

# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

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Dayton Emerging Fashion  
Incubator (DE-FI) LLC

# WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Community, Partners, and Champions of Innovation,

The year 2015 was a quiet but powerful turning point for (DE-FI) Global INC. While the headlines may not reflect it, this was a year of deep transformation—both for me personally and for the direction of our work. What began as a journey back to “normal” after the physical and emotional toll of a serious car accident in 2014, quickly became a year of medical emergencies.

Without health insurance until the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, I had been navigating life, and running this organization, on borrowed strength.

While my physical health was in flux, I pushed forward balancing a full-time job, a part-time job, and leading (DE-FI) with the same (DE-FI)ance that inspired our name. I returned to New York to work behind the scenes at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, and with every step, I continued listening, learning, and reimagining what sustainable success in fashion could look like, not just in New York, but right here in Dayton.

This year marked a strategic evolution for (DE-FI). We stepped away from large-scale, back-to-back runway shows and began asking: what do our designers actually need to grow and succeed? The answer wasn't more lights or longer catwalks, it was time, space, and tailored development. So we shifted our focus from production-heavy programming to one-on-one mentorship and strategic capacity-building. What I wasn't prepared for was the resistance that I would experience from designers, half of the designers quit and I became Dayton's fashion scene's Public Enemy #1.

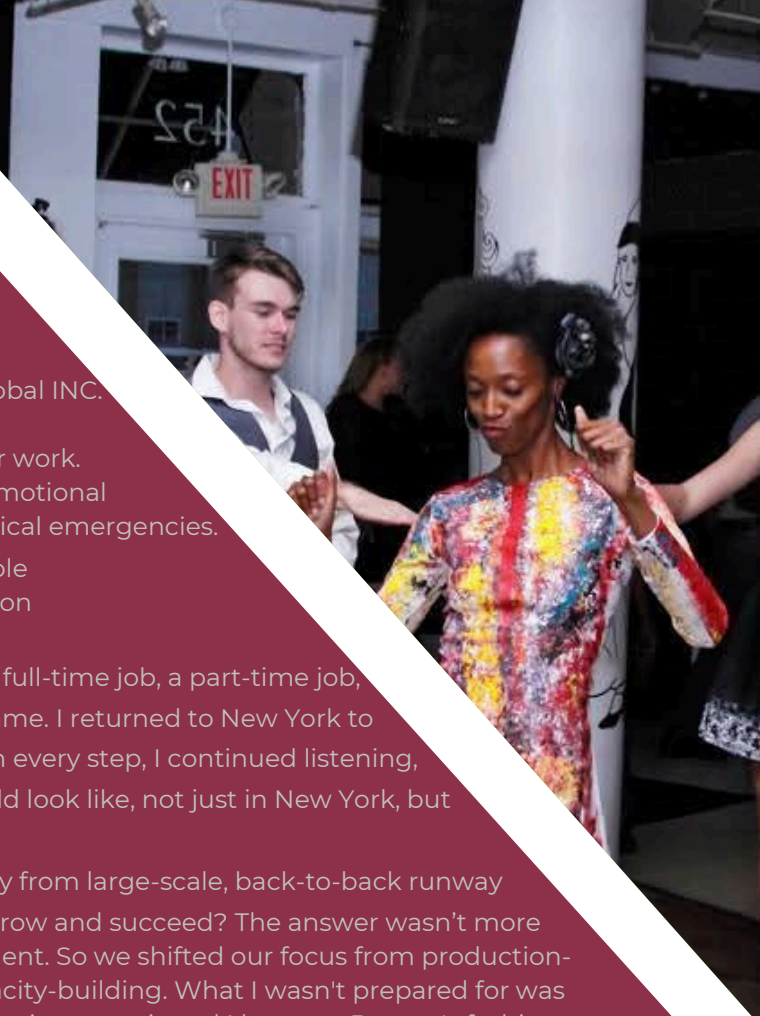
For those designers who stayed the course, I learned that one designer only wanted 2 new clients a year and had a very niche market; second time brides willing to pay 5 figures for a wedding dress, and were spending 6 figures on the wedding. Another designer wanted the world to know their name and their work. A third designer wanted to stay off the radar but wanted the world to be familiar with their work.

In 2015, we explored the classic era of supermodels to inspire a return to craft, form, and individuality. We officially launched A Generation of (DE-FI)ance youth inspired magazine and hosted our first individual designer experience. We began building real infrastructure exploring the creation of Dayton's first workforce development pipeline for garment manufacturing, and aligning with new partners who shared our vision for long-term economic impact.

2015 was a year of quiet clarity. It was a year that taught me that growth doesn't always come with glamor but often with grit, reflection, and strategic recalibration. It was a year of reaffirming that fashion is more than fabric, it's about structure, systems, and the people behind it.

To everyone who continued to believe in this vision during a year when much of the work happened behind the scenes, thank you. Your support gave us the space to plant seeds that would soon take root and redefine what's possible for our region's creative economy.

In (DE-FI)ance and determination,  
Caressa L. Brown  
Owner/Director  
(DE-FI) Global INC



# 2015 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

While 2015 was a year of personal recovery and strategic recalibration, it also marked significant milestones that advanced our mission to cultivate fashion through innovation, education, and economic empowerment:

**Academic Collaboration with Miami University:** Miami University launched its fashion design program and extended an invitation to the Dayton Emerging Fashion Incubator (DE-FI) LLC to serve as a regional partner marking the beginning of a collaborative relationship to support curriculum development, student engagement, and professional mentorship.

**Laying the Groundwork for Dayton's First Sewing Workforce Development Program**  
Recognizing the urgent need for skilled labor in garment production, (DE-FI) began building the foundation for Dayton's first workforce development initiative focused on industrial sewing and garment manufacturing positioning the region as a future hub for apparel innovation.

**Debut of Art, Wine, and Fashion.** We introduced Art, Wine, and Fashion, our first intimate, independent designer showcase series. This event celebrated the intersection of fashion and fine art, giving emerging designers a curated platform to tell their stories through garments, paired with immersive art and networking experiences.

**The Wright Brothers Apparel Collaboration.** (DE-FI) was tapped to help produce the debut photoshoot for the officially licensed Wright Brothers clothing line, marking the first time the iconic aviation name had been applied to apparel. The historic WACO Field served as the backdrop for the brand's bomber jacket shoot, bridging Dayton's past with its future in fashion.

**Introducing The House of (DE-FI)ance:** Inspired by MTV's House of Style, we introduced The House of (DE-FI)ance a dynamic fashion experience designed to spotlight individual designers and incubator talent through storytelling, behind-the-scenes content, pop-up shops, networking, partying, and focused runway presentations.

In 2015, (DE-FI) Global INC became a strategic partner with the Dayton Early College Academy (DECA) through the University of Dayton, supporting seven students with a passion for fashion design. We equipped them with sewing machines and materials, enrolled them in hands-on sewing classes, and provided behind-the-scenes internships. Through this partnership, students gained real-world experience in entrepreneurship and the operations of a fashion-based business.





# SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

(DE-FI)<sup>®</sup>

## Art, Wine, & Fashion



## The Wright Brothers Co





# SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

(DE-FI)<sup>®</sup>

## The House of (DE-FI)ance Fashion Party



# THANK YOU

## 2015 Community Partners & Sponsors

SunWatch Indian Village  
Dayton Most Metro  
The Wright Brothers Co.  
Miami University  
Dayton Early College Academy

## 2015 Photography Team

Pete Bradow  
Darren King Sr.  
Misti Leigh  
Lamar Pacley

## Featured Designers & Boutiques (2013)

Edina Ndeble  
B-Marie by Brenda Marone  
Kerapa Klothng by Sonya Mills  
Catou by Berny Martin  
iii Creations by Misti Leigh  
Bubblegum Couture

## 2013 Collaborative Partners

Beauti Box  
Shutter Eye Photo  
Midwest Fashion Week  
Industry Events  
Audio Etc.  
Creative Images  
Circle of Vision Keepers Re-Entry and  
Recovery Program

## Advisory Board (2013)

Berny Martin  
Cindy Kirk Gabory  
Ed Dixon

## 2013 Leadership & Core Team

Owner/Director: Caressa L. Brown  
Director of Logistics: Sybil Martin  
Director of Photography: Lamar Pacley  
Director of Web Dev & Graphic Design:  
Quincy Macklin  
Model Coordinator: LaToya Stephens  
Editor-in-Chief (DE-Flance): LaKeisha  
Grant  
Administrative Executive: Danielle  
Simpson  
Director of Community Outreach:  
Khadijah Ali  
Accountant: Lori Adtkins Steele  
Director of Communication: Dalisse  
Humphrey

## Contact Us

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