywhere." She estimates there were about 150 people that came into her shop on Saturday; most of them hadn't been to the shop before. Her sales for the day were equivalent to a slow month of total sales. The Lowry Café, next door to the Goddess of Glass also had a fantastic day as new people stopped for a bite to eat before or after their cash mob experience. The cash mob isn't the only creative tool Connie has used to create visibility; she also uses local deal sites such as Groupon and Crowd Cut to sell classes at her studio, the Funky Bungalow. In the past year

Beckers has sold over 650 classes. The classes are small enough for students to get individual attention and everyone leaves with a piece of handmade art. Beckers uses this opportunity to teach her attendees about more than art, "98 percent of the people have never been to North Minneapolis before. So, I kinda use the power of having a captive audience to give them an education not only on glass fusing but on the community. We are not without our challenges but so is every neighborhood. I think I am having a little success." The proud Northside native chose to raise her family in North Minneapolis because it is an affordable community to purchase a home and an excellent place to raise kids, "a lot of what we see in the media is exaggerated and sensationalized."

This summer Beckers is offering another unique opportunity for artists and art lovers, NOMI Community Support Art- CSA. Instead of the traditional CSA- Community Supported Agriculture in which customers buy a share in a farm, Beckers has created a program in which art enthusiasts can purchase a "share" of North Minneapolis art and become a NOMI CSA Shareholder. Through this competitive process ten Northside artists were selected and will be given a stipend to create ten art "shares." Shareholders can purchase shares and they will receive three "shares" of art throughout the summer at events hosted by the Goddess of Glass. Shareholders will have the opportunity to meet the artists. Artists include: Bill Cottman. Angela Davis, David Hoffman, Dan Hylton, Tia Salmela Keobounphang, Valeri Luepke, Michael McGraw, Johnna Morrow, Sarah Ruehmann, and Lucy Yogerst. Mediums include: photography, sculpture, music, ceramics, poetry and much more.

Beckers has learned that running a business is both rewarding and challenging but building a network of other entrepreneurs and business owners makes the tough days more palatable. Her advice to start up businesses, you need to be "committed to the long run and understand success doesn't come over night. There are days where you have no sales and you need to prepare for the good and the bad. It is tough…wait for the rewards." Becker claims that building her small business network has contributed to her success and she will share her business and social media knowhow with just about anyone, "buy me a cup of coffee and I will tell you anything."

Apparent in her business model, which includes strict Northside hiring practices and creating opportunities for artist to gain exposure and make money, it is clear that Beckers isn't only dedicated to the success of her own businesses but increasing wealth and visibility for the entire Northside arts community. Beckers is currently looking for more Northside Artists interested in selling at her store; she is specifically looking to further diversify the collection to include more afro-centric and machismo art.

THE GODDESS OF GLASS & FRIENDS
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THE FUNKY BUNGALOW
Glass Studio
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