

## Local Artist Les Leggett Paints Obama Portrait

He knew he was drinking too much. He recognized how alcohol was impacting his life. He voluntarily entered a residential treatment center, twice. He secluded himself from his family and friends. He eventually lost his job, his home, and his self-esteem. Through it all, he never stopped drinking.

Homelessness is a humiliating experience for a man in his 60s; especially for one who holds a Bachelor Degree in Fine Arts and was employed as a professional illustrator for a number of years. Because of this humiliation, Les drank even more. He would sell his blood to buy vodka. Finally, in total despair, he drank himself unconscious and wound up in a medically-supervised alcohol detoxification facility. In spite of a well-established program for alcohol withdrawal and recovery, Les was transported to the emergency room two times due to severe complications. What normally would take a person five days to detox, took Les seventeen days. He remembers two things from his time at the detox facility. A physician advising him that if he continued to drink, he would die. And, a manager at the detox center telling him about Crossroads, a nonprofit partnership between Washoe County Social Services and Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada, which provides supportive living to those battling addiction and homelessness.

One evening the same manager woke Les and told him a bed just became available at Crossroads. He drove him over. That was 18 months ago. Les now leads three AA meetings a week at Crossroads, teaches an art class and has other administrative housing responsibilities. He also returned to his passion, illustration and painting. He painted a scene on a wall where a towel dispenser was once located in a county office as well as other small jobs. Then the unexpected occurred. The City/County needed a picture of former President Obama for the Mills Lane Justice Center. Word had gotten to the selection committee that there was a professional artist living at Crossroads. After reviewing his work, Les was hired to paint the portrait. It is his first paid job in several years.



Les Leggett is pictured with the portrait he painted for display in the Mills Lane Justice Center. Les is 18+ months sober and credits Crossroads for saving his life. Les now faces the daily challenges of life one day at a time.