

**For Immediate Release**

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## ***Pittsburgh Opera Makers' Program uses Thread Ground to Good™ fabric to help local entrepreneurs hone their sewing skills***

**Pittsburgh, PA...**

Pittsburgh Opera partnered with [Thread](#), [Modesto Studios](#), and others on an innovative entrepreneurial pilot program this summer.



The Pittsburgh Opera Makers' Program brought five participants to Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters for a four week training program, where they learned advanced sewing techniques from Pittsburgh Opera wardrobe staff. In order to learn skills such as installing zippers, grommets, screen printing and serging, participants made fabric pencil cases.

The pencil cases were made with Ground to Good™ fabric purchased from Thread, a Pittsburgh-based fabric maker. Their innovative fabric is made from plastic bottles collected in the poorest neighborhoods in

Haiti and Honduras, combined with select American cotton. Thread usually works with larger customers such as Timberland and Cole Haan, but was excited to make their Ground to Good™ fabric available to Pittsburgh Opera in the smaller quantity needed for this program. The fabric used in the program contained 700 plastic bottles, which represented 43.75 pounds of waste and saved 22,430 gallons of water.

The pencil cases are being donated to Pittsburgh area schools.

The Pittsburgh Opera Makers' Program featured guest speakers from [Urban Innovation21](#), [Contemporary Craft](#), [Thrill Mill](#), the [University of Pittsburgh Innovation Institute](#), [strawberryluna](#), [NEXTpittsburgh](#), [Alternate Histories](#), the [Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board](#), and [PA Career Link Pittsburgh](#). They talked about topics such as how to set up your own store on Etsy, employment opportunities, and various entrepreneurial matters.

"The summer is the off-season for our costume shop", said Pittsburgh Opera Director of Production Tara Kovach. "This was a great way to keep our own wardrobe people employed, while simultaneously helping local makers and entrepreneurs who want to expand their skill set and help the environment."

Ian Rosenberger, CEO and Founder of Thread said, "We are proud to play a part in this inspiring story with the Pittsburgh Opera. Every yard of Thread's fabric supports jobs and entrepreneurs in the poorest parts of the world so it's fitting that we can do the same in our own home town. We look

forward to seeing and supporting the future graduates of the program so together we can turn plastic trash into products people love."

Pittsburgh resident Nisha Blackwell was one of the program participants. Nisha makes bowties from reclaimed fabric. She was self-taught, and came to the program so she could learn more complex sewing techniques from professional, expert stitchers. Through the program, Nisha learned a variety of ways to improve her operations. "I just feel so much more confident with my sewing machine and my sewing ability", says Blackwell. "To be able to keep incorporating different skills and different techniques is essentially having a bigger impact on our environment." She is now on [Etsy](#), where millions of potential customers from around the world can view and purchase her bowties. She also sells her ties on her own website, [Knotzland.com](#).

[Hear Nisha's story in this YouTube video.](#)

Pittsburgh Opera intends to expand the Makers' Program next summer.

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#### **About Pittsburgh Opera**

Pittsburgh Opera celebrates its 78th season in 2016-17. Established by five intrepid women in 1939, Pittsburgh Opera is viewed as one of the most vibrant opera organizations in the U.S., with a rich artistic tradition, outstanding educational programs, an acclaimed artist training program, and a progressive outlook toward the future. Its green initiative culminated in LEED® Silver certification for its Strip District headquarters, and its capacity as a true community partner has increased significantly under General Director Christopher Hahn's leadership. Learn more at [pittsburghopera.org](#).

#### **About Thread**

Thread, a Certified B Corporation based in Pittsburgh, PA, transforms waste from the poorest, most disenfranchised places on the planet into jobs. Each product made with Thread™ yarn supports income opportunities in low-income countries, while cleaning streets, neighborhoods, and waterways. See how at [www.threadinternational.com](#) or follow the Ground to Good™ story [@threadintl](#). The catalog of products made with Thread fabric are available at [www.ThreadAndPrint.com](#).