



# The Sewing Labs



2019  
Annual Report

# Stories *Sewn* with Success



## Sewing Makes Our Hearts Sing

In 2009, Khalid & Fatin, a married couple, emigrated from their war-torn country of Iraq to the United States. They were both highly educated individuals in Iraq, however those degrees did not transfer to the US. They finally found the *Don Bosco Center* and enrolled in the English as a Second Language course. As part of that ESL course, they were able to enroll in *The Sewing Labs'* Sewing as a Universal Language program. In the process of learning to sew, Khalid & Fatin tapped into and allowed their left brains to flourish. Fatin said they were focused on their lives in the right brain functions of math, science and engineering, however it was no longer fulfilling since they couldn't be employed with those skills. After graduating from the sewing program at *TSL*, Khalid & Fatin set up a small sewing studio in the basement of their home. They are now focusing on garment construction and speak of the sheer joy and happiness they now have in their lives thanks to their newly developed skill of sewing. "Sewing makes our hearts sing," Fatin says of their experience with *The Sewing Labs*. "Because of *The Sewing Labs*, we have visited employers in the Kansas City area who are actively seeking people like us; people who have been trained on the machines these businesses use. Thanks to *The Sewing Labs*, we now have many ideas of items we can sew and sell, putting us in the business of being entrepreneurs. That is our American dream."

## Loves to Sew

As a young girl, Ina's mother and grandmother both tried to teach her to sew, but she had no desire to learn. Ina was too busy having fun running and playing outdoors. She took a workshop at *The Sewing Labs*, where she discovered a new love of sewing, and became dedicated to this newly learned art. Ina began attending Open Sew twice a week at *TSL*. Ina is drawn to the fine, sturdy interior fabrics that are donated by *Weave Gotcha Covered* and has begun sewing sturdy, lined tote bags. Realizing she is on a path to entrepreneurship, Ina has started building an inventory of these totes calling them, "Ina's Haul-Around Bags" and has started selling them, most often donating any profits right back to *The Sewing Labs*. "This way they can buy more thread and supplies as needed, so I can keep sewing along," Ina says. Ina's passion to learn to sew is blossoming—she recently picked out a garment pattern and is now learning to use a serger. Ina shares that, "I am having so much fun sewing now as an adult; I didn't know what I was missing! I am proof that it is never too late to learn." Ina is also a dedicated volunteer with *The Sewing Labs*, often leading Open Sew sessions twice a week.



# Message from the Executive Director

## 2019 QUICK FACTS



**119**

students participated in  
*TSL* classes or workshops

TOTALING



**3333**  
HOURS

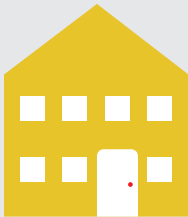


Our partnership with  
The Climate Council of  
Greater Kansas City begins

**2,438**

hours of time and  
talent were put in by

**70**  
volunteers

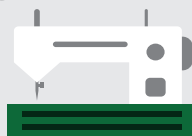


*TSL* prepares to move to the Community Center. A space of

**4,000**  
square feet

THE SEWING SALON  
entrepreneurial program is launched

& part-time  
**two** sewing  
instructors  
are hired.



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What an incredible year! In 2019, more than 119 students participated in classes or workshops at *The Sewing Labs*, for a total of 3333 classroom hours. Some of these students achieved certifications in sewing toward employment, while others gained important sewing skills. We achieved many milestones in 2019, including hiring our first full-time Executive Director and Operations Manager, launched our new Sewing Salon entrepreneurial program (allowing us to hire two part-time sewing instructors) and, in our continued effort to be sustainable, we entered into a partnership with The Climate Council of Greater Kansas City to mutually raise awareness about slow fashion, encourage recycling, upcycling and re-purposing of fabric, notions and sewing machines to better our environment.

*The Sewing Labs* began in 2016 and received our 501(c)3 status in 2018. We are now bursting at the seams as we have outgrown our current 900 square feet space. In 2019 we signed a lease to move into our new, expanded space with our non-profit partner, *Don Bosco Centers*, whose ESL students we teach in our Sewing as a Universal Language certification program. Our move into 4000 square feet of space in their newly renovated *Community Center* in the Columbus Park neighborhood of Kansas City should be complete in May of 2020.

During 2019, 70 volunteers donated 2483 hours of their time and talent to *The Sewing Labs'* community. We are incredibly grateful for all our volunteers and their commitment to our success. Our volunteers keep the heart of *The Sewing Labs* beating. Thank you, volunteers!

As we move into our third full year of classes, we are ever more cognizant of the uplifting community that allows *The Sewing Labs* to successfully operate our programs. The students of *The Sewing Labs* continue to experience barriers being removed and connections made to employers actively seeking trained sewists. Many of our students have also realized the opportunities in front of them to become entrepreneurs with their newly learned skill of sewing.

In kindness,

**Eileen Bobowski**

*Executive Director*

*The Sewing Labs*  
1305 E 27th Street  
Kansas City, MO 64108

# Mission Statement

To inspire hope in populations of women marginalized by generational poverty, addiction, and/or incarceration, through jobs training, creative sewing arts, and networking. Our motto is “Inspire, Create, Thrive”.

## Program Information

*The Sewing Labs* teaches sewing skills as a pathway out of poverty and toward employment and entrepreneurship for those struggling with at-risk situations. Classes are designed to accommodate the specific needs of our participants and to meet one or more of the tri-fold mission:

- 1.** Provide job skills training in fabric, textile, and sewing related occupations.
- 2.** Promote and support interest in creative skills relating to sewing, fabric, fiber and textile arts.
- 3.** Formation of safe, supportive, nurturing community by engaging the wider Kansas City community in volunteer and mentor roles.

Classes teach legacy sewing arts to foster economic self-sufficiency and develop connections in a supportive community. Skills are taught related to garment design and construction, alterations, industrial applications, and entrepreneurial applications such as cut-and-sew operations, accessory design and fabrication, quilting, crocheting, knitting, needlepoint, and other artistic expressions.

# Student Services

*The Sewing Labs* define "directly served" as the number of people availing themselves of the classes and community activity opportunities.

We provided over

3333

HOURS



of classroom instruction to

&

115

individual students



Three

and

volunteer teachers



78

volunteers

2483 hours

to provide this training, a significant increase over 2018.



# Curriculum

In 2019, *The Sewing Labs* hired Robert Lackie, Classroom Teacher and Art Therapist to the staff. Robert's experience has allowed *The Sewing Labs* to improve the documentation and implementation of structured lessons with the goal of attaining full accreditation. In addition, Robert's experience as a licensed Art Therapist, allows us to better support at-risk students through even greater understanding and compassion.

Additionally, *The Sewing Labs* hired Cali Roberta Cox, Classroom Teacher and Production Manager to the staff. Cali Roberta's experience in design and manufacturing allows *The Sewing Labs* to build and improve job placement outcomes for our students. Her understanding of real-world jobs in the sewing industry gives *The Sewing Labs* a foundation to fully implement the Sewing Salon project in 2020. These staff additions along with our Operations Manager, Linnea Stevens, provide a well-rounded curriculum that supports the mission of job-skills training and community connection through the legacy of sewing.

Workshops, classes, lectures and retreats were offered throughout 2019 covering the fundamentals in sewing for jobs and self-sufficiency. These events included: Sewing Machine Operations - Domestic and Industrial, Sewing Basics, Garment Construction and Serger Operations, Quilting, Cosplay Costuming, Kid's Camp and "Sewcial Justice" projects.

## Community Relationships

*The Sewing Labs* continues to provide tours and opportunities for community organizations to come visit and learn more about the services and classes provided. We continue to receive inquiries from interested individuals who return to donate goods, time and talent. We are cultivating relationships with business sewists who provide opportunities for program participants to see and experience real job opportunities for our graduates.





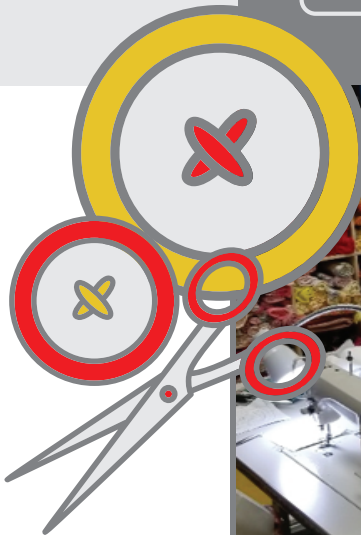
## Don Bosco

*The Sewing Labs continued our partnership with Don Bosco in 2019.*

# of sessions  **1 to 3**  
in 2018 in 2019

Each session averaged

 **10 weeks**  
of training



## Maker Faire

*The Sewing Labs* participated in Maker Faire again in 2019, held at Union Station. We showed up at this “show and tell” celebration of creativity with a fully functional sewing booth and volunteers who taught both adults and kids to make a quilt blocks, create a make and take, or to donate to the *Community* quilt. Many blocks were dedicated in memory of others.

## KC Midwest Regional Quilt Guild

*The Sewing Labs* was a co-participant in the semi-annual regional quilt festival at the Overland Park Regional Quilt festival. This festival is operated by the 25 regional quilt guilds and proceeds from the mini-quilt auction was split between *The Sewing Labs* and another organization.

## Workshops

Several workshops were held at *The Sewing Labs* in 2019, with the goal of either deepening a skill set, or inviting members of the greater Kansas City community to become involved in the activities of *The Sewing Labs*. These workshops bring new faces into the mix and broaden the social capital exchange among our students, volunteers, and the community.



# 4th Annual Gratitude & Grace Quilt Retreat

The fourth annual quilt retreat was well attended by 13 enthusiastic quilters eager to learn new techniques. This is an annual event scheduled for the last weekend of July. Our non-profit partners at Amethyst Place hosted this retreat once again.

## Community Projects

Again, this year *The Sewing Labs* volunteers and community members engaged in numerous community projects. We made over 400 Christmas pillowcases in time to deliver to three local nursing homes for the holiday season!

### Workshop Examples

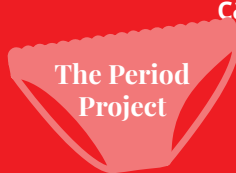
#### The Pillow Case Project



pillow cases were created & donated to 3 local senior centers

#### The Sewcial Justice Project

taps into *TSL* sewing & supporting causes such as



The Period Project



Project Warmth

Costuming for Nerds  
cosplay workshop

#### Kids Sewing Camp



& 3 seasonal  
quilt workshops



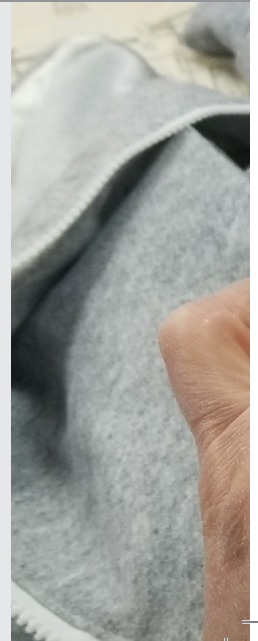
# Strategic Partnerships

We have strategic partnerships and collaborations with a variety of community organizations, including the following:

- American Sewing Girls
- Amethyst Place
- Clara Manor
- Climate Council of Greater Kansas City
- Don Bosco Centers
- Hillcrest Ministries
- Independence School District
- KC Athenaeum
- KC Credit Union
- KC Regional Quilt Guilds
- KC Social Media Club
- Maker Faire
- Meyer Nursing Home
- Missouri Sewing Machine Company
- Missouri Star Quilt Company
- MLK Senior Group
- Nighttime Needlers Quilt Guild
- Northland Quilt Guild
- Once We Were Refugees
- Operation Breakthrough
- Sewcial Justice
- Stitching Change
- Summit Nursing Home
- Veronica's Voice
- Weave Gotcha Covered
- Wyandotte Center

Business  
Partnerships

Key  
Supporters



- ACB Bikini
- Fabric Quilt
- KC Sewing Company
- Knit Rite
- Maverick Sound Solutions
- Temper-Sealy Mattress
- Weave Gotcha Covered
- Women Spirit-Sacred Stitches

- Curry Family Foundation
- Don Bosco Center
- Ewing Marion Kauffmann Foundation
- JE Dunn Family Foundation
- Kansas City Athenaeum
- Kansas City Regional Quilt Festival
- Liberty Sertoma
- Sunderland Foundation
- Weave Gotcha Covered



## Tax Status

*The Sewing Labs* received our determination letter approving our 501(c)(3) status in May of 2018 and this may be viewed on our website.

## Funding

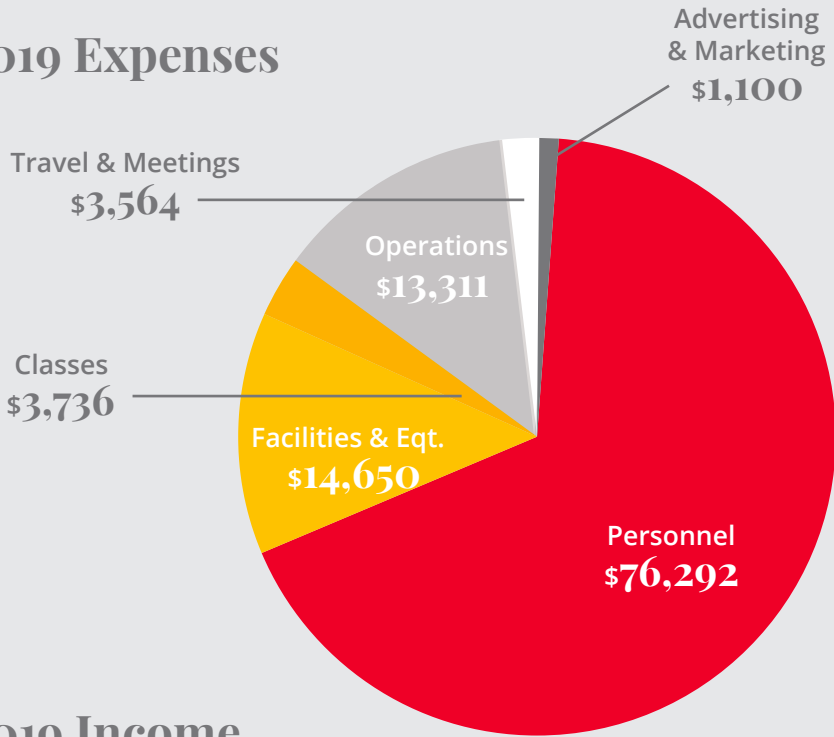
In 2019, we received an increased number of private donations, with a single donor contribution of \$100,000 and were awarded other significant grants as well. Our Operations Manager became a full-time employee and we hired a full-time Executive Director, along with two part-time teachers. Significant grants include funding from The Curry Family Foundation, The Kauffman Foundation in support of The Sewing Salon entrepreneurial program, The Sunderland Foundation in support of brick and mortar construction of the new space at the renovated *Don Bosco Community Center*.

*The Sewing Labs* continues to develop 'grass roots' soft fundraisers that connect us more intimately with the community. These fundraising initiatives include; Facebook, Amazon Smile and PayPal Giving. Our most popular soft fundraiser continues to be the Fabric Grab, which is now held two times per year. The Fabric Grab brings in additional income, builds our presence and connects us to the greater community.

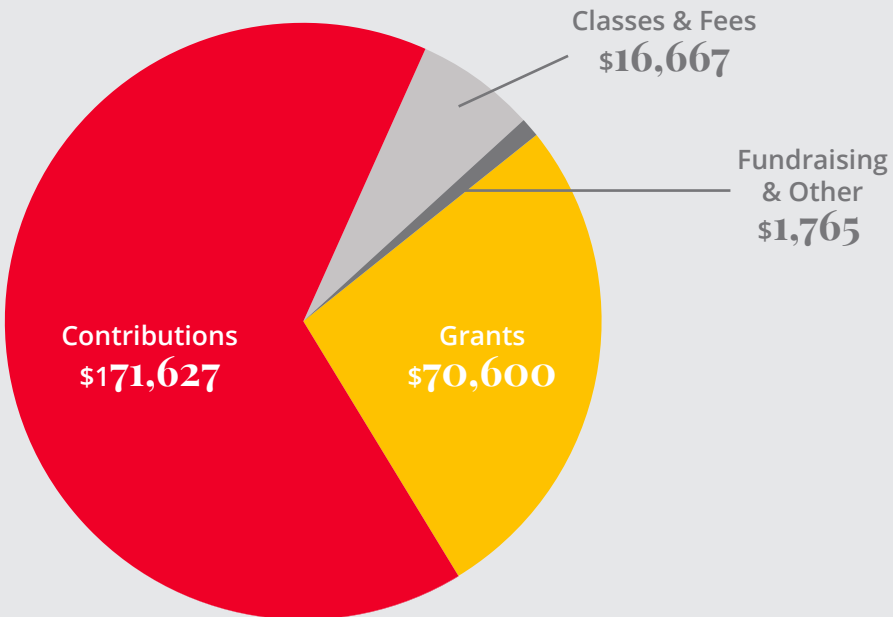


# 2019 Financials (unaudited)

## 2019 Expenses



## 2019 Income



## Assets

### Current Assets

Total Cash	268,150.00
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Total Other Current Assets	945.00
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Total Current Assets	269,095.00
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Fixed Assets	8,421.00
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<i>Total Assets</i>	<u><u>\$277,516.00</u></u>
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## Liabilities & Equity

### Equity

Total Equity	277,516.00
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<i>Total Liabilities &amp; Equity</i>	<u><u>\$277,516.00</u></u>
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*\*As of December 31,2019*



# 2019 Board of Directors

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**Eileen Bobowski, BFA**  
*Executive Director*

**Kris Smither, MEd**

**Kelly Wilson, BA**

**Kriss Miller, Artist**

**Nancy Petersen, BS**

**Barbara Hadley, B.S.**  
*Board President*

# 2020 Goals



Successfully move to a new location



Engage a volunteer coordinator

Build a network of community members through monthly

**‘Downtown Sewcials’**



## Fundraising

- Develop a robust grant writing program, quarterly donor newsletter
- Develop fundraisers that cultivate relationships.
- Purchase and implement donor database program

Develop *The Sewing Salon*

8 a.m. to 8 p.m.  
Tuesday

through Saturday program,  
*with more hours if possible.*



Maintain **two** part-time  
**teachers** after the  
Kauffman Grant terminates

Develop our partnership  
with strategic alliances:

Veterans  
Vocational/Missouri Rehab  
Formerly Incarcerated

- Develop multiple stories usable for telling the *TSL* story
- Generate sufficient funding to meet our expenses.
- Continue the existing programs and build on their successes



# The Sewing Labs

Create. Inspire. Thrive.

*The Sewing Labs*  
526 Campbell,  
Kansas City, MO 64106

*[www.TheSewingLabs.community](http://www.TheSewingLabs.community)*