

Sew Elegant

Each student gets their own sewing machine, still in the box. At a reduced price and with great anticipation, they opened these boxes on Monday and started with the Owner's Manual. How quaint. Such ownership!

Nine machines buzz as I enter the Field House. Leaders Kerri, Tina, Ann and Carolyn also sit at whirring machines, arms held outward in the traditional seated sewing position. Each with a foot on the gas pedal. Insert onomatopoeic words.

A trip to the fabric store built in on day 1: choosing fabrics for color, weight, pattern, type of fabric, and cost. These girls (no boys this year) all have vinyl tape measures strung across their shoulders, hanging down the fronts of torsos bent toward the machines.

"Mistake!" someone calls out. "Redo!" As if they're celebrating mistakes. Might as well, since one has a choice. Rip out the seam, start over. Lots of do-overs, like life.

One student puts the finishing touches on her pink flamingo pillow, one last opening to sew up.

Another completes her tote bag, a striking pattern of blues and off white.

Another holds her pajama pants to her legs, comparing lengths: the fabric vs. the flesh and bone.

Four ironing boards stand off to the side, waiting to be useful. Irons at the ready too.

These girls are busy, hardworking and ultra-focused. They speak to me but do not look up from their machines. Foot to the pedal, eyes fixed on the needle, hands perilously close to continual puncture.

The miraculous needle and thread meets the miracle of fabric. And learning not just to sew, also how to create, how to choose, buy, listen, measure, assess, make mistakes and finish making something you can even use or wear.

Ah.

Stephen Ringo

Casual Observer