

# Turning hardship into harmony

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GREENSBORO, N.C. -- Hardship is turning into harmony for people who have faced homelessness in Greensboro.

Since January, students and faculty at Greensboro College have been working with local musicians to tell the stories of clients at the Interactive Resource Center.

Together they have written and composed Blues songs under The Healing Blues Project.

"For one, the Blues allows them to speak about it, to put it in an art form and kind of release some of it. For another, it brings awareness. It brings awareness of the stories of these people who are kind of faceless standing on a street corner," said Ted Efremoff, assistant professor of Art at Greensboro College and one of the leaders of the project.

Shannon Stewart is one of the 13 clients who participated, and in true Blues fashion; his story is one of hardship.

"I was one of the guys who aged out of foster care. I was in foster care from like seven or eight until I was 19," he said.

He was in foster care after his mother lost a custody battle. He went to live with his father.

"He won, but the fight for him was I can't maintain the kids. I remember him sitting in the car after DSS picked us up. He just cried because he couldn't maintain what he set out to do. That's probably the hardest part," Stewart said.

Through his personal adversity came art. The song the musicians wrote and composed is track number nine on The Healing Blues album titled "Walking."

The project gives Stewart a feeling of accomplishment that despite his situation, he didn't seek pity.

"It's something I can always listen to, even when I'm feeling down," he said.

There will be a CD release and celebration concert on Oct. 5 from 4 to 6 p.m. at Greensboro College's Huggins Auditorium. Proceeds will benefit the Interactive Resource Center and the individual storytellers.

Stewart is looking forward to the celebration.

"You hear it all the time in rap, oh the album release party, Puffy or whoever, and to have one of your own is like, wow this is going to be cool and they are going to do my song."

