

One Thread Collective

One Thread Collective

Impact Report

2024



One Thread
Collective

Dear Supporters,

What a joy it is to reflect on last year's victories and share them with our beloved community that helped make it all possible! I think you'll be surprised at the impact you've had on Wayuu women in La Guajira, Colombia via our small-but-mighty organization.

This report is meant to recap our accomplishments, summarize where we still need to grow, and give you an idea for what to look forward to in the year ahead. If an idea or question arises as you read this report, please know that I am always keen to connect with you in person or via email, phone or zoom!

I am filled with gratitude for each and every one of you, and hopeful that you will continue to deepen your support because we're just getting started!

Wishing you all a year full of abundance!

Jackie Gilbert
Executive Director



A HUGE thank you to our 2024 Members!

Members include anyone who signs up for recurring donations of at least \$25 per month or \$300 per calendar year. They receive a special member newsletter, invitations to member-only events, discounts to our ticketed events, and 15% off our entire collection of handwoven goods.

Allison Hovey
Alexandria Piccinini
Caleigh Hernandez
Carlos Lezcaro
Caroline MacDougall
Carolyn Chandler
Celsea Jenkins
Cheri Myers
Christy Foley
Collin Burnett
Cristi Walden
Daniel Elkin
Gabi Pereverziev
Heidi Stilwell
Holly Sherwin
Ilan MacAdam-Somer
Jessie Nord
Jordan Dorian
Karen Secore

Kate Johnstone
Kit Thomas
Lisa Faitell
Lisa Proctor Hawkins
Lucy Gamble
LUSH Cosmetics
Lynn Montgomery
Margaret Loncki
Marsha Gomez
Melissa Christou
Mike Critelli
Molly Green
Peter Kraus
Susan Budinger
Teana David
Tori Stedman
Trip Hawkins
Tyler Olsen

And to our event sponsors:

Atost California Apertif
Babcock Winery
Black Sheep Restaurant
Cimarrón Tequila
Cutler's Distillery
Cuyama Lamb
Earth Trine Farm
El Zapato SB
Fess Parker Winery
Grassini Family Vineyards

HL Fisheries
ILLUMINATE Film Festival
M. Special Brewery
La Paloma Restaurant
Licores Perros
Santa Barbara Fish Market
Third Window Brewery
Tutti Frutti Farm
Twenty Four Blackbirds
Yoga Soup

Meet Our Team



Jackie Gilbert
Co Founder/Executive Director



Megan Battaglia
Co Founder/Board Member



Nicole Borboroglu
Assistant Director



Paula Restrepo
Program Coordinator



Rosa Carracedo
Quality Control Manager



Yamile Vangrieken
Wayuu Cultural Liaison



Canela Di Marco
Volunteer



Miko Tollefson
Intern



Linnea Skinner
Intern

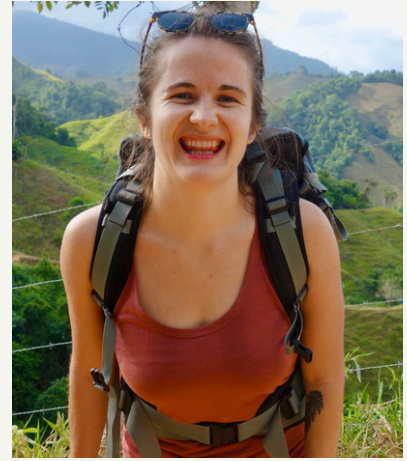
Our Board of Directors



Katharine Johnstone



Margaret Loncki



Lucy Gamble



Caroline MacDougall



Caleigh Hernandez



Adriana Gutierrez

And nearly 100 Wayuu weavers from 8 remote villages!



Weaving possibilities into reality

OUR STORY

While working in La Guajira, Colombia in 2018 and 2019, co founders Jackie Gilbert and Megan Battaglia witnessed first-hand the many challenges Wayuu families face – food insecurity, water scarcity, corruption, state abandonment, displacement, environmental degradation, and climate change have all led to extreme poverty.

Despite all of the NGOs operating in La Guajira, the Wayuu families Jackie and Megan worked with seemed to be trapped in a constant state of emergency, not knowing how they would buy rice for their next meal. But one thing was very clear – **the women were devoted to giving their children a better future.**

These women were not interested in charity; rather, they wanted help with selling their handwoven mochilas. Inspired by the tenacity, artistry and entrepreneurial spirit of these women, Jackie and Megan joined forces with Paula Restrepo at Fundación Talento Colectivo, a La Guajira-based nonprofit that has provided training programs for Wayuu weavers for more than a decade.

Together, they made it their mission to create the most ethical and sustainable international mochila brand in the world!

What started as a small social enterprise has grown into an 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that is working to lift more than 100 families out of poverty while pioneering a new type of ethical fashion that goes far beyond fair trade.

OUR MISSION

One Thread Collective empowers Wayuu women weavers in La Guajira, Colombia with fair trade income, business skills, microloans, and leadership opportunities to help them transcend poverty and build sustainable futures for their communities.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead

2024 IMPACT

at-a-glance

28

workshops
sponsored

20

interest-free
micro loans

15

new
leaders
trained

Fair trade work for

100

Wayuu women

4

new
product
innovations

2

community-led projects
launched

8

cellphones for
artisans

3.5k

in donations &
emergency relief

Month-By Month Recap

JANUARY

We helped 5 artisans open bank accounts for the first time and showed them how to use online banking, an important step towards financial independence.

Why is this important? While opening a bank account might not seem like a big deal to us, most Wayuu women live in a cash economy and have no experience with the western banking system.

Taking advantage of their inexperience, banks will often tack on erroneous charges to their accounts, such as life insurance policies that the artisans don't even realize they are consenting to. That is why our Program Coordinator, Paula, accompanies them to the bank and helps them navigate the process.



FEBRUARY

Jackie and Canela went to La Guajira to visit the team and shoot a short film from the perspective of our artisan leaders with videographer Sebastian Buffa.

Our 5-minute piece entitled "Dream Weavers: A day in the life of Indigenous Wayúu women artisans of One Thread Collective" is now available on YouTube. Please share it widely!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzaSq9T3POU>

We also welcomed a new cohort of artisans at our first workshop of the year for the Yala'yalaa School for Positive Leadership and Community-led Entrepreneurship.

This course is meant to coach and support the artisans as they find creative solutions to issues in their remote villages (e.g water and food insecurity) while generating income for women. **Yala'yalaa**, by the way, is Wayuunaiki for strong, brave empowered, and resilient.



MARCH

We held our first Advanced Leadership Workshop, a new 9-month course for our 8 artisan leaders who graduated from the Yala'yalaa School in previous years.

These half-day workshops focus on soft skills like positive leadership, how to manage a team, and how to work with customers located outside of the region, with the intention of the artisans themselves establishing a weaving collective of their own.

Our goal has always been to connect the artisans with buyers and other brands looking to work directly with Wayuu weavers (not for them to have to rely on One Thread Collective as their only source of income for the rest of their lives!) If we're able to help them establish clients in and outside of Colombia, we will be freed up to start working with new communities that need our support!



APRIL

We collected used iPhones from our community in Santa Barbara to donate to the women, and gave some of our artisans interest-free micro loans to buy brand new phones.

Why is this important? If Wayuu women do not have a way to communicate with customers, their only option as weavers trying to provide for their families is to travel to the city and sell their mochilas to a middleman in the marketplace where their work is undervalued. Wayuu women earn as little as two dollars in profit (and sometimes even lose money!) when they sell their mochilas in the market!

Please reach out if you have a working cell phone that you would like to donate to an artisan – if it's an iPhone, we can only accept models 7, XR, XS and above, since the older versions are not compatible with Whatsapp and other applications necessary for this work. (Androids tend to be easier for the artisans to use!)



MAY

Jackie and Nicole led One Thread Collective's first annual Solidarity Trip to La Guajira with a group from Santa Barbara plus one of our board members, Lucy Gamble.

Mike Critelli wrote a wonderful article in the Santa Barbara Independent about this trip with photos captured by his wife, Jill. The article is called "Little Thread's of Change: Wayúu Should Care About Colombia." Give it a read if you haven't already!

<https://www.independent.com/2024/05/29/little-threads-of-change/>



This month we also provided financial support for Elvia, the manager of La Casa Para los Niños (a program One Thread Collective supports), who was suffering from dengue fever and unable to care for her children.

Elvia was in the hospital for over a week, during which Paula arranged for someone to watch her five children and cook for them. We are often supporting the women through emergencies like this, because the majority of them are sole earners or single mothers, and when they cannot work, they have no savings to fall back on.



JUNE

With our partnering organization, Fundación Talento Colectivo, we facilitated an order of 100 mochilas for the 25th anniversary of the Agrarian Bank, Colombia's state-run agriculture development bank.

One of our artisans, Olga Ramirez, was invited to Bogota to present the mochilas (designed with the bank's logo) at their big celebration. This was Olga's first time on a plane and her first time staying in a nice hotel! She even got to sell one of her mochilas to the President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro!



We also hosted the Community Solidarity Team from Banco Agrario at our June leadership workshop to learn more about their seed funding opportunities for community projects – we hope to collaborate with them in the future.



JULY

We paid for Paula to attend the Raíces Fest in Medellín to sell weavings on behalf of our artisans, find potential wholesale partners for them, and expand our network of support in Colombia.



Unfortunately, this festival didn't result in the sales we had hoped for. We are finding it increasingly difficult to sell mochilas and Wayuu accessories in Colombia where the market is saturated with lower quality and lower cost mochilas.

We pay higher wages and offer more benefits to our weavers than any other mochila brand in the world, but the average Colombian cannot easily afford our higher price point. This is why we are going to support our artisans leaders in creating a line of lower cost, solid color mochilas for the market in Colombia. These bags will be made with a different kind of straps that is less expensive to produce, but just as attractive as our normal strap.

AUGUST

In Santa Barbara, we held our first Supporter Appreciation Dinner at the Black Sheep Restaurant to bring our community together and give our supporters an inside look into how our organization works.

This event was definitely one of our favorites! In the future, these educational donor dinners will be open to our Members and sponsors first and foremost. We will reach out to members as soon as the next date is set!



In Colombia this month, we sent some of our team members to see a movie about domestic violence and held discussions on the topic at both of our monthly workshops led by Yamile Vangrieken, our Wayuu Cultural Liaison.

Violence is a topic that we will be holding several workshops around in 2025 with the help of one of our artisan leaders, Maribel Bouriyu. She is part of a network of Women Protectors who focus on shielding children from any form of violence (including sexual abuse or exposure to domestic violence in the home). They also advocate for children's rights more broadly, since many Wayuu children are put to work selling mochilas at age 8 or 9 without any adult supervision. (Reminder, please don't give children money or buy things from them during your travels to under-resourced countries– it reinforces the cycle of poverty because oftentimes parents will keep their children out of school in favor of having them sell and beg).

SEPTEMBER

This month we helped our partnering organization, Fundación Talento Colectivo purchase an undeveloped piece of land where Paula will build a new center called La Casa Yala'yalaa.

La Casa Yala'yalaa will be a sanctuary for Wayuu women and the home base for many of our workshops. The vision is to have a classroom space, a restaurant that employs Wayuu women, a store where artisans can display and sell their weavings, cabañas for travelers seeking immersion, and a community garden.

Thanks to a generous donation from one of our members, we are able to start construction on the classroom space and finish it in time for our first big workshop in February 2025. (Thank you Susan!)

But first, the land had to be cleared of weeds!

BEFORE



AFTER



SEPTEMBER (continued)

We also finished the construction of a bathroom at La Casa Para los Niños del Mundo, another property we helped Fundación Talento Colectivo purchase and develop for Paula's co-curricular children's program.

La Casa Para los Niños is located in an informal settlement near two of our artisan communities.

It functions like an after school program that serves a diverse group of children (Wayuu, mestizo, Venezuelan) living in extreme poverty. The bathroom we helped fund is currently the only working bathroom and septic tank in the neighborhood. (Can you imagine not having a bathroom in your home and living side-by-side with lots of neighbors?)

Paula and Elvia open the house several days a week for the children to come play, make art, sing, practice reading & writing and learn about environmental stewardship and nutrition. We absolutely love sponsoring this program!



Photo by Jillian Critelli

OCTOBER

This month we sponsored innovation workshops in three different communities taught by our artisan leaders. Each leader was paid to teach a new product she developed with us.

Product innovation is an important part of our work to increase income earning opportunities for Wayuu women. Together with the artisans and Paula, we have developed more than a dozen unique products – guitar straps, yoga straps, cell phone pouches, clutches and more – to help the women diversify their weaving skills.



Yenitza teaching the artisans of Kululumana & Mouwasira how to weave an iPad carrier.



Sara teaching the artisans of Tocoromana her designs that symbolize native plant medicines.



Yamile teaching the artisans of El Ahumao how to crochet Christmas stockings.



NOVEMBER

This month we wrapped up our monthly workshop series for the Yala'yalaa School and our Advanced Leadership course.

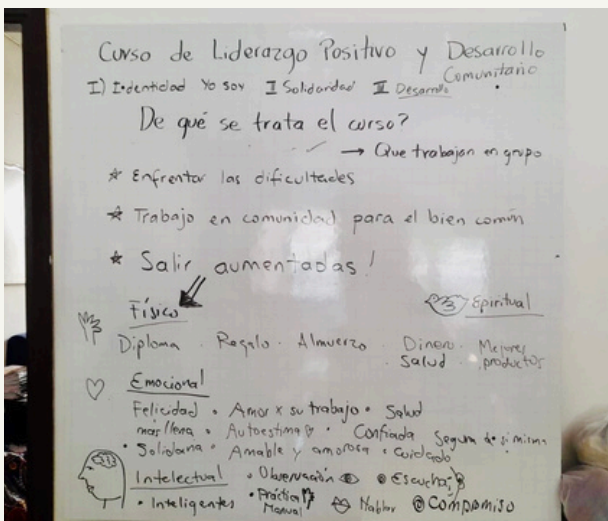
When the year starts out, the newcomers are very shy. For some of them it's their first time ever taking a class. Some of them might be illiterate or can't speak Spanish fluently (which is why we have Yamile explaining the concepts in Wayuunaiki). But after 10 full-day workshops with Paula, by the end, everyone is enthusiastically participating!

The women report improvements not only with their work, but with their mental health, self esteem, and their relationships.

We also got the very exciting news that our application was accepted for the International Folk Arts Market (IFAM) in Santa Fe!

This opportunity inspired us to help Paula get her passport and pursue a travel visa to the United States. It's not easy for Colombians to get a temporary work visa (even for someone like Paula, a professional with a strong track record).

We hope that next year we will be able to bring one of the artisans too!



DECEMBER

On December 11th we held our most special event of the year, our graduation ceremony.

This year we brought 30 artisans who participated in our workshops to Mar Azul, a beachfront eco lodge located next to one of our artisan communities, Tacoromana.

Words cannot do justice to how moving this event is for the women. For most of them it's the only time they have ever received a diploma, had professional photos taken of them, or eaten at a nice restaurant.

Our artisan leaders blew us away with their motivating speeches and Paula went above and beyond make this ceremony extra special.



DECEMBER

(continued)

We were the primary sponsors of the Festival del Arte y la Alegría (Festival of Art and Joy), a week-long offering around Christmas time for underserved children at la Casa Para Los Niños.

Paula brought instructors from throughout the region to lead fun and creative activities such as music & dance lessons and educational art classes (e.g. art made from plastic to teach children about plastic waste).

We don't know where Paula gets the energy to pull off this event right after putting on our whole graduation ceremony!



DECEMBER

(continued)

We launched two community-led projects in Tocaromana and El Ahumao, two of the weaving teams we've worked with the longest.

In Tocaromana we supplied the materials for an "enramada" (open-air structure) that will serve as an event and meeting space for the weaving team.



Here the women will be able to host tourists from the nearby hotels who want to buy handwoven goods directly from the artisans. Next we will buy tables, chairs, shelves and decorate the space.

In El Ahumao we supplied the materials for a water storage tank that will be collectively managed by the artisans. There is no running water in this seaside community, and perforating a well is not possible. The water will come from tanker trucks.

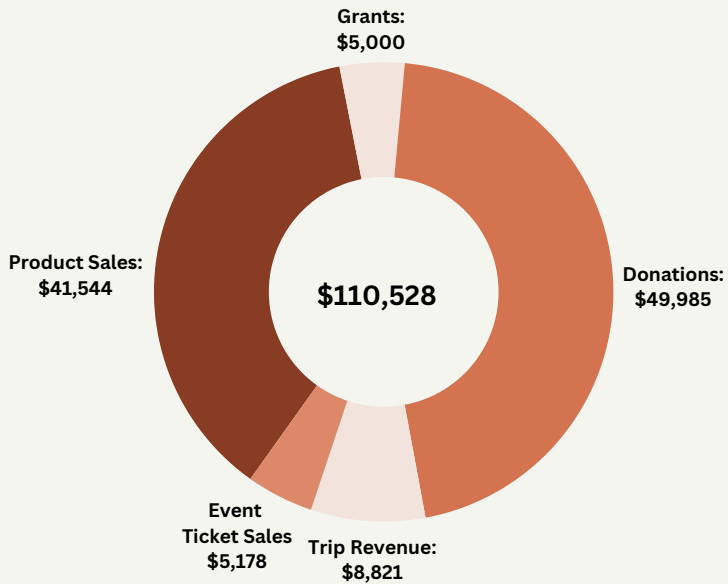


The cost of refilling the tank, as well as the cleaning and maintenance responsibilities, will rotate among families. Each family will also contribute 10% of earnings to a collective savings.

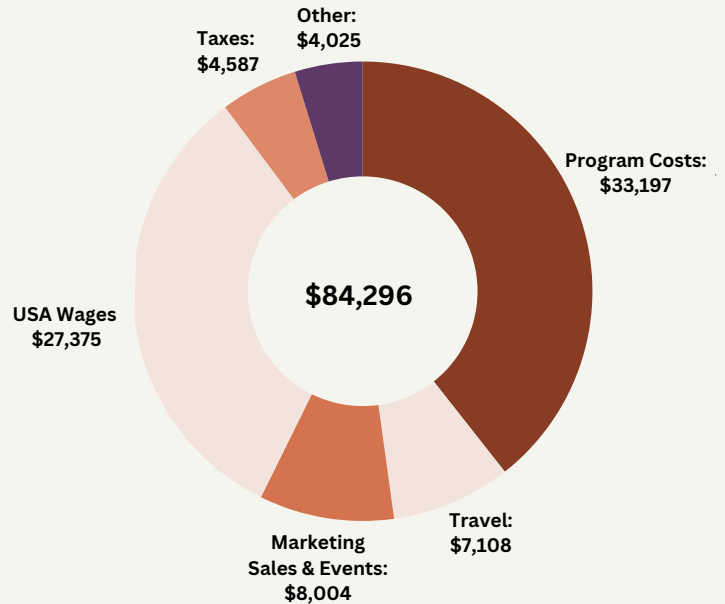
Rather than just gifting infrastructure to the communities, it is our policy that the recipients cover the cost of labor for projects that involve building. This helps ensure that the community has some skin in the game, knows how the infrastructure is built and how to repair it when necessary.

Financial Facts:

2024 REVENUE



2024 EXPENSES



1

grant from LUSH
Charity Pot

52

donors in 2024

80%

of donors live in
Santa Barbara, CA

6k

in wholesale

As the numbers show, we have a LOT of room for growth in our revenue streams! We need support with:

- Growing our donor base in Santa Barbara and beyond.
- Finding foundations interested in funding women's empowerment and poverty alleviation programs in Latin America.
- Finding wholesale partners outside of Santa Barbara.

What's Ahead in 2025

1

Our 2nd annual Solidarity Trip to Colombia is coming up!

We are thrilled to welcome a new group of 6 kindred souls to La Guajira on February 21st. The group this year is made up of board members and supporters who want to meet the artisans and see first-hand the work we are doing in Wayuu communities. The trip cost this year is \$3,000 per person (flights excluded) which includes a \$1,000 tax deductible donation to our programs. Reach out to us if you would like to join us on our next adventure!

2

Launching a bulk food coop in Ovejomana.

In February we'll be working with our artisan team in Ovejomana to build and stock a bulk food store for their remote community. The store will sell corn, rice, coffee, and other staples by the weight at lower prices than you can find in the surrounding area. This will improve food security for the most underresourced families while generating income for the artisans and reducing plastic waste in the community.

3

Building out a center for women with our partners.

Paula from Fundación Talento Colectivo purchased inexpensive, undeveloped land near Riohacha to develop a center for women called La Casa Yala'yalaa. We were able to fund the classroom space which will be finished in February just in time for our first big workshop of the year. **Now we're looking for sponsors to help us build out the rest of the center, which we expect will cost about \$30,000.**

4

More Santa Barbara events in 2025!

We have lots of fun event ideas that we're excited to incorporate this year, including a benefit concert, two member-only events, and a fashion show! Our Members (anyone donating at least \$25 per month or \$300 per calendar year) will receive discounts on all ticketed events and exclusive invitations to our free donor dinners. **We hope you will consider joining our fabulous community!**



One Thread Collective



THANK YOU
for supporting!