



**May 2023**



**Our Mission**

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

**Message from the Executive Director**

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we approach Mother's Day, I'm filled with gratitude for the strong and loving women in my life. Their guidance and

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At The Sewing Labs, we're dedicated to empowering our community through the skilled trade and art of sewing. We believe that the skills learned through sewing can not only provide a creative outlet but also help gain financial independence.

This Mother's Day, I encourage you to think about the important women in your life, whether it's your mother, grandmother, or any other maternal figure. Take a moment to thank them for their love and support.

And if you're looking for a unique way to show your appreciation, consider giving the gift of sewing. Our organization offers a variety of classes and workshops for all ages and skill levels.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission to empower women through sewing. Wishing you and your loved ones a happy Mother's Day.

Sincerely,

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



**Robyn Kerkaert,  
Executive Director**



## What Did Your Mother Tell You?

Many of us who sew today grew up seeing our mothers and grandmothers sew, quilting with scraps or making clothing for the family, of having the necessities and making do. Here are a few remembrances of those strong, wise, enduring women.

Linna, Operations Manager: I must have been 5 or 6 and I sewed with my grandmother; we made quilts out of scraps left from making clothes. I remember we

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the quilts. My grandmother loved to sew; she made clothes and then embroidered them. She was a natural. The first thing my mother taught me was a gathered skirt. And then after that, I just sewed, learned as I went.

Cali, Instructor: My mother remembered my grandma making her rip out zippers all the time. My grandma made dresses, really beautiful ones, and I would look at all the details, seams, bows, everything. She must have made them for accordion recitals, but I got to wear them to dances. My mom was phenomenal at taking a pattern and making it fit. And she let me *be creative*.

Robert, Instructor: My grandmother was going blind but kept sewing. She used an old treadle machine and could tell by feel where the stitches were. Even after she was blind, she taught me to hand sew using the width of my fingernail as a spacer to keep the stitches even.

Mark, Student: My mother was all about doing it yourself. If I didn't know something, she made me look it up. Same with sewing. I asked her to mend something, and she said to do it myself, and she would help me correct the errors.

Opal, Volunteer Coordinator: My mom was willing to let me learn the hard way about fabric nap. I made a pair of corduroy pants and said, "why are the legs different colors?" She didn't want to stifle my learning so she'd just cut me loose and then teach me whatever I needed. And anything she tried, I tried—macrame, crochet, whatever.

Celeste, Volunteer: my grandmother taught me to make doll clothes for a Madame Alexander doll I could play with twice a year. We fashioned a tiny couture wardrobe. My mother sewed tailored suits for herself and clothes for five kids. She made costumes and dance and ice-skating outfits. She was all about the details. She would say, "You don't want to be mediocre, do you?"



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Highlighting our Students and Supporters

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## Meet Board Member Christian Micheal Shuster!

Fifteen years ago, Christian Micheal Shuster sat down, pulled out some fabric and thread, and taught himself to use a sewing machine. It's now 2023, and he hasn't stopped since. Schuster's career has been a decades-long march forward. It led him from a childhood love of military garb to selling neckties to establishing his own clothing label. And in March this year, he joined The Sewing Labs as one of our newest board members.

As a local designer and sewist, Schuster had heard of The Sewing Labs many times. He volunteered there and was close friends with one of the instructors.

"After meeting all of the ladies there, I just fell in love," he said. "I was excited about the possibility of joining the growing Sewing Labs, so I submitted an application and they accepted me."

Being on the board is a great fit for Schuster, who is also the Director of Development and Community Engagement at another nonprofit, the Jackson County Historical Society. Of course, his love of fashion and sewing also help him fit right in at The Sewing Labs. His passion for garment-making is infused into his clothing label, Micheal Schuster. His menswear and womenswear collections have appeared on the runway in Kansas City, Omaha, and in Arkansas.

Even as a child, Shuster enjoyed drawing military uniforms from the Napoleonic and Victorian era. His interest in intricate and detailed clothing inspires many of his pieces. He has a special love for menswear, which is often different in construction from women's garments. A small day dress might consist of a couple of side seams and straps, but with menswear, all the seams, buttons, and stitching must be tailored and symmetrical. A single-collared button-down dress shirt consists of 37 pieces.

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This complexity, particularly formal wear, is part of what makes menswear so dreaded

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the task so much. He prizes symmetry, clean lines, and quality construction in his work.

It took Schuster many years to get to where he is now in his career. He believes that any person can make a living out of a passion with determination and hard work.

“Actively and passionately *attack* your goals,” he urges.

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## Upcoming Classes

### Sew Professional Open House

Friday, May 19: Join us 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m for our Sew Professionals Open House. If you are a sewist looking for a job, or an employer seeking to hire, this event is for you.

**Click here to register** on our calendar, or contact Linnea Stevens at 816-888-3051 or [linnea@thesewinglabs.community](mailto:linnea@thesewinglabs.community).

### Nine Street Jelly Roll Quilt

May 2- June 6: A jelly roll (a bundle of rolled-up fabric strips) is perfect for a fun and easy quilting project! This will be taking place once a week for 6 sessions.

**Click here to register!**

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## Did You Know...

**Lawn cloth** is a form of batiste that's slightly heavier and more durable. Named for the french city of Laon, it's the primary fabric in Pakistan and India used to make salwar kameez, or "lawn suits."



## Sew What Now?

What causes birds' nests? (cont.) The tangle of threads on the underside of the seam can be caused by tension or maintenance issues. If thread tension — the balance between needle and bobbin threads — is off, you may have to adjust the upper tension tighter.

Different thread weights top and bottom, or the wrong thread weight for the fabric can produce a tension issue. The bobbin may have been dislodged or inserted wrong. Make

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Also, be sure you've lowered the presser foot onto the feed dogs. When it's up, the tension discs are wide open and needle thread can flow too freely. And, of course, be sure the feed dogs are raised to meet the foot. If they can't keep the cloth moving forward, the stitches will bunch up in one place.

Next time, we'll discuss thread breakage.

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