



Bree Kasper (left) and Melissa Gilbert opened Sew Together in April.

"THERE'S THREE TYPES OF ZEN. THIS ONE IS CALLED GRANDMOTHERLY ZEN."

Melissa Gilbert, Co-founder of Sew Together

small warehouse space in a mostly residential neighborhood near North Wells Avenue. The property owner temporarily waived the rent as the organization works to establish financial stability. They opened their new studio, Sew Together, on April 1. Kasper is director of operations, and Gilbert is the co-founder.

On a recent Monday, Kasper and a volunteer named Sebastian Elcano were in a small room running yards and yards of heavy gray fabric through sewing machines. They were making blackout curtains for the large, sunny windows at Acro Enso, an acro yoga and circus arts studio on East Fourth Street that opened earlier this year.

Adjacent rooms have a cutting table, more sewing machines, shelves of fabric, a few stuffed animals waiting to be repaired and displays of Gilbert's quilted wall-hangings and Kasper's furry dress-up hats. A storage room is already starting to pile up with donated fabric—much of it from Truckee Meadows Community College's recently closed theater facility.

In the three months the space has been open, it's seen a good amount of traffic.

"Sewers are just coming out of the woodwork," said Gilbert. Posts on social media—especially on Meetup—have led to a lot of new acquaintances who want to learn to sew, teach a class or sew in a social environment instead of at home.

So far, Sew Together has been holding weekly meetup sessions like Mending Mondays and Fearless Fashion Fridays. Gilbert, Kasper and visiting teachers have taught workshops in skills such as taking measurements and making patchwork quilts. Ali Conway, proprietor of Strange Bikinis, taught a workshop on starting your own garment business.

Sew Together recently began offering monthly memberships and put several more

classes and meetups on the calendar.

In an effort to balance affordability with

financial sustainability, drop-in classes operate on a donation basis, with a requested donation of \$5-20.

Kasper and Gilbert intend to host workshops for recent Encompass graduates who need a place to keep sewing, and they want to build partnerships with various community groups. One friend who works with homeless veterans is coordinating with young sewers to make sleeping bags for her clients.

This type of networking is exactly what Kasper and Gilbert were hoping for. In the three months they've been in business, they've already seen people inspired by sewing together, and to them, it's about more than just creative clothing and quilts. It's about how making things by hand can affect the soul and the brain.

"That inspiration, to me, can get you through a lot of hard times and sorrow," said Kasper. "I think the act of creation—or mending—caring for what you have, or creating something new, it's what makes being human bearable sometimes."

"The act of making things—there's so much peace that can come from that," said Gilbert. "When you create something, you get not just the emotional boost, but you're learning skills that can translate into real life, help you communicate, help you moving forward." □

Sew Together is located at 640 Eureka Ave. Upcoming workshops include "DIY Kitty Ear Class" on July 12 and "Sewing 101: Learn the basics" on July 19. To see the complete schedule, visit Sew Together's Facebook page. The non-profit welcomes donations of sewing machines and fabric and is eager to hear from sewing experts who may want to propose a class or workshop.

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