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**LOCAL ARTIST WINS WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEUR AWARD AND OPENS
BOUTIQUE ART GALLERY IN SILVER SPRING**

Silver Spring, MD - Artist and entrepreneur Brenda Smoak has transformed a long-time dream into reality with the February 12th Grand Opening of Alchemy at 8025 Georgia Avenue.

A retail store and gallery featuring over 25 local artists and global entrepreneurs, Alchemy offers eclectic art, fine crafts and home furnishings at enchanting prices.

In Ms. Smoak's words, "I chose the name Alchemy because of my fascination with medieval times when scientists toiled to transform base metals into gold. The process to find that panacea is similar to the quest that artists undertake when creating their work. All of us search for that alchemical key; it's one of the noblest paths one undertakes when creating art."

Walking into Alchemy is like stepping in from the monochromatic cold of the northeast winter into the warm glow of an Ali Baba cave of treasures. The walls are covered with original paintings and photography and the scent of handmade soaps pique the air as the natural light from storefront windows catches the glint of handmade jewelry, silk purses and crystals. With woolen rugs to walk upon and Pashmina shawls to wrap around your shoulders, you can take your time exploring a surprisingly varied array of textiles, furniture, jewelry, hand-blown glass, pottery, sculpture, and body care products.

Ms. Smoak is committed to serving the local community and has purposely sought out local business support for her insurance and security needs. She believes in synchronicity and, inspired by the overwhelming support she has received.

Ms. Smoak is using Alchemy to introduce local businesses and community leaders to a unique approach to fundraising: Alchemy brings 10-20 artists to your venue to sell their work and then makes a donation from the proceeds to your organization. Additionally, restaurants and businesses can preview work at Alchemy and request artist's work to be shown in their establishment free of charge. And, lastly, with an eye towards spring, Alchemy will host weekend outdoor artist and vendor markets at Georgia and Stoddard Streets during the warm months.

Ms. Smoak was one of 30 applicants selected, out of 700 who applied, to participate in an intensive 8-week program sponsored by Women Entrepreneurs of Baltimore (WEB). The WEB program is designed to help people who have new and viable business ideas turn them into successful businesses by providing sound advice and mentoring. Upon completion, March 3rd, Ms. Smoak will graduate with a business plan to carry Alchemy through the next 5 years.

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