

2022-23 BI-ANNUAL REPORT

Dayton Emerging Fashion
Incubator (DE-FI) LLC

WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Community,

There's no sugarcoating it, 2022 and 2023 were two of the most challenging years we've faced as an organization. From leadership transitions and a global pandemic aftermath to personal medical crises and family health scares, these past two years pushed us beyond anything we could have imagined. I underwent four corrective jaw surgeries, endured a cancer scare, supported my father through his renal cancer diagnosis, and stood beside my stepmother as she faced breast cancer for the second time. Members of our leadership team faced their own battles, heart surgeries, illness, caretaking. And yet, through it all... we pressed on.

In the midst of it, I confided in Lisa Smilor, Executive Vice President of the CFDA, about the difficulties we've faced trying to grow in a city that seems to consistently reject anything it cannot control. Her words were simple, but they changed everything: "Leave. Let Dayton miss you." And so, we did. We launched the Cincinnati Fashion Incubator and Fashion Week of Cincinnati, continuing our mission from a new vantage point while never losing sight of our roots.

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Despite the obstacles, what remains clear is this, (DE-FI) is not just a name. It's a statement of resilience. We don't fold, we build brick by brick...most times using the bricks that have been thrown at us as we continue to cultivate fashion rooted in (DE-FI)ance.

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



2022-2023 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

At the close of 2021, change was already underway. With Washington Prime Group filing for bankruptcy and the Dayton Mall sold to new owners, we found ourselves in a state of limbo. At the same time, armed with the knowledge and training received through the CFDA Connects program, we began restructuring. In December 2021, (DE-FI) Global INC was established as the new parent company for the Dayton Emerging Fashion Incubator, House of (DE-FI)ance, Dayton Threads, and other growing initiatives. Each entity now operates under its own legal structure to ensure long-term protection and sustainability.

In early 2022, we began planning the return of Dayton Fashion Week, set to take place at the Dayton Mall. Despite submitting a comprehensive proposal in January, including a plan to transform the mall into a “Lincoln Center-style” fashion experience, the new owners went silent. For six months, we received no responses, even as we dealt with severe plumbing issues and continued programming. Eventually, we made the difficult decision to pack up and move out in May 2022. It wasn’t until two months later that mall officials even realized we had vacated only then trying to salvage a deal. But the damage had already been done.

Still, the work continued. We:

- Earned our registered trademark for (DE-FI)
- Piloted a new two-and-a-half-year designer incubator model under Dayton Fashion Week, starting with six designers
- Ensured selection was earned, not given through external interviews and writing-intensive assignments. Two designers withdrew after the first assignment due to its rigor
- Celebrated our inclusion in the CFDA 2021 and 2022 Annual Report, highlighted at a New York City CFDA Connects event at Gracie Mansion, covered by Vogue
- Were featured in Chic Guide Dayton for our work at the House of (DE-FI)ance
- Produced “Dogs on the Catwalk”, a charitable fashion event supporting regional pet rescues.
- we launched our modeling agency (DE-FI) Models.

All of this happened while juggling life-altering challenges, COVID’s lingering impact, medical emergencies, and an unrelenting pace of growth.

Frustrated but not defeated, we followed CFDA’s advice and planted new seeds in Cincinnati. That move birthed the Cincinnati Fashion Incubator and Fashion Week of Cincinnati, sister programs to Dayton Fashion Week. Each initiative now serves distinct but complementary roles in cultivating and amplifying fashion talent across the Midwest.



(DE-FI)

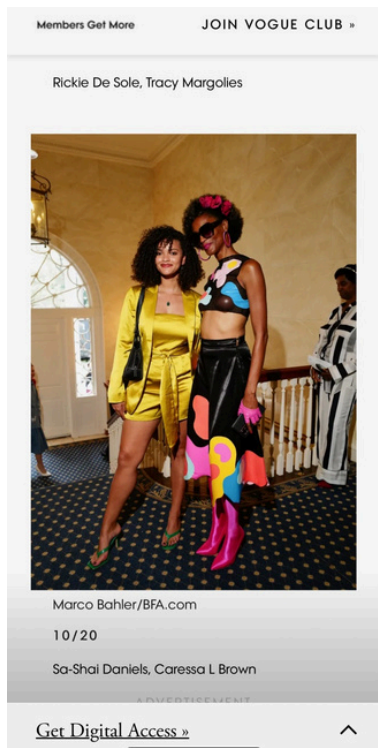
THE 2022-23 EXPERIENCES

(DE-FI)[®]



THE 2022-23 EXPERIENCE

(DE-FI)[®]



THANK YOU

2020 Photography Team

John Flynn
Lamar Pacley
Chris Kuettner

Advisory Board (2020)

Cindy Kirk Gabory
Ed Dixon

2021 Photography Team

John Flynn

Advisory Board (2021)

Cindy Kirk Gabory
Ed Dixon

2020 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

2021 Collaborative Partners

Industry Events
Audio Etc.
Creative Images
Cloverstorm Photography
Edward A. Dixon Gallery

2020 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
Director of Beauty: ShaTerra Jenkins
Model Coordinator: Danielle Pinion
Administrative Executive: Danielle
Simpson

2021 Leadership & Core Team

Owner/Director: Caressa L. Brown
Administrative Executive: Danielle
Simpson

Contact Us

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