



Our Mission

The Sewing Labs is an inclusive and welcoming community teaching the legacy of sewing for employment, entrepreneurship, and enrichment.

You can now find us online at [thesewinglabs.org!](https://thesewinglabs.org)

Save the Date

The annual Make'nHERstory Gala is coming soon. Mark your calendar to save the evening of August 18. Reserve your seat at the table today!

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

The Sewing Labs pursues all avenues to empower individuals with sewing skills for economic self-sufficiency. Multiple pathways help meet each student's needs, from those looking at entrepreneurship to a more traditional path, we have options tailored for each.

Our entrepreneurship program is an opportunity to work alongside professionals, honing sewing skills and learning the ins-and-outs of a successful sewing business. Our mentors provide individualized support, guiding students to develop their skills with the confidence to launch a business and succeed in the competitive world of entrepreneurship.

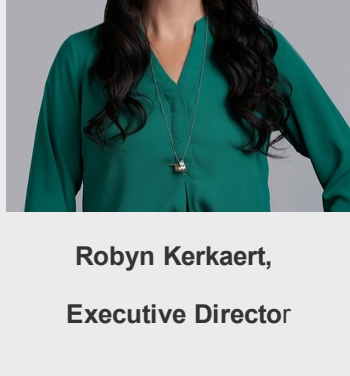
Through our registered apprenticeship program, they train intensively on the job with experienced professionals, as well as classroom instruction. Apprentices earn while they learn, providing them with financial stability as they work towards career goals.

We are proud to be part of the larger registered apprenticeship movement, which expands access to quality training and creates new pathways to economic opportunity. Our apprenticeship program is just one of the many ways we provide a brighter future for our trainees and their communities.

Thank you for your continued support of our organization and our important mission.

Sincerely,

Robyn Kerkaert, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, CCEP, CHPC



**Robyn Kerkaert,
Executive Director**



Image Courtesy *The Pitch*

Meet Strawberry Swing's Katie Mabry van Dieren

Make'n Her Story 2023 Honorary Chair

If you live in Kansas City, you might be familiar with Strawberry Swing, a local craft fair featuring small businesses and independent artists. The woman behind it all is Katie Mabry van Dieren.

Today, Mabry van Dieren is well-known as a creative powerhouse and business leader, but she didn't start out that way.

"I was thinking of going to law school and was a paralegal," she said. "I had my first baby in 2011, and I just started creating little baby things for him like onesies."

People loved the items, so she began selling on Etsy. Soon after, she and her friend Heather started Strawberry Swing as a way for KC Etsy sellers to connect. Heather moved away, leaving her to take Strawberry Swings to new heights.

"I told her, I'm gonna grow this thing," she said. "I quit my job as a paralegal and went full force into [Strawberry Swing]."

Since she started the craft fair, Mabry van Dieren has taken on many other projects. She started Shop Local KC when COVID-19 hit. The idea was to give creators a curated, online platform to sell their goods during the pandemic, when people were staying inside rather than attending events full of people.

At the same time, craft shows were moving outdoors to meet safety requirements, and flowers were perfect to sell outdoors. So, she started the shop as a retail gift and flower shop as well as an online store. She also became involved in the Troost Market Collective and other nonprofits.

In fact, Mabry van Dieren's enthusiasm for non-profits is what led her to the Sewing Labs. Mabry van Dieren is the co-founder of Troost Market Collective, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a mission of creating equitable economic opportunity for creative entrepreneurs, inspiring future generations through innovative partnerships and program.*

"The Sewing Lab's mission and vision is just so near and dear to my heart. I love to help non-profits that align with the mission I truly believe in, which is raising that barrier to entry to become a maker or creator," said Mabry van Dieren.

*Corrected from earlier version

Surge to Serve

Do you have an eye for décor? An interest in crafting? We need volunteers for the decorating committee for the Gala on August 18. Now is the time to help plan!

The annual Gala Gift is also in the works. We need volunteers to assemble kits for this year's gift. Once assembled, volunteers can pick up kits of ten to sew. Or stitch them up on Open Sew Fridays. Will you help?

Centerpiece Contest

This year, The Sewing Labs will hold a competition for the Gala's table centerpieces. These will be constructed on a miniature dress form and embellishments may be anything you choose—feathers, fabrics, flowers! Bring your creative skills to this challenge. Some materials may be available at TSL, but you may add whatever catches your eye. The prize is \$250; the winner will be determined at the Gala.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Highlighting our Students and Supporters

Volunteer Spotlight: Holly Gray

Holly Gray became interested in The Sewing Labs after seeing it on TV during the mask-making in the early part of the pandemic. She soon applied and completed the orientation online, but it was a while before she came in. Once she did, she was immediately sold by "the welcome, the inclusion of people, both who had a lot and who didn't have a lot."

It reminded her of the Madison Area Technical College she attended near where she grew up in Wisconsin and the workshops she learned in. She studied *Clothing Services* and *Clothing and Textiles*, completing both programs.

Fabrics and what to do with them has been in her blood since she was young. "Mom made me wait till I was 10 to sew on a machine," she said, "but by the time I was in high school, I was making extra money by sewing dresses for Mom's friends to wear to work."

In her classes at the college, she studied all aspects of fibers: drapery, tailoring, fitting, garment construction, and pattern making. "We made drapes, some industrial, some production. And since I had extra time, I learned upholstery as well."

There was even a class requiring students to design and screen print their own fabric, enough to make a garment. So she did that, too. Hers was a long skirt with sweeping gores. "It was stylin'!" She smiled, remembering.

For years afterwards, she did men's, women's and bridal alterations for a living, and also worked in a sewing machine shop where she learned a good deal about how the machines function. Nowadays, she and like-minded friends go on a quilt retreat for a week in spring and fall — a divine escape.

Fearless of any project involving textiles, Gray's newest project is a new ironing board cover to replace an old stained one at TSL. For several months, it has been Cali's assistant in the Salon classes. "I like being with the students; it reminds me of where I came from [at the tech school]," she said.

Her days learning about fabrics are the fondest of memories. "I really consider my skill a gift, innate. You learn things, of course. But this—it's a wonderful thing!"

Plan Ahead

The Kansas City Regional Quilt Festival is coming up. It will be held on June 15 – 17 at the Overland Park Quilt Center. Go to see the quilts and leave with your imagination fired up.

Also, Robert Lackie will teach TSL classes June 8, 15, Making a BBQ Apron/Hot Pad, and June 13, 20 Home Décor Pillows.

Did You Know...

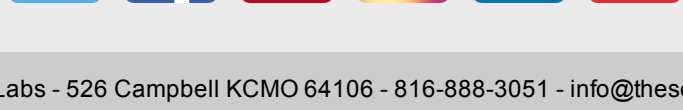
Sew What Now?

This month's question is, "Why is the thread breaking?" First, look at the thread. There are a few things you'll want to check.

- Is the thread old?
- Has it been stored properly (out of light—sun or electric)? Is it the right weight for the project and for the fabric?
- Are you using the correct needle size?

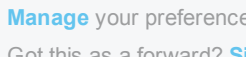
If you check any of those boxes, rethread and check the tension on your machine. It may need to be adjusted. Next time, we'll take a look at thread tension.

[Donate here](#)



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