

## **SW Women's Fiber Arts Collective Annual Report 2008**

Southwest Women's Fiber Arts Collective (SWFAC) is a grassroots, 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization with the goal of creating successful cottage industry in the southwest. It provides lines of communication and information among many artisans, guilds, art and craft shows and sales, classes, teachers, and others working in the fiber arts. We believe that by creating a networking structure we improve the opportunities of all working in the fiber arts to gain skills and financial independence.

SWFAC operates The Common Thread, a gallery of fiber art, created by members. The Common Thread, located at 107 W. Broadway in Silver City, New Mexico provides a venue for members to sell their work. SWFAC also sells members' work at shows in Las Cruces and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Outreach programming includes a week-long fiber arts camp for underserved youth, knitting programs, and fiber art day camps.

Ongoing classes are offered to the community for modest fees. By learning fiber art skills, these individuals will be able to earn an income through the venues established by SWFAC.

### **Mission**

- SWFAC is a resource that connects fiber artists in the southwest with one another and with opportunities to sell work, learn new skills, teach, and secure materials.
- SWFAC provides outreach to women and children by teaching fiber arts.
- We promote the concept of cottage industry as a means of fostering economic self-sufficiency and artistic development for women and others working in the fiber arts.

### **Economic Development**

The Common Thread, a fiber arts gallery opened in May of 2006, is becoming known throughout the southwest as a source of creative and diverse fiber art. To date, we have sold nearly \$70,000 of our member's work. On average, 30 members receive income each month. We have members whose work is being recognized, and ordered over the phone, and buyers who are making special trips from out of the area, just to buy their work. The Common Thread is proving that cottage industry is viable economic development.

In addition to operating the gallery, SWFAC participates in the Las Cruces and Santa Fe Rag Rug Festivals. Produced by the New Mexico Women's Foundation, these venues provide our members with greater visibility and increased sales. Our artists look forward to participating in these shows each year.

The Tapestry of Talent, our annual fashion show, is a fundraising event and not a program, but in just 2 years, this event has become an important source of income for our members. At the First Peek Boutique, sales have doubled, giving income and recognition to our member artists. The event has become a much anticipated and sold out event two years running. Community members start calling in June to purchase tickets for the September event.

### **Classes and Workshops**

In 2008, we brought in two nationally recognized instructors: Jennifer Moore and Nadine Sanders. Jennifer Moore taught a 2-day design class much requested by our members. Nadine taught a warping class beneficial to those that are weaving at the production level. A total of nineteen fiber arts classes successfully ran this year, educating members of the Collective and the community in the fiber arts. In addition to skill training, these classes educate the public about SWFAC and our mission, and bring in new members.

### **Outreach to the Community**

Including all members of our community is integral to our mission. We have very successfully collaborated with other organizations to provide a wide range of outreach programs that include the following.

#### **Life Quest Knitting Program**

Teaches knitting skills to six Life Quest Clients with developmental disabilities. The items made are sold at The Common Thread and no commission is taken. We run a news release about this program each December, which brings in members of the community to The Common Thread, who specifically want to support these women.

#### **Summer Fiber Arts Camp**

Teaches fiber art skills to area youth in a week-long camp. This was our third year, and we have had campers who have participated each year and stated, "This year was the best!" Collaborative teaching with other guilds, groups, and individuals provides a wide variety of experiences for the children.

#### **Sixth Street School After School Knitting Program (SSK)**

An after-school program that teaches knitting skills to children from Sixth Street Elementary School, an entire school that is considered "at risk". The children and instructor so wanted this program, that it has changed which day it runs each week to accommodate the student's schedules so they can keep on knitting. It is currently held on Friday afternoons.

#### **Stout Elementary School Quilt Program**

A pilot program working with three fifth grade classes to make quilts. We collaborated with UnCommon Threads quilting group to put the quilts together. Each class made the quilt squares using mathematical designs.

#### Casa de la Cultura Summer Camp

This was our third year participating in Casa's summer camp. More than 20 children in Santa Clara participated at one of 3 fiber art project tables available to them. The students remember us from previous years and asked for "real loom weaving" next year.

#### Gila Library Summer Camp

The rural youth of the Gila Valley had the opportunity to make journal covers for the journals that recorded the books that they had read. This was a wonderful fiber art experience and collaboration.

### **Community Education and Collaborations**

Being recognized as a resource for artists to earn income and skill development is key to our mission. We are accomplishing this through education and collaboration with other organizations in our community. We have received much support for our activities and participated in many activities to promote our mission.

#### Earth Day Fair

We participated in Penny Park's Earth Day fair by providing an educational booth and an activity for children. Two types of paper airplanes could be made at the SWFAC booth.

#### Volunteer Fair

Produced by the Volunteer Center, we had an educational booth where members of the community could try their hand at inkle weaving. This is a great event for the public to learn about the Collective and other non-profits.

#### Chamber of Commerce Fourth of July Booth

Members of SWFAC volunteered to help man the Chamber's booth building relationships with business partners in our community.

#### Mimbres Region Arts Council

The Common Thread participates in two MRAC fundraising events that are both win-win. In February, we were on the list of venues for Chocolate Fantasia, which brought in 300 customers into the gallery. Many returned to buy fiber art.

Weekend at the Galleries is a huge downtown event, and this year The Common Thread was listed on the cover of the brochure. This event brings customers into The Common Thread from the entire southwest area.

#### Downtown Merchants Association

By collaborating with all the other downtown merchants, we stretched our advertising dollars and let more people know about SWFAC.

## **Board, Staff, and Volunteers**

Without the vision and hard work of a very dedicated Board and Director, SWFAC would not have come so far, in such a short time. Our Board includes the following members who deserve to be recognized for such a fabulous job.

### **Chris McDaniel, President**

Chris moved to Silver City from St. Louis, MO where she was an elementary teacher. She received a degree in art from Stephens College. Chris has a life-long appreciation for the fiber arts as her mother taught tailoring at Stephens College. Chris works in felted appliqué and sells her pieces at The Common Thread. Chris brings her skills and talent to serve as Chair of the Jury Committee and her artistic abilities as the merchandiser for The Common Thread.

### **William Blakemore, Vice-President**

Bill brings a wealth of knowledge from his public school teaching experience to our outreach programming. He has a strong commitment to community development and valuable gallery experience as a former cooperative gallery owner and current co-owner of Moonstruck Gallery. Bill has been a potter since 1998.

### **Deb Shatzkin, Secretary**

Deb brings valuable management experience as a previous manager and purchaser for the Silver City Food Cooperative. Her commitment to community includes starting the community gift card program at the Co-op and is currently the Community Outreach Coordinator of the Southwest New Mexico Breastfeeding Council. She has been crocheting, embroidering, and quilting for 30 years.

### **Kathy Cole, Treasurer**

Kathy brings a doctorate degree in resource economics and experience in developing computer models to analyze various marketing, financial, and strategic planning issues to the Collective. She plays a key part in policy development and marketing and has been a quilter for the past nine years.

### **Patricia Bouchard, Director**

Pat has a Masters in Speech Pathology and brings valuable teaching experience and empathy to the Collective. Pat states that as an educator, she had to often think outside of the box to encourage progress and attain goals. Pat strongly believes that SWFAC should “float everyone’s boat”. She is currently co-owner of Moonstruck Gallery where she sells her own fabulous knitted creations.

### **Betty Mishuk, Director**

Betty is a retired Certified Public Accountant, has served on other non-profit boards, and has been a Fiscal Officer for El Grito, a federally funded Head Start program here in Silver City. Betty has a strong commitment to supporting women’s issues and believes in cottage industry as a means for economic self-sufficiency. Betty also holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Occupational Therapy.

Charmeine Wait, Executive Director

Charmeine has lived in Grant County since 1990. Her previous work experience includes being the manager of 3 non-profit natural history bookstores, a buyer for the Silver City Food Cooperative, and twelve years as a certified ophthalmic technician. She has been a weaver for more than 20 years and is a co-founder of SWFAC.

#### Volunteers

We could not have accomplished anything without the dedicated volunteers who operate The Common Thread, run the outreach programs, chair committees, instruct classes, and a myriad of other duties. More than 60 volunteers donated more than 2000 hours to the Collective this year. SWFAC is grateful for their generosity of time and talent. Many attended the Volunteer Appreciation this year, and we were glad to be able to express our appreciation of their work.

#### **Financial Support**

Without the financial support of the New Mexico Women's Foundation, New Mexico Arts (a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs), McCune Foundation, Domanica Foundation, and Silver City Lodgers Tax, we could not carry out our mission. We are grateful for their funding and for the individual acts of generosity that support SWFAC. Heartfelt thanks go to all who donate the financial resources we need and we gratefully acknowledge them all. All earned income and funding income is spent on achieving our mission in the manner listed in this annual report.