

New at Hartford Artisan Weaving Center

It's been a few years since we've visited The Hartford Artisan Weaving Center on Woodland St and what we recently discovered is interesting and encouraging. To begin with, they have space for three more artisans who will be able to begin in January. They currently have 33 artisans, one-third blind or low vision and two-thirds over 55.

The three founders, Fran, Claudia and Dorrie are still there, but they now have a new Executive Director, Katie Glass, who's bringing new energy to the effort. They also recently completed the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving program *Building on Success*, which has helped them become more efficient as a nonprofit and hopefully more sustainable.



They are fortunate to be expanding their space in the building at 42 Woodland St into the lower level, which will be used to hold classes for the general public beginning in January on Monday afternoons and they offer classes in Manchester at the Old Cheney Mill on Thursday evenings. To round out the opportunities, there are summer classes for grade school children and occasional workshops.

If all of this seems like a lot to keep track of, they have an excellent website at <https://www.weavingcenter.org> and more than 40 volunteers that make much of what they do possible.

As Katie puts it, "our mission is to enrich lives through hand-weaving... the low-vision/no-vision and over 55 crowds are often excluded from the workforce. This program gives them the opportunity for a job, some income, to be creative and express themselves. ...we just want to be sure that we provide the support that they need." So the core demographic are the artisans; people over 55 or with vision challenges who are less engaged with society in general. For these people HAWC offers an opportunity to engage with other people, to be active and produce something beautiful that they can be proud of. For the 40 + volunteers, whether weavers or not, it's an opportunity to give back and be a part of a valuable service. For those who take the classes or the customers, it's a way to connect to the beauty and value of hand woven products. For all of the above, they are a valued part of the Asylum Hill fabric.

They will have a display at Infinity Hall in Hartford for the Blind Boys of Alabama performance on Sunday 12/2 and the following weekend at Winterfest Hartford. For more photos, go to: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/aHTPRjgQ4esDcjcg7> For more information see their website or call (860)727-5729, especially if you'd like to become an artisan.