



RI Sewing Network

March 2026 Newsletter

RISN Meetings

**Warwick Center for
the Arts**
3259 Post Rd
Warwick, RI 02886

**First Tuesday of the
Month**

SOCIAL HOUR
6:00 PM

SEW & SHARE
6:40 PM

SPEAKER
7:00 PM



October 7, 2025
November 4, 2025
~~December 2, 2025~~
March 3, 2026
April 7, 2026
May 5, 2026
May 19, 2026

Thank you to the members that came out for the March meeting. That weather was horrible. How does the saying go for March; 'In like a lion and out like a lamb?' We can only hope!

For those attending, we were treated to a jaw dropping trunk show by Veronica Mays. She brought dozens of custom quilt inspired garments and quilts to share and with each one there was a lovely story to be heard. There are lots of pictures of her works of art in the newsletter.

Even with a smaller than usual showing, we had many Sew and Shares. Our members were busy during those snowstorms. I think "SNOW DAY – SEW DAY" has a nice rhyme to it. We saw crafts, bags, alterations, children's dresses, doll clothes, a dress and tailored wool coat. All so beautiful.

RISN is looking for a newsletter editor to take over the role beginning this summer. Susan Berlam has decided to retire and do a little travelling and as a result won't be able to make many meetings. The newsletter editor role is a lot of fun as you get to interact with the other Board members, help select the speakers each year, speak with the incredibly talented presenters, and meet more of our members through Sew and Share. There are 6 newsletters published around the 15th of the month (September, October, November, February, March and April) and one Board meeting to attend in the summer. You'll need to attend the meetings to take the pictures, or where you have a conflict, ask someone to sub for you. Diane is exceptionally helpful with the newsletter organization and fresh eyes, so you're not alone on this. Susan will get you set up if you want any assistance. Please contact Diane and/or Susan if interested.

Next month, April 7, Janee Connor is presenting "Honoring Clarie Shaeffer". Janee, while recently retired from her successful business, will be with us to share her talents and what she learned from the famed couture seamstress, Claire Shaeffer.

May 5, Lisa Limer will present "Bela Monde: Wearable Art in Silk and Alpaca" and May 19, Gail Patrice Yellen will present "Sergers Embellishments & Cover Stitches".

We are looking forward to seeing you at the upcoming meetings and sharing some of your makes with the group.

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1. RISN Meeting Schedule and Speaker Line-Up for 2025-2026

RISN 2025/2026 Speakers

Oct 7, 2025	Marc Allen	Dressing you for your Lifestyle
Nov 4, 2025	Emily Boni	Liturgical Garments
Dec 2, 2025	Gail Patrice Yellen	Serger Embellishments & Cover Stitches
Mar 3, 2026	Veronica Mays	African Inspired Quilts & Jackets
Apr 7, 2026	Janee Connor	Honoring Claire Shaeffer
May 5, 2026	Lisa Limer	Bela Monde: Wearable Art in Silk and Alpaca
May 19, 2026	Gail Patrice Yellen	Serger Embellishments & Cover Stitches

2. April 7, 2026: Janee Connor, Honoring Claire Shaeffer

When Claire Shaeffer died in early 2025, she left behind a house full of couture garments and a legacy of sewing knowledge. Not everyone was lucky enough to take classes with her, whether they could afford a week's time away from home or business, or the tuition cost, or just didn't have the opportunity. To read her books is enough to catch a glimpse of her knowledge, and time spent with her at conferences or seminars was always a treat. Join Janee for a look at what Claire brought to the sewing world, a peak into a few of the many books she wrote, and a slideshow of garments she shared that will make you feel like you're there in one of her classes.

Here's a little about Janee Connor and you can read more about her and her business on her website, <https://www.janeesorignals.com/>

A professional seamstress offering custom sewing services since 1990. Janee's Originals has created, altered, and tailored garments for clients both local and from far away. Specialties include bridal alterations and restyling bridal gowns, and creating christening gowns from wedding gowns, in addition to fitting, design and custom garment making. Making clothing fit properly is a fine art, and I have been privileged to learn from the best teachers.

As a charter member of the Association of Sewing and Design Professionals (ASDP; formerly called PACC), I strive to live up to the qualities and standards set by the organization, to make my garments as beautiful on the inside as they are on the outside. Alterations are completed using the same techniques as originally sewn, so even vintage designer garments are entrusted to my studio. I have been involved with the organization for over 31 years. Taking advantage of the annual educational conferences, I've been able to study under the best sewing educators, especially Claire Shaeffer across the country and advance my skills in sewing techniques, design, and fitting. The network of members gives me access to sewing specialists in other areas for both referrals and

guidance. I'm now retired from sewing professionally for others. I am honored to bring to you what I know and learned from Claire Shaeffer.

For those that didn't know much about Claire Shaeffer, take a few minutes to read a beautiful article in Threads that details her incredible accomplishments in haute couture and the fashion and design industry. <https://www.threadsmagazine.com/2025/01/11/shaeffertribute>

3. Veronica Mays – Recap March 3, 2026

African Inspired Quilts & Jackets

<https://www.conakysquilts.com/>



Veronica Mays, a Rhode Island native, whose background is in writing and drama, dazzled us in March with her life story and quilt trunk show comprised of dozens of works of art, including wearable quilt coats and gorgeous unique art quilts depicting portraits and applique designs. Veronica grew up in RI, graduated from RI College, worked in the newspaper industry (Newport Daily News), taught high school English in RI, Alaska and Italy, and found her quilting passion while living in Alaska in 2004. But it wasn't until 2015 when she really pursued quilting and was totally hooked. She quickly expanded her sewing machine collection to a current high of 16 machines and told us her favorite sewing notion is her walking foot! She owns one long arm, 2 Featherweights, and a plethora of other machines. She finished her teaching career in 2019 and never looked back.

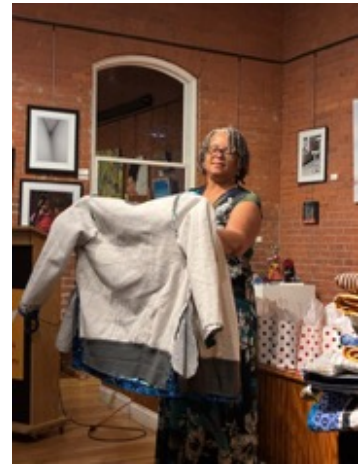
Veronica has had the opportunity to answer nationwide calls for artists to have her works travel to various states for display. This has really allowed her to expand her knowledge and awareness of what is trending, while remaining true to herself and continuing to find her artistic voice. Veronica was featured in the January 2023 edition of Quilt Folk magazine which was devoted to quilters in Rhode Island. In July 2024 she was selected by Rhode Island Monthly magazine in their "Best of Rhode Island" issue as an "Artisan to Watch". Additionally, Mays had been the coordinator of the Five Star Souper Kitchen at Community Baptist Church in Newport for the past 20 years. She volunteers at the soup kitchen every Saturday. She served on several local boards including Bank Newport, ReNewport, AIDS Quilts RI and more.

Veronica shared a story of her experience with a quilt group associated with a shop from Las Vegas named "Sew Yeah". This group supports non-profit efforts and when Veronica shared that she was interested in making 100 "hygiene filled bags" for a local soup kitchen, the "Sew Yeah" group stepped in. They sent Veronica 1500 bags for her project! Veronica was able to distribute the bags to numerous soup kitchens in the area.

Much of Veronica's work uses African-inspired fabric. Veronica's African fabric inspiration may have come from her mother's visit to Ghana in 1988. Her mom brought back authentic African fabric which Veronica has used in numerous quilts. Veronica's mom came to our meeting and modeled one of the beautiful coats. She beamed with pride showing off her daughter's exceptional quilting talent.

Veronica not only quilts, she writes beautiful poetry inspired by her quilting passion. Her book "Heart Wide Open" is a collection of quilt-related and Ghana-inspired poems based on the author's art quilt creations and her awe-inspiring trip to Accra, the capitol of Ghana. Mays' inspiration comes from her everyday art life as well as her love of people and places.

You can see more of her work and her book at the link above. Below are a few pictures from the trunk show.









4. Sew and Share March 2026

For Sew & Share, Susan Berlam, Newsletter Editor, will take your name, photo and details about your 'Share' for the Newsletter. Please be sure to “check-in” with Susan before you share so she can get the details. Susan will have a sign-up sheet for you to write down the details yourself to be sure she gets it right in the Newsletter.

Emily Fournier shared her 1860's wrapper dress (pattern from Etsy) and mostly handsewn, undergarment (pattern Simplicity).



Mary Morse showed us her alteration hack to lengthen her daughter's bridesmaid dress. Mary cleverly inserted a band of matching netting near the hem line. The finished garment looks amazing!



Mary Jo Hines sewed a beautiful stretch velvet dress and wool jacket. The dress pattern is “Justin” by Itch to Stitch and the jacket pattern is “By Popular Demand” by Cutting Line Design. Mary Jo explained that many of the patterns from Itch to Stitch offer bust sizes from A to DD so you don't have to do your own large or small bust adjustments. Mary Jo also shared that she often uses Copy Shop Print to print digital patterns on one piece of paper instead of printing out dozens of pages and taping small sheets of paper together. Great Tips!



Diane Martin showed us two adorable outfits she made for her granddaughters. The romper was made from a changing pad cover, at the request of her daughter. Both the romper and the sundress were based on the pattern “Dandelion Romper” by Oh Me, Oh My and is available on Etsy. So cute!



Cindy King shared the cutest “*Scrappy Doll*”.

Yes, “*Scrappy Doll*” is a thing! Cindy told us to Google *Scrappy Doll* and you will see cute and bizarre assortment of dolls! Cindy is not kidding. What a great way to use up scraps – but it looks to me that it could be addictive 😊!

Thank you, Cindy, for sharing a fun outlet and way to use up your fabric scraps!



Karen Penn wanted to share a cute outfit she made for an American Girl Doll at our meeting but instead gave us a teaser that evening and then sent the pictures to Susan Berlam to share here. The pictures are also on our FaceBook page.

That doll is going to look super cute in her new summer outfit!



5. FaceBook Sharing

All Annual and Premier members are welcome to join the RISN private FaceBook page. Access is not automatically granted with membership applications. Please be sure to request access from the FaceBook Administrators if interested. To become a member of the RISN FaceBook group go to the search bar and type in RISN Exclusive. When it brings you to our page there are two questions you need to answer. Answer those and hit submit. Once the administrators are notified by Facebook the record will be checked to make sure you are a current member, and you will be added.

There was a lot of interesting posts this month on happenings in the area and recorded lectures (all past now) and several shared “how to videos” that I’m not able to copy here. If you’re not on FB, you are missing some interesting things. Here’s just a few things I can share here.

Rose O’Koren

I thought I would share my latest designs for the Doll Collection 2026. I thought aprons would be cute. They do not take up much fabric or trim. I am glad I didn't get rid of my scraps of fabric and trims. I was short of red rick rack and asked my neighbor if she had some, she had to google what rick rack was. I found white in my stash. I love snowstorms, it is great sewing weather.



<https://miami.dolcegabbanaexhibition.com>

Susan Berlam shared a notice of the Dolce and Gabbana Exhibit “From the Heart to the Hands” going on in Miami until June 14.

I’m ready to book my plane ticket ☺. Who’s coming with me?

A groundbreaking exhibition

Take a journey into the minds of two of the fashion world’s most celebrated designers in the first ever exhibition of the brand’s most revered creations, tracing the translation of Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana’s ideas from the heart through to their realization, by hand.

Susan Berlam posted her Snow Day, Sew Day makes (also shared at Sew and Share). An Italian wool and leather strap handbag (Simplicity 1387) and a Zippy Bag made from quilting cotton and linen (Sallie Tomato pattern and bag notions). The apron is another Splash Fabric project. And the two pullovers are for my granddaughter (Low Land Kids Half Zip Sweater pattern).



Susan Berlam posted that there is a new fabric store coming to Westerly, RI. Forget me Not Fabrics opened March 5. They have a Facebook page and are located across from the railroad station. They advertise themselves as offering quilting and sewing supplies and offer quilting, knitting and crocheting lessons.

6. Other News and Interests

Dolce & Gabbana Exhibition, From the Heart to the Hands. Through June 2026.

<https://miami.dolcegabbanaexhibition.com>

Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center & Museum

“Style & Substance” is on display through November. Located adjacent to the theater lobby, the museum houses letters, photos, home movies, costumes, personal wardrobe items, and other memorabilia exploring the life, career, and legacy of a Connecticut native and Hollywood icon.

300 Main Street, Old Saybrook CT

thekate.org

Fashion and Design Exhibition at Peabody Essex Museum, Salem MA

<https://www.pem.org/exhibitions/fashion-and-design>

Costume & Textiles at Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford CT

<https://www.thewadsworth.org/explore/collection/costume-textiles/>

Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style is at The King’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace. Spring to Autumn 2026

<https://www.rct.uk/about/news-and-features/largest-exhibition-of-queen-elizabeth-iis-fashion-announced>

RISN Raffles

All meeting attendees are handed a raffle ticket when they check-in for the meeting. Anyone that participates in the optional Sew and Share portion of the meeting will receive an extra raffle ticket. Following the speaker presentation Mary Jo raffles off several goody bags to lucky winners. You never know what fun prizes await.

This month, 10 lucky attendees won a mini, rechargeable, handheld sewing machine vacuum! That was a pretty cool prize!



RISN Website

Be sure to check the RISN website [HERE](#) for archived Newsletters, updates, and events.

Gift, Sell, Buy, or Services

Urge to Purge? Members who have sewing/craft items for gifting or sale are invited to set up a table at our meetings. You need to bring home any leftovers.

Do you have a sewing/craft related business? Why not consider showcasing/selling your items at a meeting? Please limit your selling space to one table. You can also post your sale items or what you might be looking to obtain on our Facebook page.

7. Meeting Venue – Warwick Center for the Arts

Warwick Center for the Arts

3259 Post Road, Warwick, RI

Address for Parking:

3273 Post Road, Warwick, RI

<https://warwickcfa.org/about-wcfa/>

For directions, we suggest you use your GPS, however, here are a few details you might find helpful.

From RT 117 go straight past the first rotary, turn right at the second rotary (Dunkin Donuts), and a short distance to the next rotary go 3/4 around onto Post Road. Immediately watch for the first driveway on the left (before the Town Hall) for parking in the back. There is also parking on the street if you passed the WCFA (Armory building).

For 2025/26 we want to strongly encourage our members to consider carpooling! We hope that by doing so, you get to know one another a little better AND bring along someone that might not want to make the drive on their own.

If you aren't sure who to ask and want to carpool or need a ride, send Diane Martin an email and she will forward the request to the Network.

2025-2026 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Your completed application with a check made out to RI Sewing Network or RISN should be mailed directly to:

Jo Ann Kunitz
11 Lee Rd.
Barrington, RI 02806

Membership includes six issues of our Newsletter, membership to RISN FaceBook page, plus discounts to meetings and other events as well as email news.

Annual Membership: New members will be asked to pay an Annual \$10 registration fee for the 2025-2026 season which includes the email notifications, Newsletter, and access to the private FaceBook group. For each in-person meeting, a \$10 fee will be collected at the door from Annual Members.

Nonmembers: The nonmember fee for meetings is \$10 per meeting. Non-members will not receive any of the additional benefits (Newsletter, emails, FaceBook, etc.).

Premier Membership: The Premier membership fee is \$40. With this Premiere Membership, the \$10 annual registration fee is waived and there are no additional fees for attending meetings. Premier Membership includes the email notifications, Newsletter, and access to the private FaceBook group.

For members that want to participate with the FaceBook page, they must request to be included.

To become a member of the RISN FaceBook group go to the search bar and type in RISN Exclusive. When it brings you to our page there are two questions you need to answer. Answer those and hit submit. Once the administrators are notified by FaceBook the record will be checked to make sure you are a current member, and you will be added.

The Registration form is below and on our website: www.rhodeislandsewingnetwork.com

<u>RISN Membership Application 2025-2026</u>			
Last Name: _____			
First Name: _____			
Email: _____			
Mailing Address: _____			
Street			
_____		_____	_____
City/Town	State	Zip	
Preferred Telephone Contact: _____			
Please select your membership category.			
Annual (\$10) _____			
Premier (\$40) _____			