



FEBRUARY 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

Here at The Sewing Labs there are SEW many ways we show love in our local community.

First and foremost, one of the most important aspects of our founding is

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involved with The Sewing Labs—have learned is that tremendous *community* is built around a sewing machine. Here within our room, the sewing machine is a remarkable equalizer, bringing people together with a common bond.

There is a great need in our world for people to come together to support each other without judgment or expectation and to be filled with great curiosity and a desire to live new experience together. We encounter this during our classes and in our Open Stitch sessions on Fridays.

Open Stitch is an opportunity for anyone to come at no charge and sew on the domestic machines, including the students enrolled in our Sewing Salon Training Program to use for lab time or homework. During this time, there is no formal instruction. Visitors and occasionally volunteers help each other by lifting one another up as they learn about each other's projects; they assist one another with their projects/techniques or listen to each other while sewing together.

Relationships are built here at The Sewing Labs. Friendships are formed here. And people end up showing up to be here for each other, to be here when someone might need support, to be trusted and welcomed. When you are in The Sewing Labs, you focus on the work at hand, and your worries and concerns drift away. The creative sewing process results in people feeling essential and loved when involved in a community.

Showing love for your community sometimes means making yourself useful. We have opportunities to engage volunteers who can sew from home on different community projects. For example, The Sewing Labs partners with another area non-profit, [Volunteer KC](#), to produce canvas navigation tote bags that connect homeless individuals with emergency resources. Alternately, volunteers sew our Sweet Dreams for Seniors pillowcases distributed at low-income senior living facilities each holiday season.

Occasionally, in addition to sew-at-home projects, volunteers come to The Sewing Labs for a session where collaboratively they sit down and sew fleece hats and scarves that are distributed to the homeless in our community or to children in need through a partner nonprofit.

The Sewing Labs shows love in the community beyond our four walls.

In kindness,

Eileen



Eileen Bobowski



IN THE SPOTLIGHT
Highlighting our Students and Volunteers

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Patti Jachowicz

Patti Jachowicz started volunteering in the spring of 2021, because The Sewing Labs was one of the nonprofits that appeared when she searched a volunteering website for a new activity. It sounded intriguing and Patti sent an email to TSL's volunteer coordinator, who turned out to be a dear friend of her daughter. Lauren set Patti up to help with the very first Make'n HERstory conference, as well as attending it. In the fall, Patti began assisting Robert Lackie with [Literacy KC](#) ESL sewing classes. This was a perfect dovetail. Patti's career experience had prepared her; she had been a college teacher and counselor for adult and international students, helping them with career development. Moreover, previous experience with ESL armed her well for this work.

When Patti was seven, her mother and older cousin taught her to sew, a skill that cycled through her life again and again. In high school, she sewed many of her own clothes, including a suit jacket and skirt, and participated in a fashion show wearing clothes she had made. She took her sewing machine along to college, and made a wrap coat among other things. When her son was born, and later her daughter, she made many items for them.

Now, her main sewing interests are finishing a decorative quilt she's begun and making small gift items.

Patti has appreciated being at The Sewing Labs for many reasons, including working with learners in a safe and welcoming place. She delights in the new friends she makes, the fun new things she learns and the opportunity to serve the community. The hallmarks of her volunteering at The Sewing Labs are connections, calm, and creativity.

"Being here has given me some calm I can rely on," she says. "And it has cracked open my creative self again."

Congrats to Our ESL Class Graduates!

Congratulations to our most recent ESL graduates from our "Sewing as a Universal Language" class taught in collaboration with Literacy KC! TSL celebrates our 5th year with the partnership with Literacy KC?Don Bosco. A new class will also be starting in February, and we're excited to offer it again!

Registration for the ESL classes is offered through Literacy KC. Contact them at 816-333-9332

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Showing the Love

On the last day of January, The Sewing Labs held a Fleece Workday. For several years we've made hats and scarves of donated fleece for homeless adults and for children through the Assistance League of Kansas City, Operation Child in Need. For the workday, volunteers showed up to stitch up the precut fabric meeting the goal of one hundred sets of hats and scarves to warm the heads and necks of those in need.



Emotional Confetti

"Blessed are the Piecemakers" was the title of an article that Robert Lackie, class instructor who has been trained and is a practicing art therapist, shared as the class began. It outlined the ways in which sewing and other forms of crafting help a person shed stress as their focus intensifies on shapes, texture, color and creating.

Which is what the attendees did. Using scraps of satin, brocade, velvet, linen, cotton, tulle, yarn, ribbon and wool rovings, all colors and patterns imaginable, they snipped,

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foundation to evoke the collages and bricolages that represented a mood, a goal, a tribute or remembrance. The arrangements were then covered with a sheet of translucent Solvy and the stitching began. Using matching or contrasting thread, and sewing in random designs up, down and across, students attempted to stitch over each bit of cloth and embellishment in a near haphazard way to fasten all the parts of the collage to the backing.

Then the Solvy was dissolved under cold water and the piece ironed dry. The finished art was amazing, each different and beautiful. Many were abstract but evoking a clear idea, a mood, a notion.

This class repeats several times a year—check the [calendar](#) to register for our next Emotional Confetti session.



Source: Connie Fiorella

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Nedra Bonds Quilts for Justice

Kansas City quilt artist and activist Nedra Bonds never creates a piece that doesn't have something important to say. For decades, Bonds has been furiously stitching up quilts to advocate for social justice, preserve history, and document events in her life.

When Nedra first started quilting at six years old, she hated it. Her tiny hands were too small to handle a thread and needle, and the whole idea of taking perfectly good fabric only to cut it up and put it back together seemed entirely pointless to her six-year-old brain.

Nevertheless, she learned to quilt in the traditional way that was passed down through her family: she didn't have a choice.

"The women in the family sat me down and told me, 'You will do 10 stitches to the first crook in your finger,' said Bonds. "If I didn't have 10 I'd have to take them out and do it again."

It took becoming a mother for Bonds to enjoy quilting again. Then in 1989, when Kansas City authorities were planning to put a landfill over [Quindaro](#), a historic settlement near her home, she took it up once more. She created her first Quindaro Quilt to document and preserve the history of the town's involvement with the Underground Railroad. Bonds was also part of a group protesting the landfill; the quilt was her way of speaking her mind on an important issue. She had always been an activist, and was an active part of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s—now, she had another way to protest.

" I realized quilting was a way to say things and connect with people in the community in ways that other people couldn't, simply because quilting was something that most people have in their background," said Bonds. "One of the Kansas state senators came to me when I was doing a presentation about the old town of Quindaro with tears in his eyes, telling me that when he was a little boy, he would sit with his grandmother and tie the knots in her quilts."

Bond's Quindaro Quilt was only the start of a long and ongoing legacy of activism, art, and education. Since then, her quilts have been exhibited in places such as the Spencer Museum of Art, the [Arrowhead Art Collection](#), and the Jazz Museum, to name a few. She's also done collaborative, educational work such as The Local Hero Quilt Project and UMKC's Women's Equity Quilt.

To those who want to try their hands at sewing for art, Bonds has this advice: "Start with what you know and feel. Find a fabric that says that—or make it yourself! Once you get started, the rest will come to you."

To learn more about Nedra Bonds and to view her beautiful artwork, including the Quindaro Quilt that started it all, check out her [BBC](#) article.

First up, Embroidery!

The Sewing Labs had its inaugural class on the embroidery machine on Friday, December 9,

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10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

Even with the maximum number of students—all also regular volunteers at The Sewing Labs—each received individual attention from the two instructors. The mechanics were demonstrated, they had their questions answered, and also had the opportunity to frame a hoop with fabric and stabilizer in preparation for inserting into the machine. The Sewing Labs' embroidery machine, the Baby Lock Venture, operates with ten different thread colors and can produce elaborate and highly stylized designs.

Students learned about different kinds of software compatible with embroidery machines' computers, about the special bobbins and the particulars of oiling the machine, and about the variety of threads and the outcomes that can be expected using each. In addition, students learned about setting the hoops and the different sizes of hoops, as well as the best types of fabric and the stabilizers used for different projects: tear-away, wash-away, and melt-away.

By the end of class, attendees were awash with information. "I need to go home and digest this," one said. "It was a lot of information."

All who attended became certified to use the embroidery machine, and just in time for Christmas projects. The class is a requirement for renting the machine—for personal or business use—for monogramming, logos, embellishing fabrics, upcycling and custom embroidery. Check our [website](#) for classes as well as rates and times available.



Volunteer Signups Made Easy

We're using SignUp to organize our upcoming volunteer sign ups.

Here's how it works in 3 easy steps:

- 1) Click the button above to view Volunteer Opportunities.
- 2) Review the opportunities listed and choose the opportunity and spot(s) that best fit your schedule.
- 3) Sign up! It's easy - you will NOT need to register an account or keep a password on SignUp.

Note: SignUp does not share your email address with anyone. If you prefer not to use your email address, please contact us at VolunteerCoordinator@thesewinglabs.community or Linnca@thesewinglabs.community and we will sign you up manually.

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