

Inspiring the uninspired: Destination Dream Foundation aims to motivate youth through the arts



Artist and entrepreneur Jada Renee has fond memories of her grandparents' home on Forest Avenue in the Buckeye neighborhood. Growing up in Buckeye, Shaker Heights, and Larchmere, Jada Renee was “super creative and into everything” and went on to study applied communications at Kent State University before returning to her home neighborhoods to resume her creativity and getting into everything.

As a young Black woman living in Cleveland Jada Renee knew she wanted to make a difference through art and inspiring others. And she stresses the importance of independence—a trait Jada Renee herself exhibits and encourages every day.

Today, Jada Renee is the founder and CEO of Destination Dream Foundation, a non-profit organization focused on creating art and business programming, urban agriculture, workforce development, and mental health awareness for Cleveland youth. She is also CEO of INDI Group, a media marketing company.

While in college, Jada Renee also realized she has a good head for business. “I always knew I would do something in the arts, but I never expected it to be entrepreneurship,” she says. “I honestly never knew you could fuse art and business together until becoming an entrepreneur, which came about simply because I wanted to understand the business of being a profitable artist.”

In 2020, Jada Renee inherited her grandparents' house at 11504 Forest Ave., and she knew exactly what she wanted to do with the home they had owned since the early 1970s:

Create youth arts and business programming that addresses both neighborhood disinvestment and community trauma. Destination Dream is a one-stop route to success for the youth of the City of Cleveland. She is creating Destination Dream's INDI Art House.

Jada Renee is currently working with ioby (In Our Own Back Yards), a national crowd-funding organization with offices in Cleveland that turns grassroots neighborhood projects into realities, on a \$31,000 campaign to transform the Forest Avenue house and two adjoining vacant lots into INDI Art House—a place for after school arts education workshops, mental health programs, and entrepreneurship for at-risk youth in the Buckeye area.

“We want to specifically target youth in impoverished areas,” says Jada Renee. “My vision is to build a campus. We're training youth to understand their value and how to relate to business and how to turn creative ideas into revenue.”

Instilling business sense in the neighborhood's young people is a priority for Jada Renee, who started her first business endeavor at the age of 19. She has worked with students in the Cleveland Metropolitan and Cleveland Heights-University Heights School Districts—particularly at Harvey Rice Wraparound, Bolton Elementary, Fairfax Elementary and Roxboro Elementary—since 2016, running INDI Art Zone Workshops that promote individuality, entrepreneurship, and the arts. “I'm always in a school,” she says. “I teach about how to make a friend, do a course on marketing, or how to get funding.”

Jada Renee says she especially wants to reinforce these skills and values on the Black students in Cleveland, to make sure they know they can achieve any goal they set.

“In Cleveland, you don't really see Black entrepreneurs, you didn't really see Black industries thriving” she says. “I'm about individuality, and I can get anybody to understand their individuality and bring it out. I inspire the uninspired.”

Jada Renee's ioby project, which launched in April and runs through December 18, involves the first phase of transforming the house into an arts education space. Additionally, Jada Renee is working with the Cuyahoga Land Bank to acquire the two vacant lots on either side of the property she owns.

Inspiring the uninspired: Destination Dream Foundation aims to motivate youth through the arts (continued)



“We will be educating the youth on entrepreneurship, community development, urban entrepreneurship, and art education, along with providing a safe space to create art, produce music, and promote their art,” she says of her vision. “These efforts will work so help the youth understand the value of themselves and the value of their artistry and talents which will in turn give them the confidence they need to attract the lives that they want to live.”

The house exterior has already been painted, with help from the Cleveland Paint Program, and Jada Renee and her team are in the process of painting the interior. “Once the inside of the property is painted white, we will have a local artist call for Cleveland artists to come and paint the walls to start to create the theme of the Art House,” she says.

A community block party is planned for June to promote the ioby campaign, Jada Renee says, followed by a community cleanup even in July and September. Other events are planned through the end of the year (when the ioby campaign ends), to bring awareness to the project and the vision.

The campaign so far has raised about \$700 toward the \$31,000 goal. There are various gifts given for each of the five donation levels, ranging from stickers to tickets to the Art House grand opening gala.

Additionally, Cuyahoga Arts & Culture will match donations, up to \$3,000 through the ioby/Cuyahoga Arts & Culture Match Fund.

Jada Renee says she first realized her love for combining the arts, business, and nonprofit work when she took a business and humanitarian trip with an Atlanta nonprofit foundation to South Africa and Botswana when she was a sophomore at Kent in 2019.

While there, she learned marketing basics and how to write a business plan.

“I began brainstorming my ideas and my business idea for the brand INDI Media came alive,” she says. “I wanted to create a platform for local independent artists to have the education and opportunity to understand the business side of the arts while having the opportunity to showcase their talents and make a profit.”

She launched her brand upon returning to Kent State and began working after graduation with LAND studio and Mt. Pleasant NOW Development Corporation, doing community development work in Buckeye.

Once she found her calling, Jada Renee never looked back. LAND studio project manager David Wilson says he knew right away that Jada Renee was a positive force when she responded to a call for artists for the Inner City Hues program.

“Quickly she became instrumental in developing marketing and artwork for that program,” Wilson recalls. “It was apparent from the outset that her energy, passion, and drive really come through. It’s really inspiring to see her energy and drive.”

Wilson says he has no doubt that Jada Renee’s INDI Art House project will be an asset to the Buckeye neighborhood, and she will meet her \$31,000 ioby goal.

“She’s a visionary,” he says. “She puts in the work, and she has the drive to see it through. [Her project] is about envisioning a future that embraces the artist in all of us. Her positivity and personality come through in so many ways—she connects with youth in ways that are so exciting, and I think it’s important and necessary to keep that vision and drive going.”