

# Metro

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## Fest, artists share space

Bart Herre, Aron Conaway and other artists have exhibit space in Portland. **B3**

Neighborhoods **B3**

Kentucky, Region **B4**

Deaths **B6, 7**

Weather **B8**

**B**

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**THURSDAY**

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# Festival shares space with group of artists

## Portland building is a former church

By Sheryl Edelen  
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The Courier-Journal

A group of local artists is using an old church building in the Portland neighborhood as the new home for its special events.

Members of the Louisville Assembly of Vanguard Artists, or LAVA, have studios in a 134-year-old warehouse at 927 Shelby Parkway in Germantown.

They also held public events there, including art exhibits and concerts, before July, when fire officials told them that the warehouse wasn't suitable for public gatherings.

Aron Conaway, who co-founded LAVA in 2001 with fellow artist Bart Herre, said the group then struck a deal with the Portland Family Reunion Festival Committee allowing it to use the committee's headquarters at 3329 Northwestern Parkway for exhibits, parties and concerts.

The Portland Festival is a week-long neighborhood event rooted in families, history and tradition that has been held annually since 1974. Scores of Portland natives return to the area each year for the event.

The group's 7,500-square-foot building, which dates to 1863, was owned by Parkway United Methodist Church until last year, when the Portland festival committee purchased it for \$92,000.

Conaway said the LAVA artists learned from John Owen, a board member of neighborhood advocacy



Aron Conaway, seated, and Bart Herre co-founded the Louisville Assembly of Vanguard Artists. Their group is sharing the Portland Family Reunion Festival Committee's building; its second floor is shown here. Instead of rent, the artist group pays the festival committee a percentage of its proceeds from fund-raising events that the group holds there.

By Keith Williams, The Courier-Journal

group Portland NOW, that the building was available.

"It was a large space, and we've always attracted a large amount of people," Conaway said.

"We're excited to be able to work in that kind of environment because it's not sleek. It's got a nostalgic feeling about it."

Instead of rent, LAVA pays the festival committee a percentage of its proceeds from fund-raising events that the group holds there.

The committee received \$900 from LAVA's first event, a Halloween party.

LAVA members hold events to

cover shared expenses, including tools and equipment.

They are currently saving to buy a \$2,000 DVD video projector.

The group, which has about a dozen members, aspires to create art that includes elements of social awareness.

Festival committee chairman Herb Brodarick said he and other committee members are pleased with their arrangement with LAVA.

But they initially were concerned, he said, that the artists' events might draw complaints from neighbors.

Brodarick said the group's Hallo-

ween party, which featured artwork and bands and attracted more than 600 people, didn't result in any complaints from nearby residents about noise or nuisances.

After the event, LAVA members cleaned outside, picking up trash from neighbors' yards whether or not it was left by people who attended their party.

"They turned out to be a really peaceful group that appreciated having a place where they could go and use without being hassled," Brodarick said.