



RI Sewing Network

April 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

NEWSLETTER WRITER NEEDED FOR 2026 / 2027 SEASON

RISN is looking for a newsletter editor to take over the role beginning this summer. 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. Please contact Diane and/or Susan if interested.

For a welcome change, our April meeting didn't mean driving in the dark in the rain. It's such a welcome time of year to see the long days finally arrive. For some, maybe this means a few more hours at the sewing machine and planning that Spring/Summer wardrobe.

Janee Connor offered an insider glimpse of the life and incredible couture talent of Claire Shaeffer at our April meeting. Janee shared her personal interactions with Claire, the classes she attended, and many stories and photos about Claire and her amassed collection of over 1700 garments. Photos from the evening and a few snippets of the presentation are provided in the newsletter.

There are a few additions to the museum offerings: many in NYC. I think a lot of us miss the bus trips to NYC for fabric shopping. If you book Amtrak tickets far in advance you can get very cheap tickets. Buy refundable and you can't go wrong.

Next month we have two meetings. May 5 Lisa Limer will present "Bela Monde: Wearable Art in Silk and Alpaca" and May 19, Gail Patrice Yellen will present "Serge Embellishments & Cover Stitches". A brief description of what they will present and discuss is describe inside.

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

This is the last official newsletter of the 2025/2026 Season. Look for photos and summaries of the May meetings in the next newsletter September 2026.

Happy Sewing Everyone!

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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. May 5, 2026: Lisa Limer, Bela Monde: Wearable Art in Silk and Alpaca

Lisa's professional career for over 20 years was as a professional photographer working for national and international magazines in travel and fashion. Her assignments took her to over 40 countries and won numerous magazine awards.

In 2016, Lisa received a Providence Design Catalyst grant, which enabled her transition from photography to textile design. For the past 10 years, she has devoted herself to building Bela Monde, an outerwear and accessories brand. The brand is known for its silk prints and wearables inspired by Lisa's extensive travel experience. Lisa's vision is to utilize wearables as a canvas for storytelling, weaving tales of beauty and inspiration from the diversity of global culture. Drawing upon her two-decade career as a professional travel photographer, each pattern is transformed from her archive of original photographs, each with its own story to tell. While the patterns weave together our global journey Bela Monde's unwavering commitment to using only 100% sustainable fabrics defines our design ethos. Each one-of-a-kind or limited-edition offering is intentionally crafted to support our goal of prioritizing quality while minimizing waste. Printed in NYC on 100% silk and handsewn in our studio in Providence, RI, our offerings include silk scarves, wraps, dresses, and robe coats. At the core of our outerwear collection are classic silhouettes designed to radiate elegance, sophistication, and the luxurious sensation of silk against your skin. Keepsakes that are collected and cherished.

3. May 19, 2026: Gail Patrice Yellen: Serger Embellishments & Cover Stitches

Let me show you how to take your serger to a whole new creative level with decorative serger stitches and specialty threads. Just a few tweaks can turn utility stitches into stunning embellishments. I'll demonstrate my favorite overlock and cover/chainstitch techniques. Did you know that you can blend multiple threads in a looper? We'll finish with time for Q & A.

A serger expert, Gail teaches serger basics and advanced techniques. She teaches workshops across the country including Houston Quilt Festival, machine dealers and Craftsy. Zoom classes keep Gail interactive with sewists around the world. Gail is a BERNINA Ambassador and author of two books, Serger Essentials: Master the basics and beyond! and It's All About Embellishment (digital) and her patterns include serger skill building techniques. Check out YouTube.com/GailYellen for free tutorials.

4. Recap April 7, 2026: Janee Connor, Honoring Claire Shaeffer

For those that loved to sew and design couture, Claire Shaeffer was a couture expert and educator known worldwide. Her passing in January 2025, at 85 years old, was an enormous loss to the sewing community. Janee Connor was fortunate to have studied under her and brought a snippet of Claire's life, talents and collections to RISN.

Janee took 4 classes with Claire and met her on at least 10 separate occasions, often at sewing conferences where Janee would take the opportunity to interact with Claire and learn more about her. Claire wrote at least 25 books and received numerous awards over her lifetime. She acquired more than 1700 new and used garments, representing numerous famous designers. Many garments came to her from museums which decommissioned the garment, while others she found herself through on-line research. Without harming the garment, Claire would study every piece to understand the design, stitching, construction techniques. Janee said that Claire was happy to acquire slightly damaged or torn garments which made it easier to peek into the insides of the garment for a closer look. At the end of Janee's talk she showed numerous slides of garments from Claire's Collection.

Vogue patterns offered 45 couture patterns by Claire. None of them are in print today. According to Janee, Vogue often expressed concern when Claire would insist on detailed instructions sometimes 8 or more pages long to accompany her pattern. Claire maintained that the detail was necessary to ensure success in constructing a couture garment. *<I think we would all agree that detailed instructions are more than welcome when it comes to replicating couture design>*. These patterns were all drafted from garments in her collection.

Janee talked about the many books Claire wrote and shared a few of her favorite tips from Claire's books.

'Price it Right': an early publication on how to establish pricing. This one is difficult to find but still can provide valuable insights when starting a business.

'Fabric Sewing Guide': this might be Janee's favorite book. She said that she often refers to Claire's Burn Test Chart to help her identify fabric content.

'Complete Book of Sewing Shortcuts': contains an extensive glossary of terms which includes terms many of us have never heard of. Bluffed Edge – a finished edge but not topstitched. Bight – width of

a zig zag stitch. Course – cross grain of knit fabric. The book also includes tips on narrow hems and invisibly stitched patch pockets.

‘**Couture Cardigan Sewing**’ – is the bible for the French jacket.

While the industry lost a priceless couture artist, Claire Shaeffer leaves behind many talented students, Janee included, that can continue to teach and inspire couture sewing. Janee specifically mentioned two women who worked extensively with Claire; Barbara McCormick and Linda Homan, founders of Love Couture Sewing (www.lovecouturesewing.com).

When asked about her favorite sewing notions, Janee first raved over her rotary cutter, which she uses almost exclusively for cutting. She mentioned that she goes through at least 50 blades a year! But the real surprise was the magnetic cutting board and ruler she uses from Sew Tites. Check it out here:

<https://www.sewtites.com/collections/sew-magnetic-cutting-system>

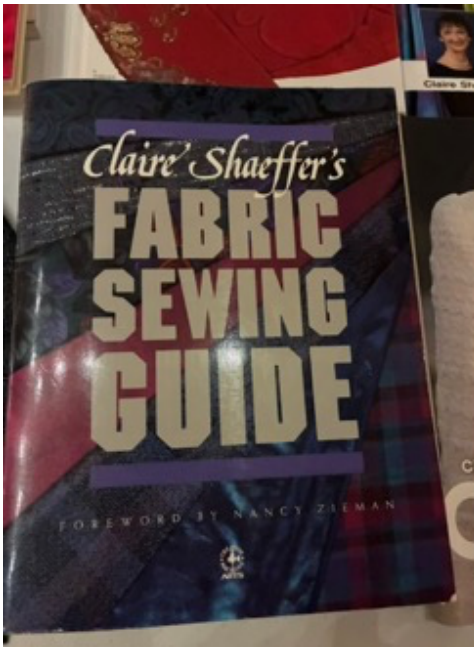
Another must have per Janee is her adhesive sewing machine light from Madame Sew. The LED light strip can be trimmed to any size and easily mounted to your machine to give you light where you need it. Here’s the link. <https://madamsew.com/products/sewing-machine-light-strip>

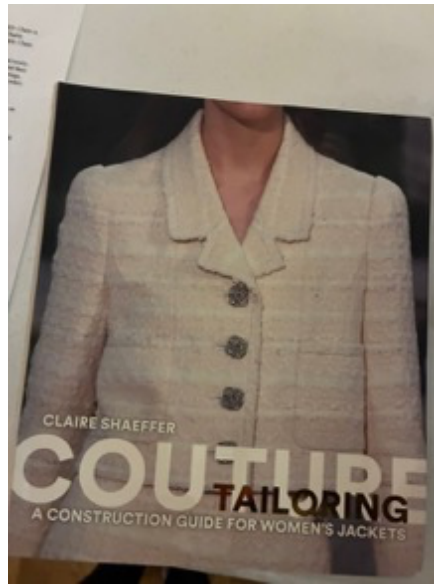
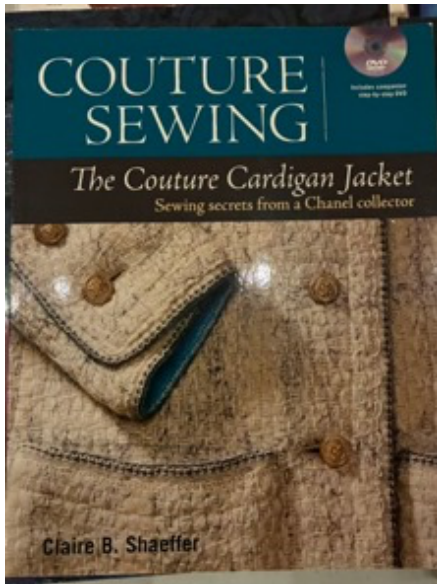
While Janee is retiring you can read more about her and her business on her website, <https://www.janeesoriginals.com/>

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>







5. Sew and Share April 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.

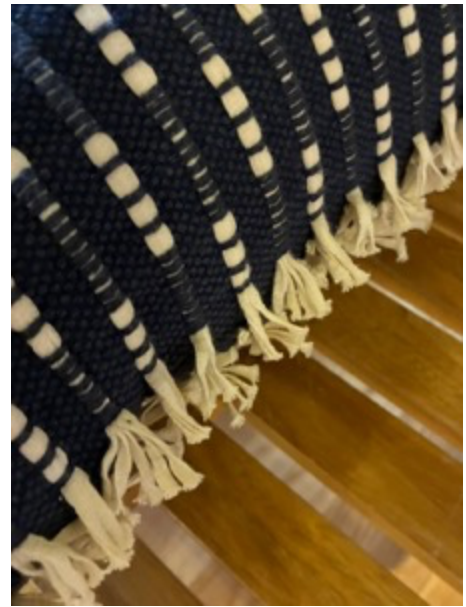
Cyndee Tully shared a beautiful blouse she made using Love Notions Pattern, Rhapsody Blouse. Cyndee said the pattern has great instructions, is easy to make and best of all, not buttons.

Very pretty, Cyndee!



JoAnn Kunitz showed us a lovely pillow she made from one strip of heavy woven upholstery weight cotton which lent itself perfectly to creating a self-fringed edge. JoAnn used her “French Jacket” skills to create the fringe.

It looks amazing!



Donna Mansolillo showed us another adorable dress she made for her granddaughter using a cotton border print she purchased from Americana Fabrics in Waterford, CT. Donna said she sewed the dress while healing a broken wrist which made it even more challenging.

As an aside Donna told us of how she “channeled Deepika” (founder of Pattern Review and past guest speaker at RISN) and led a mending class at a local library. She encouraged us to do something similar and give back to the community too.



Mary Jo Hines shared another make using the Itch to Stitch Tustin dress pattern. Here she used a faux cashmere knit for the dress and added 9 inches to the length to suit her taste.

Another fabulous make. It's beautiful,
Mary Jo.



Emily Fournier showed us an adorable full-length romper made as a gift for a friend. She used a Batman knit fabric she purchased from Etsy. The Simplicity pattern called for woven fabric, but Emily substituted the lightweight knit and it worked perfectly.

Someone is a lucky gift recipient!



Rowena Burke shared a beautiful fleece triangle shawl. She used the Triangle Shawl pattern by Puff and Pencil. While the pattern called for a single layer fabric, Rowena made it out of 2 layers of polar fleece.

It looks supper cozy and warm, Rowena!



6. 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.

Just in time for the Easter holiday, **Rowena Burke** shared a post from Amy’s Fabric Treasures. The shop reminded their followers of a quilt show in Framingham, MA April 11-12. But apart from that, the post showed a very clever wreath that appears to be made from heirloom hankies. Who doesn’t have a drawer full of them from their grannies and aunts? I suppose you can starch them up good and maybe they will hold their shape.



Rowena Burke also shared a broadcast during Women’s History Month that featured the designer, Claire McCardell, who forever changed fashion. The broadcast was held March 12 and featured the author Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson who discussed her first biography, Claire McCardell, *The Designer Who Set Women Free*. You can watch a recording of the broadcast at the link below and learn more about the book.

<https://www.americanancestors.org/video-library/claire-mccardell-designer-who-set-women-free-author-elizabeth-evitts-dickinson>

For those that want to be inspired by ‘red carpet attire’, **Rose O’Koren** suggested that we check out the book written by Christian Siriano, titled “The New Red Carpet”. As Rose mentioned, the book is filled with great photos of red-carpet outfits.

Here’s a link to Vie Magazine which captures a little bit about the designer and his book.

<https://viemagazine.com/article/christian-siriano-the-new-red-carpet/>

Rose O’Koren shared a tip for those that want to watch The Great British Sewing Bee. Here’s what Rose said.

I just got a Roku for my sewing room. I have been watching The Great British Sewing Bee non-stop. It's amazing to me how these sewers get on without knowing how to sew an invisible zipper. I couldn't do the transformation challenge, but it is so addicting to watch.

7. 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

Note: the Fashion & Design Exhibition will be closed May 18 – August 1.

<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>

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Costume Art, May 10, 2026 – Jan 10, 2027.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/costume-art>

The Museum at FIT, NYC

Doll Dressing, Sep 16, 2026 – Jan 4, 2027

<https://www.fitnyc.edu/museum/exhibitions/index.php?exhibitions=upcoming>

museum of arts and design, NYC

<https://madmuseum.org/exhibitions>

There isn’t anything specific to fashion currently, but some of the other exhibits deserve a look.

Savannah College of Arts and Design (SCAD FASH), Atlanta GA

DIOR: Crafting Fashion, April 15 – Aug 23, 2026

<https://www.scadfash.org/exhibitions/exhibition-dior-crafting-fashion>

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, Mary Jo raffled off sewing themed HOT SOCKS!



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.

8. 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) _____		