

2023 Annual Report



Reflecting on 2023, we can't help but feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude and excitement.

Thanks to the incredible support of our community, Stitch Buffalo **successfully completed our capital campaign and unveiled the design for our expanded store/studio space**, serving Buffalo, NY, the Western New York region, and all points beyond.

From individual donors and private foundations to local businesses and city/

Front—Stitch Buffalo Executive Director Dawne Hoeg works in the studio with members of the Refugee Women's Workshop. Our banner reading "THE WORLD IS HERE" has been a year-long art project, engaging community members at events across Western New York who stitched alongside members of the Refugee Women's Workshop.

Below—A busy day at the Stitch Buffalo studio, with members of the Refugee Women's Workshop and volunteers from the wider community all happily working side-by-side.

county/state government, it was incredible to receive such unilateral support for our programs and mission.

Concurrent with the success of our capital campaign, **Stitch Buffalo also experienced growth in all three of our programs**, providing services to more refugee women, textile-art students, and other creative people than ever before.

As you'll see throughout our 2023 Annual Report, this year truly set the stage for what we have in store for 2024—a wonderful journey that is just beginning!

Without your donations, patronage, and support of Stitch Buffalo, none of these milestones or success stories would have been possible. Thank you for believing in what we do and playing an integral role in our goal to stitch communities together.





MILESTONES

2023 Operations

- **Capital Campaign**—Completed a successful capital campaign, raising over \$750,000 to renovate a larger store/studio space. *(See page 15 for supporters)*
- **Improved Language Access**—Revised and translated consignor program information, contracts, and financial documents, which are now available in seven languages (plus English). *(Supported by the WNY Foundation)*
- **New Board Members and Officers**—Welcomed several new board members, including a new President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. *(See page 18 for new board member details)*
- **New Hires**—Hired a full-time Business and Finance Director. Our staff also grew in early 2024 with new hires in our Retail Manager and Second Stitch Manager positions.

Our Mission

Stitch Buffalo is a textile art center committed to **empowering** refugee and immigrant women through the sale of their handcrafted goods, **inspiring** creativity and inclusion through community education, and **stewarding** the environment through the re-use of textile supplies.

Our Values

Community Building: Bringing people together through the textile arts.

Empowerment: Maintaining a welcoming environment that fosters fair and equitable opportunity and self expression.

Trust: Forging an inclusive and trustworthy space where each individual's cultural traditions and lived experiences can be expressed and preserved.

Passion: Working, learning and celebrating together in pursuit of innovation and personal expression.

Environmental Stewardship: Reducing waste by keeping useful materials out of landfills and in the hands of creative people.

A NEW HOME

Moving On Up!

Renovations are nearly complete. In April 2024, Stitch Buffalo will be taking up residence in our new store/studio at 284 Plymouth Avenue. We will occupy the building's entire first floor and have room for all of our programs to grow.

Below—Volunteers and members of the Refugee Women's Workshop took a field trip to check out the progress on our bright-and-beautiful new space!

Key Features

- Almost 300% more space than our previous location and fully ADA compliant
- Central community table and kitchenette
- Dedicated print/dye studio space
- Larger store to provide a better shopping experience for our guests
- Fully equipped sewing studio space



Features & Functions

1. Retail Space

Expanded retail space to accommodate more work by members of the Refugee Women's Workshop.

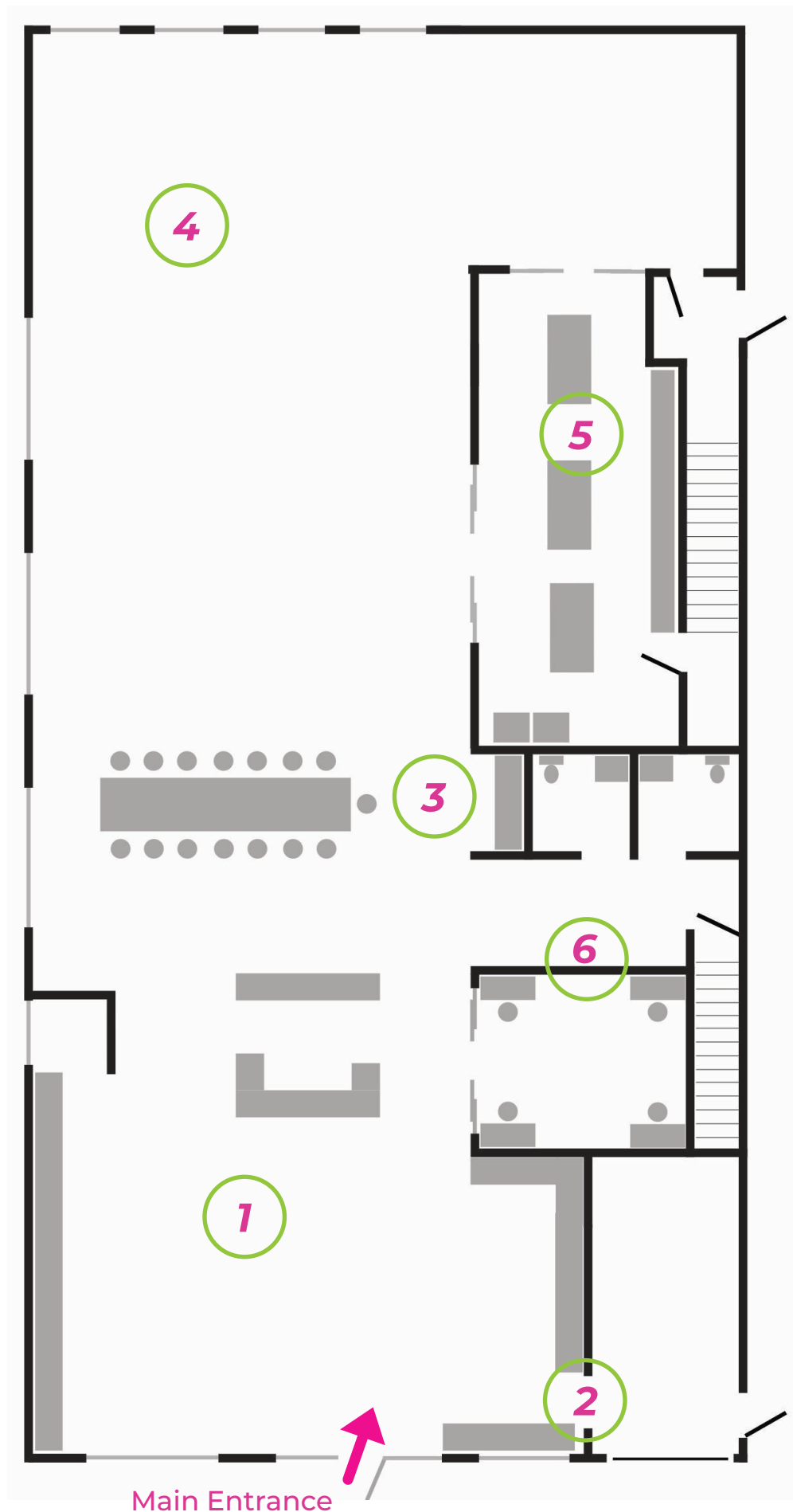
2. Second Stitch ▶ A devoted space to receive and process donated supplies, as well as room for resale of sustainably sourced textile art tools and materials..

3. Community Table and Kitchenette ▶ At the heart of the space is a large community table and kitchenette, where community members can gather to enjoy a cup of tea and stitch together.

4. Sewing and Weaving Studio ▶ Expanded studio space for sewing, weaving, and more. This will allow us to welcome more artisans and take on bigger jobs.

5. Wet Studio ▶ A room for dyeing, printing, and other messy processes—plus a washer and dryer.

6. Restrooms and Office ▶ ADA-compliant restrooms, plus offices for our staff, and secure lockers for volunteers and students.



Stitch Buffalo's Community Table

The World Is Here



HSAR
Burma



ANHAR
Egypt



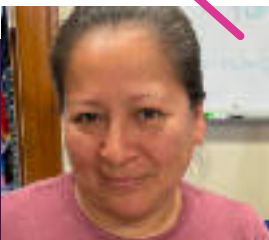
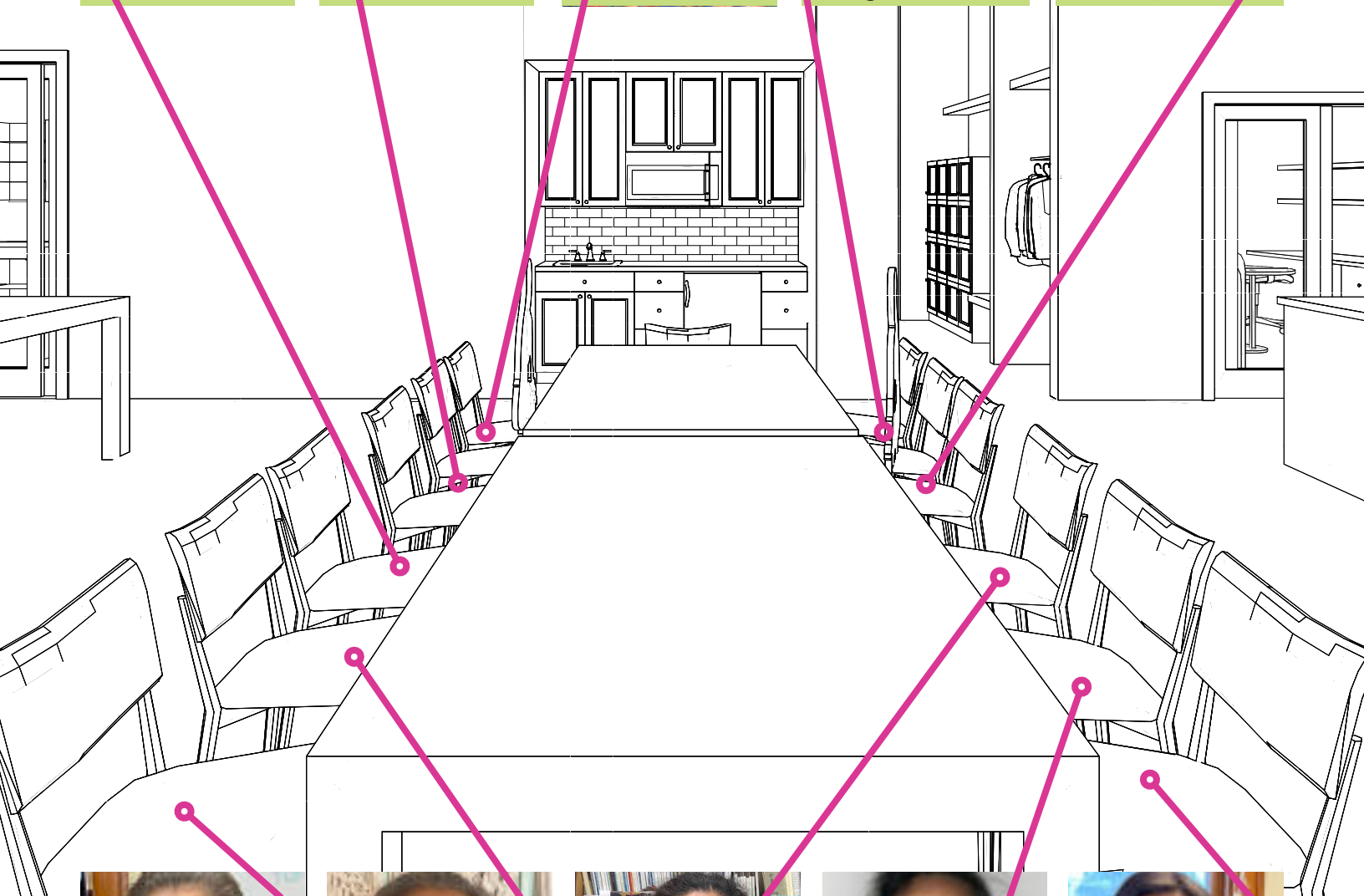
TILA
Bhutan



PALWASHA
Afghanistan



CLAUDINE
Congo



MARA
Ecuador



HIRAN
India



ROSITA
Peru



HKAWNG
Burma



MUNA
Pakistan

PROGRAMS

Refugee Women's Workshop

- Featured in new book, *111 Places in Buffalo That You Must Not Miss*
- Partnered with Eileen Fisher Renew as well as many local designers to create new, sustainably sourced products
- Welcomed dozens of new participants from Burma, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Ecuador, and beyond



Community Classes

- Completed design of our *Creative Threads* curriculum
- Expanded our outreach, bringing Stitch Buffalo classes to new schools, community centers, and other venues
- Provided free or low-cost seats in every class—plus 12 full scholarships to Textile Art Summer Camp for kids from underserved neighborhoods



Second Stitch

- Although we closed to supply donations in November (to pack for the move), we processed over 13,000 pounds of donated textile supplies
- Planned for expansion of operations in our new home, with a devoted space for Second Stitch sorting and retail.



IMPACT

200+

refugee women and families
received sewing tools and training



1,700+

people participated in
hands-on textile-art classes



13,000+

pounds of supplies
rescued for reuse



48%

increase in sales & payouts
to refugee artisans (YoY)



4,000+

volunteer hours
contributed

STORIES

Ser Eh Paw

Signature Outfit for a Signature Album Cover

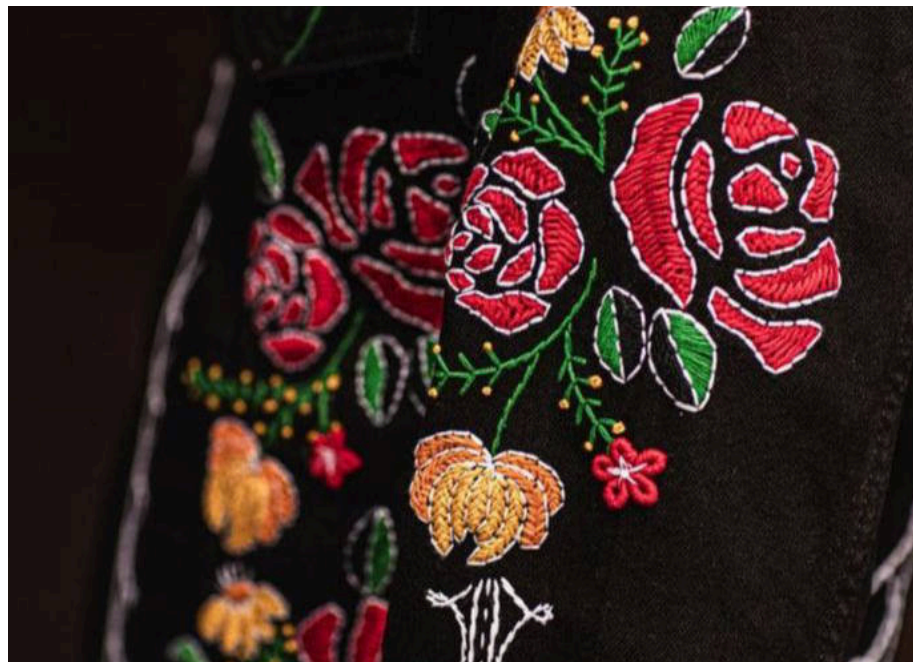
A signature album cover calls for a signature outfit. Stitch Buffalo helped Buffalo musician Bean Friend show his punk roots and mariachi sound with hand embroidery on black Levi's jeans and a jean jacket—in a style inspired by the traditional charro outfits worn by Mexican mariachi performers.

With design support from Executive Director Dawne Hoeg, Refugee Women's Workshop member Ser Eh Paw (Burma) hand-embroidered traditional white motifs, roses

Right—Album cover for *La Chachalaca*. **Bottom Left**—Ser Eh Paw brought her hand embroidery skills to this project. **Bottom Right**—The signature look marries Bean Friend's punk rock roots with the mariachi sound of the new album.

(representing love), and marigolds (representing death and tragedy) throughout the suit.

The album, entitled *La Chachalaca*, is available on all major streaming platforms.





Palwasha Basir

Collab with Grammy Award Winning Artist John Legend

For several years, Stitch Buffalo has partnered with the Afghan Makers project from Nest to support artisans in starting their own Etsy shops. One Stitch Buffalo artisan, Palwasha Basir, has been especially successful!

Palwasha is a trained tailor who arrived in Buffalo from Afghanistan in 2019 with her husband Abdul and three of her five children. Despite heavy restrictions at the time, **the family was able to immigrate because Abdul's career (working as a transportation supervisor at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul) put his family at risk from both the Taliban and ISIS.** Palwasha and Abdul were integral to launching Stitch Buffalo's face-mask sewing



Left—Palwasha Basir was selected as a collaborator in the 2023 John Legend Creator Collab. Photograph by Michael Mandolfo. **Right**—John Legend is a multiple Grammy Award– and Academy Award–winning musician and entrepreneur. Image courtesy of John Legend Creator Collab.

program at the start of the pandemic and Palwasha has continued to bring her sewing and design skills to the Refugee Women's Workshop ever since.

In 2023, award-winning recording artist and entrepreneur John Legend selected Palwasha as one of twelve collaborating artists from Nest's Afghan Makers program to create a limited edition ornament for his holiday collection. Through this partnership, Legend and his design team helped showcase Palwasha's work to a much wider audience and generated incredible year-end sales for her shop. We're so proud to see her recognized and celebrated for her beautiful work!

Khawar Walizai Amiri

A Lifelong Commitment to Empowering Women

Khawar Walizai Amiri learned to stitch at the age of fifteen. She was the only one of her sisters to study under her mother, a skilled artisan who inspired her to learn knitting, crochet, and embroidery skills. This work with her mother ignited a life-long love of learning.

Living in the Khost Province of Afghanistan, Khawar was able to attend a special school because her father had a government job. As an adult, she married, had six children, and continued her education. **She became the Head of Women's Affairs for Khost Province and worked to ensure girls had access to schools and education.** One of her biggest successes was organizing a Masters Degree program for women in Khost to study in India, funded by the U.S. Embassy. In 2013, she received a Women of Courage award from the Regional Command East (the government branch overseeing fourteen provinces in eastern Afghanistan).

Following the Taliban offensive and the collapse of the Afghan government in 2021, **Khawar's work for women's rights made her family a target of violence.** They were evacuated to Abu Dhabi, then emigrated to Buffalo, New York, in 2022.

Today, Khawar shares her skills, embroidery traditions, and commitment to empowering women as a member of the Refugee Women's Workshop at Stitch Buffalo. She says, "I am free and this is good work for me to make money and make myself busy." Products by Khawar are available now at the Stitch Buffalo store. Her new black & white hand-embroidered bags are available exclusively at The Shop, inside the Buffalo AKG Art Museum.



Above—Khawar Walizai Amiri speaking about her work for women's rights in Afghanistan.



Above—Khawar's new black & white hand-embroidered bags are available exclusively at The Shop, inside the Buffalo AKG Art Museum.



AWARDS

Pitch 10 Competition

Stitch Buffalo was thrilled to win the 2023 Pitch 10 competition, hosted by United Way of Buffalo and Erie County and Next Generation United. Best of all, the win came with a \$25,000 award to help outfit our community table, where women from around the world can gather at the heart of our new space.



Highmark Bright Blue Futures Award

Stitch Buffalo was one of just sixteen organizations from across five states to receive a "Bright Blue Futures" award from the Highmark Foundation. The award honors organizations with unique ideas to impact community health. It included a \$15,000 grant to support our work.



Environmental Excellence Award

On Earth Day, Erie County Deputy Executive Lisa Chimera presented Stitch Buffalo with the Erie County Environmental Council's "Environmental Excellence Award." The award honored our Second Stitch program for its commitment to reducing textile waste.



EXHIBITS

Elevating Voices

Through exhibits, community art projects, and live demonstrations, Stitch Buffalo strives to elevate the voices of refugee artisans and foster cross-cultural interaction between newcomers and members of the host community. This year's exhibits and events included:

- ***Flock of All Colors***

Solo exhibit. Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens.

- ***Art in Craft Media***

Group exhibit. Burchfield Penney Art Center.

- ***Threading the Needle: Weaving Traditions Into Contemporary Textile Art***

Group exhibit. Cornell University.

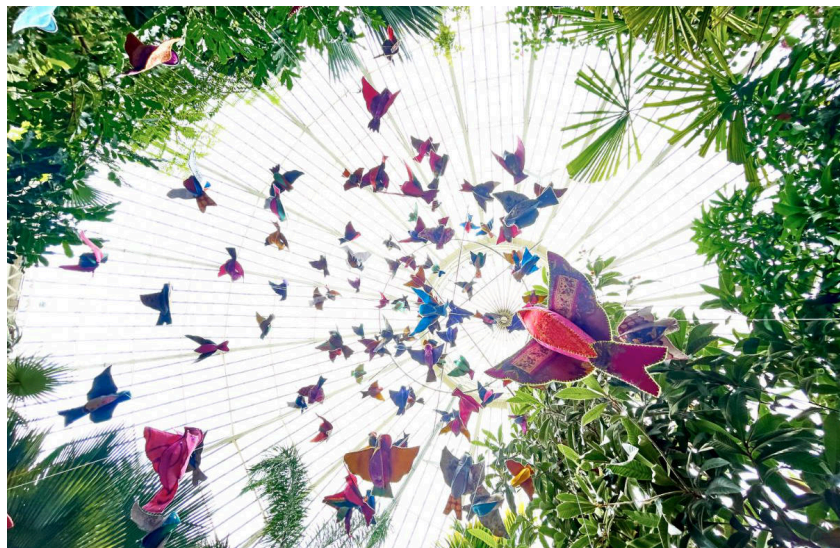
- ***BOX Gallery on Main Street***

Solo exhibit/installation. BOX Gallery adjacent to Hostel Buffalo-Niagara.

- ***The World Is Here***

Community art project, hosted at Stitch Buffalo, WNY Fiber Arts Festival, and Quilts at the Kenan (Kenan Center, Lockport). *See front cover for photo.*

Right (Top to Bottom)—Stitch Buffalo exhibits at Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens, Cornell University, and BOX Gallery.



Power of Peace (2020)
Refugee Women's Workshop at Stitch Buffalo
Bina Bawa, Dambari, Anhez, Paw Eh Bu, Ni Ni Sui, Tika, Z...





SUPPORTERS

Capital Campaign Supporters

We are grateful for the support of the following organizations in supporting Stitch Buffalo's capital campaign and transition to a new store/studio facility.

Arts Services, Inc.

Conable Family Foundation

City of Buffalo Councilmember Joel Feroletto

City of Buffalo Councilmember David Rivera

Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

Erie County Cultural Funding

Evans-Devereux Memorial Fund

Garman Family Foundation

James H. Cummings Foundation

Joe and Kathy Curatolo Foundation

John R. Oishei Foundation

Highmark Foundation

Margaret L. Wendt Foundation

M&T Bank

New York State Council on the Arts

Next Generation United

Providence Fund (Sisters of St. Francis)

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

Rich Family Foundation

Simple Gifts

United Way of Buffalo and Erie County

Vogt Family Foundation

Individual Donors

Stitch Buffalo's plan to renovate a space for our expanded store/studio would not have been possible without **the support of over 400 individual donors from Western New York and beyond!** Thank you so much for believing in our programs and mission.

Additional Supporters

Support through in-kind donations and program/operations funding was also graciously provided by:

Children's Foundation of Erie County

Fiber Art Now

FilzFelt

Josephine Goodyear Foundation

Lake Shore Savings

Nest/Etsy

Orchard Park Friends Meeting

Oxford Pennant

Seedtime Fund

Spinneybeck

Wegmans

Western New York Foundation

OUR TEAM

Staff



Dawne Hoeg
Founder and
Executive Director



Michelle Perkins
Development and
Communications
Director



Linda Crist
Business and Finance
Director



Dakota Follis-Ziarko
Retail Manager



Whitney Crispell
Second Stitch Manager

Thank You!

A special shout-out to all the board members, committee members, volunteers, and community members who invested their time and energy working on our 2023 Capital Campaign, designing our new space, and planning for the transition. Your contribution to Stitch Buffalo's future made the next step possible!

Volunteers

Mindy Airhart
Christine Alford
Diane Arnone
Donna Ball
Ann Clark
Sherri Darrow
Joan Fedyszyn
Jennifer Fendya
Marcia Gutfeld
Marie Hasset
Rolf Hoeg
Nancy Hutchinson
Lillie Klaiman

Holly Koss
Karen Krutchick
Liz Mahoney
Martje McCausland
Kathy Moriarty
Margaret Nielsen
Gretchen Oubre
Sheila Pace
Maria Pacheco
Nancy Peters
Judy Phillips
Jane Potenzo
Hannah Quaintance

Amy Rowland
Carol Sabatino
Ann Sessions
Jean Sinopoli
Mary Skrip

Cheryl Thompson
Marjorie Tritto
Nancy Vaccare
Amy VanDerwater
Celeste Zachritz

We were also assisted by volunteer teams from: M&T Bank (right), United Way of Buffalo and Erie County's Day of Caring (below).



Board of Directors



Patricia Watson
President
Erie County Department of
Senior Services (ret.)



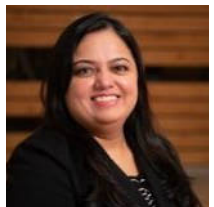
Andrea Kuettel
At large
Of Counsel, Ocotillo
Law



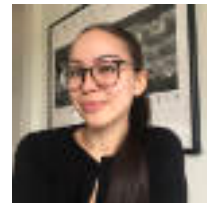
Elizabeth Lovria
Vice President
Westminster Economic
Development Initiative (WEDI)



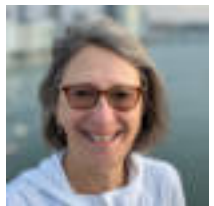
Sarah Richards-Desai
At large
University at Buffalo,
School of Social Work



Meenakshi Gupta
Treasurer
Senior Program Manager,
Rich Products



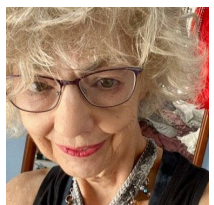
Tashi Fabian Sherpa
International Rescue
Committee (IRC)



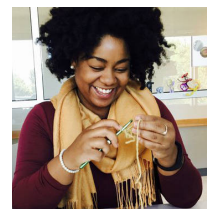
Amy Alvarez
Secretary
Physician(ret.)



Munawara Sultana
Refugee Women's
Workshop at Stitch
Buffalo



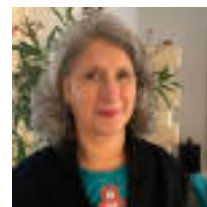
Jane Cameron
Environmental Protection
Bureau of the New York State
Attorney General's Office (ret.)



Naomi Thompson
University at Buffalo,
School of Education



Eve Everette
At large
Elmwood Village Charter
School



Joann Tomasulo
Community Liaison,
Office of NY State
Senator Sean Ryan



Christine Fontaneda
The Buffalo Zoo



Molly Worth
The Factory Buffalo

Stitching Communities Together

STORE/STUDIO (Effective April 2, 2024)

284 Plymouth Avenue, Buffalo, NY, 14213

HOURS

Tuesday—10:00am–4:00pm

Wednesday—10:00am–6:00pm

Thursday—10:00am–4:00pm

Friday—10:00am–4:00pm

Saturday—10:00am–4:00pm

CONTACT

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info@stitchbuffalo.org

Facebook.com/stitchbuffalo

Instagram.com/stitchbuffalo

Youtube.com/@stitchbuffalo

Stitch Buffalo is a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

Below—By request of our participants, we gathered in March 2024 to inaugurate Stitch Buffalo's new home with Hindu, Muslim, and Christian prayers for the health, wellbeing, and prosperity off all who enter.

