

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Dayton Emerging Fashion
Incubator (DE-FI) LLC

WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Thank you for your continued belief in the mission of (DE-FI) Global INC. Your support, whether visible or behind the scenes has remained a source of strength, especially throughout this past year.

2016 was unlike any other. It was a year marked by personal challenges that tested my endurance in ways I never anticipated. After years of unexplained fatigue and internal health complications, I was finally diagnosed with severe anemia early in the year.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, I was able to access the healthcare I needed but had previously been denied because an outdated medical chart said that I was too tall for my weight. I began receiving iron transfusions in January and undergoing a long series of tests including endoscopies and colonoscopies to find answers.

Spring brought corrective jaw surgery, followed by a severe reaction to medication that landed me in the emergency room. It was there, through a chain of events I never could've predicted, that doctors discovered I had large, asymptomatic uterine fibroid tumors. Despite being physically active running up to 15 miles a day, and showing no textbook symptoms, my body had been quietly breaking down. I was told my organs were being shifted, and my uterus had expanded to the size of a five-month pregnancy. My doctor said, my body had adjusted to being sick so I could keep going.

Though I wasn't able to produce large-scale events or secure sponsorships this year, I'm proud of what we accomplished in spite of it all. We reached a major milestone with the official launch of the Dayton Sewing Collaborative a vision we had been nurturing for two years. (DE-FI) led strategic communications, coordinated public engagement, and played a critical role in bringing this initiative to life. We also opened our first official space at 721 Springfield Street, located directly across the hall from the Collaborative, as a symbol of our continued commitment to building Dayton's fashion infrastructure from the inside out.

While 2016 was a quieter year publicly, it was a powerful one internally. It reminded me of why (DE-FI) exists...to do the hard, unseen work of planting seeds that will transform lives and communities especially in times when progress feels difficult. I had a successful myomectomy in August where 9 of 10 tumors were removed.

By the fall, I was juggling a full-time job that required me to commute back and forth from Dayton to Columbus and a part-time position in Dayton, while also serving as a caregiver for my mother and godparents. I was in school, managing (DE-FI), and doing my best to hold everything together. The weight was heavy, but the mission never left my heart.

In November 2016, just weeks into a new role, I found myself in the middle of an active shooter situation. It quickly turned into a fight-or-flight moment, and people looked to me and a few others for guidance and protection. That day underscored the kind of strength and clarity I've had to summon repeatedly in both life and leadership.

Thank you for staying with us during this season. Your faith in our mission has made all the difference, and I look forward to continuing this journey with renewed energy and deeper purpose.

With Gratitude and (DE-FI)ance,
Caressa L. Brown
Owner/Director
Dayton Emerging Fashion Incubator
(DE-FI) LLC

(DE-FI)

2016 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

In 2016, (DE-FI) Global INC advanced its mission to build a sustainable, inclusive fashion and workforce development ecosystem in Southwest Ohio through several milestone initiatives. At the heart of our work was the successful launch of the Dayton Sewing Collaborative, a community-based workforce development center years in the making. Since 2014, (DE-FI) had played an instrumental role in laying its foundation, handling communication, outreach, partner engagement, documentation, and social media strategy, as well as planning and executing the grand opening event. This collaborative created equitable, local manufacturing opportunities by establishing fair wage rates of \$12-\$15/hour, helping designers in our incubator produce high-quality garments without outsourcing abroad.

We expanded our institutional partnerships by collaborating with the University of Dayton's International Student Office, where we were invited to produce the university's International Festival. This high-impact event bridged global cultures through fashion and art, further positioning (DE-FI) as a multidisciplinary convener of community, education, and entrepreneurship.

In 2016, we also opened our first official office space, directly across from the Dayton Sewing Collaborative. This space became the operational hub for designer consultations, casting calls, workshops, and strategic meetings, symbolizing a new chapter of growth, accessibility, and visibility for our work.

Additionally, (DE-FI) launched the Train to Sew initiative via the Dayton Sewing Collaborative in partnership with Lions and Honeywell, two garment manufacturers committed to ethical domestic production. This initiative supported workforce development for immigrants and refugees in the Dayton region by providing entry-level industrial sewing training and job placement pathways. It became a model for inclusive economic integration within the local garment industry.

Capping off a year of strategic moves, (DE-FI) also purchased the intellectual property rights to Dayton Fashion Week, allowing us to formally reclaim the event's legacy, reimagine its structure, and rebuild trust within the community under a new, purpose-driven vision.

Despite significant personal health challenges faced by Caressa, the work never paused. Through resilience, grit, and an unwavering belief in our community, 2016 became a pivotal year in solidifying (DE-FI)'s role as a cornerstone for fashion-based economic innovation in the Midwest.

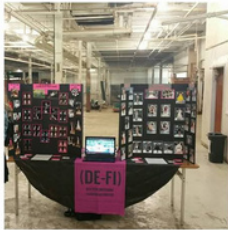


SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

(DE-FI)[®]

The Dayton Sewing Collaborative Launch

time next year," she smiles proudly as she imagines the future. "My vision three years from now I want to have manufacturers filling up these empty GM and Delphi spaces and helping to build and diversify our economy here in Dayton." She continues getting serious, "We're going to take it slow, we're going to build partnerships, we're going to educate. People think you have to be into fashion to be part of this but this is a



THANK YOU

2016 Community Partners & Sponsors

SunWatch Indian Village
Dayton Most Metro
Dayton Sewing Collaborative
The University of Dayton
Dayton Early College Academy

2016 Photography Team

Pete Bradow
John Flynn
Misti Leigh
Lamar Pacley

2016 Collaborative Partners

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

Advisory Board (2016)

Cindy Kirk Gabory
Ed Dixon
Mohammad Al-Qirawbe

2016 Leadership & Core Team

Owner/Director: Caressa L. Brown
Director of Logistics: Sybil Martin
Director of Photography: Lamar Pacley
Director of Web Dev & Graphic Design:
Jason Penix
Model Coordinator: LaToya Stephens
Administrative Executive: Danielle
Simpson
Director of Community Outreach:
Khadijah Ali
Accountant: Lori Adtkins Steele
Director of Communication: Dalisse
Humphrey

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