

Art therapy helps one woman with MS thrive



My work became a tool to help me survive and thrive.

by Heather Wolfe

When I was first diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in March 2015, I was terrified. At the time, my life was a perfect storm of stress — surviving a horrific trauma, a devastating divorce and now MS. The emotional and physical healing experience has been a long journey that I am still on today. I am grateful for my progress and for the tools that helped me survive and thrive. One of those tools was art therapy.



Heather Wolfe first started her business by doing custom pet portraits based on her clients' photos.

Having been an artist my whole life, using art as a therapy tool was a natural transition. I started my business, Heather Wolfe Art, doing custom pet portraits based on my clients' photos. The pet portraits were collages made from mixed media using handmade papers from all over the world with textures, patterns and paint. As the business grew, I was selected as a featured artist and vendor at the Westminster Dog Show in New York City and the National Dog Show in Philadelphia. This catapulted my professional career to full time, painting hundreds of portraits of champion dogs from across the world in addition to many other animals — even a therapy llama.

A few years ago, I expanded my portfolio to include live wedding paintings, where I paint the event on location as it is happening. I also do custom commission paintings of all subjects from clients' photographs of life events.

I love helping my clients commemorate their celebrations of life and honor the memories with an everlasting keepsake to hang in their home. Getting to support others and show up for them in these heartfelt moments gives me a sense of purpose and joy.

My experience taught me that beauty could coexist with hardship. We cannot avoid pain, and

we may not always have answers. We can let the struggle season our character instead of control our lives. I work to choose joy daily. When I suffer, I want to suffer well. Yes, I have MS, but it doesn't define me. I am so much more than that. I am an artist, an encourager, a wife and a mother of my first child.

Heather Wolfe lives with her husband and child in East Tennessee. She's an avid gardener and loves to create bouquets for her friends and family.

See more of Heather Wolfe's artwork on [her website](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).