

# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

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Dayton Emerging Fashion  
Incubator (DE-FI) LLC

# WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Friends and Supporters,

In 2017, we found our voice, and we used it. For years, (DE-FI) has operated in a space of service and support, challenging the status quo of regional fashion by focusing on the business behind the runway. We've empowered local talent, provided hands-on training, and created accessible opportunities for designers, models, and entrepreneurs to thrive...as a volunteer led organization. We've led with kindness, collaboration, and community but 2017 was the year we were reminded of a hard truth; not everyone operates with the same integrity.

After years of partnership and planning, we formally severed ties with the Dayton Sewing Collaborative due to broken promises and consistent reports that our talent whom we entrusted to their services was being mistreated. Fees were tripled. Jobs were denied. Communication was evasive. Despite the work (DE-FI) put in to support their growth, including running their social media, planning their launch, negotiating training partnerships, and hosting events, our leadership was met with hostility when we simply asked for accountability.

Rather than allow my name and our mission to be misrepresented, we made the difficult but necessary decision to close our office space across the hall and formally part ways. We simultaneously announced a bold new chapter: "The End of (DE-FI) As They Knew It."

At the finale of our inaugural (DE-FI) Fashion Week a fashion week dedicated not to glitz, but to grit, we unveiled a powerful evolution of our work:

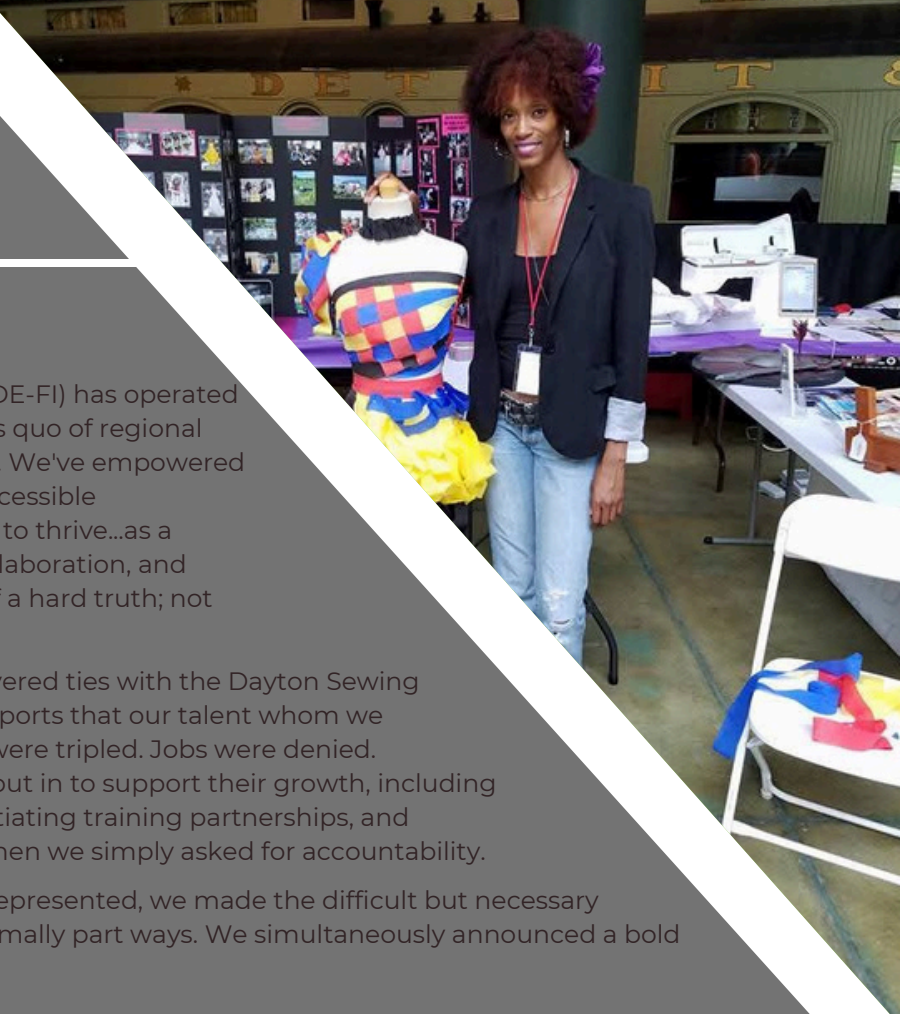
- The Dayton Garment & Textile District, a local ecosystem for manufacturing, patternmaking, sewing, and retail.
- The Gem City Sewing Company, our in-house workforce training and production solution.
- Plans for the region's first interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary fashion co-working space, blending fashion, business, technology, and sustainability.
- And an unapologetic focus on the 95% of the fashion industry that lives beyond the runway including sewing workshops, model bootcamps, acting classes, fashion business intensives, and our signature magazine release experience.

Following the momentum of (DE-FI) Fashion Week, we entered a six-month period of strategic planning. During this time, we took a hard look at the lessons learned, the gaps that needed to be filled, and the systems we wanted to build for long-term sustainability. In September, we formally introduced our updated Strategic Plan during A Weekend of (DE-FI)ance, reaffirming our commitment to not just grow fashion in our region, but to infrastructure it.

2017 was the year we chose growth over comfort, truth over optics, and legacy over imitation. It was the year we stopped explaining ourselves and started expanding our vision.

Thank you for walking this journey with us and for standing with (DE-FI) as we continue to build what's next.

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



# 2017 STRATEGIC PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

Our Fashion Incubator has made Dayton the Fashion Capital of the Midwest for the development and success of fashion-based talent. The strategic plan is based on focusing our resources on a robust financial plan emphasizing multi-year investments in support of our mission.

- We will develop diversified revenue streams and maximize our opportunities to leverage our resources across Ohio, the Midwest, and external collaborations.
- We will offer robust mentoring and retention programs for our entire team, including education on sustainable practices, farm-to-fashion methodologies, and ethical production.
- We will support our team through a strong merit-based compensation program and professional development opportunities, with specialized training in sustainability, supply chain management, and agricultural partnerships.
- We will ensure our operations are efficient and streamlined to maximize our effectiveness, incorporating environmentally conscious practices and circular economy principles where possible.
- We will ensure our team is highly trained in financial analysis and planning and works in collaboration to manage the financial resources, including securing funding and partnerships.

Our goals include:

- Invest in engaged scholarships to improve the impact and reputation of the (DE-FI) brand's transnational and educational programs.
- Conduct commercially viable research on the fashion industry and become the national and international leader in collaborating with industry.
- Provide a world-class fashion advancement program.
- Be a national leader in fashion manufacturing.
- Increase and strengthen corporate/industry partnerships with the (DE-FI) Family of Brands to optimize philanthropic revenues, research grants, and opportunities for experiential learning, including collaborations with agricultural organizations and natural fiber producers.
- Foster awareness of and advocacy for the (DE-FI) Family of Brands to enhance revenue, reputation, and rankings
- Create and sustain a top-performing, diverse, and inclusive advancement organization that will attract and retain first-rate talent





# SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

(DE-FI)<sup>®</sup>

(DE-FI) Fashion Week





# 2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

(DE-FI)<sup>®</sup>



# THANK YOU

## 2017 Photography Team

Pete Bradow  
John Flynn  
Misti Leigh  
Lamar Pacley  
Chris Kuettner

## Advisory Board (2017)

Cindy Kirk Gabory  
Ed Dixon  
Mohammad Al-Qirawbe

## 2017 Collaborative Partners

Shutter Eye Photo  
Industry Events  
Audio Etc.  
Creative Images  
Circle of Vision Keepers Re-Entry and  
Recovery Program  
Cloverstorm photography  
Edward A. Dixon Gallery

## 2017 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

## Contact Us

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