

The Empowerment Plan

Veronika Scott
Founder and CEO
1401 Vermont Street
Detroit, MI 48216
www.empowermentplan.org
Twitter: @empowermentplan
Facebook: The Empowerment Plan

Over 20,000 homeless Detroiters bear the frigid Michigan winter each year. 1 in every 42 people in the city goes without a basic necessity: warmth. Because of this, shelters are often too overwhelmed and under-supported to help every individual in need. Each day people in need of basic amenities have to fend for themselves on the streets, and in freezing temperatures the difficulty to stay warm is only exacerbated.

The Empowerment Plan employs and trains homeless women to become full time seamstresses, who manufacture a garment that serves as both a coat and a sleeping bag. The coats the women make are then distributed back to homeless individuals within the community at no cost to them. Through training and steady employment these women are able to elevate themselves from the cycle of poverty. Within the first few months of working with the program, we actively help these women and their families move off the streets or out of shelters by finding them secure, furnished housing. These women have empowered themselves with the confidence and skills necessary for a more sustainable, financially stable and healthier life.

This organization is the result of extensive research done by the founder and CEO, Veronika Scott. Initially a class assignment at The College for Creative Studies in Detroit, the project gained outside support due to its disruptive business model and humanitarian agenda. The coat she invented was simple, effective, and ready for production. The Empowerment Plan is unlike the typical nonprofit model because not only do we run and function like a garment business, we also help our employees to advance themselves professionally through learning and effectively utilizing a unique trade skill.

The Empowerment Plan is predominantly supported by donations from private individuals as well as large corporations and foundations. Some of our major donors are Carhartt, The Sara Blakley Foundation, The Fisher Family Trust, Bedrock Manufacturing and Shinola, American Express, Ford Motor Company Fund, and General Motors. Our investors are an integral part of our operation, not only by providing financial support, but by sharing experience and guidance with us. Long term, we hope to function as a one-to-one (buy-to-donate) distribution model that will not only sustain The Empowerment Plan, but aid in the development of an entire garment district in the city of Detroit. We are continually working on remodeling and improving our production facility (a massive building that was abandoned and neglected for years) to

eventually evolve into a full scale industrial sewing facility. This building, called Ponyride, was bought and re-envisioned by Detroit entrepreneur Phillip Cooley to serve as a space where local artists and organizations can work and share knowledge, resources and networks. Along with the other organizations operating out of Ponyride, we are dedicated to the development and evolution of the city of Detroit.

The Empowerment Plan is already beginning to show signs of success. Our goal is to produce 6,000 coats this year (2014) for orders throughout the country. We try to maintain open communication with the individuals who receive our coats, and the outreach organizations that order them and give them out. This enables us to learn how our coats are working for the people actually using them on the street. Each of the mothers we employ, once homeless, are now living in their own safe and secure homes with their families. With the help of local organizations, such as Alternatives for Girls and The Coalition On Temporary Shelter (COTS), we are able to provide these women and their families with the appropriate furnishings for their new homes, such as furniture and other amenities.

In the summer of 2013 we acquired a 3D printer and two computers to use for 3D modeling on the printer. Our hope is to train our ladies to use the modeling software and printer, and use the printer to create customized buckles and clasps for our coats. In the future, we would also like to offer these computers and the printer as educational resources for children in the Detroit Public School system, and we are working to implement a type of after school program where they can come to our facility and learn to use this technology. We are working with interns and students from the College for Creative Studies to train our staff in various tech programs and 3D printing. This new arm of our organization is still under development.

We have been featured nationwide in multiple media outlets. Please see our list below of accomplishments and coverage, with links to the sources where available.

Awards

Diller-von Furstenberg Family Foundation
2014 DVF People's Voice Award

The Detroit Pistons
2013 Impact Award

Crain's Detroit Business
2013 "Crain's 20 In Their 20's"

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library And Museum
2012 New Frontier Award Recipient - Veronika Scott

Industrial Designers of America
IDSA: IDEA Gold Award 2011

Major Speaking Engagements

Johnson State College

Commencement Address speaker (May 17th, 2014)

Forbes Women's Summit: Power Redefined

Social Game Changer (May 15th, 2014)

CNN Google Hangout

CNN 10: Visionary Women: What's the future of women at work? (March 25, 2014)

Duke University

Spoke to undergraduate students about innovation and entrepreneurship (January 13, 2014)

Northeastern University: Social Enterprise Institute

Participant in monthly speaker series (December 2, 2013)

Texas Lutheran University

Closing speaker for symposium on Cultivating Innovation (November 6, 2013)

Michigan CEO Summit: The viewpoint from start-up CEOs

Panel speaker (October 30, 2013)

World Summit on Innovation and Entrepreneurship (New York)

Panel speaker with Barbara Hannah and Shauna Mei (October 8-12, 2013)

HATCH (Bozeman, Montana)

Social Groundbreaker (October 2-6, 2013)

Shamengo 1,000 Pioneers (Paris, France)

Speaker at the 1,000 Pioneers of the New World Conference (September 18-25, 2013)

Johnson State College

Spoke about managing equal opportunity and diversity in the workplace (September 10, 2013)

Challenge Detroit Fellowship Dinner

Keynote speaker to the 2013 Challenge Detroit Fellows (May 2, 2013)

Cusp Conference (Chicago)

Spoke about The Empowerment Plan (September 19, 2012)

Forbes 400 Summit on Philanthropy (New York)
Social Disrupter (June 26, 201)

TEDxSanJose
Spoke about The Empowerment Plan (April 7, 2012)

Clinton Global Initiative
Participant in the Poverty Alleviation Working Session (March 30, 2012)

Aspen Fashion Week
Speaker on the “Leading Fashion for a Cause” panel (March 11-14, 2012)

The United Nations: Young Women’s Change Makers Conference (New York)
Spoke at The United Nations Headquarters (August 11, 2011)

TEDxDetroit
Spoke about the Empowerment Plan (November 3, 2011)

SOCAP: Social Capital Conference (San Francisco)
Spoke on the importance of Prototyping (September 8, 2011)

Maker Faire
Detroit Maker Faire (July 30, 2011)
New York Maker Faire (September 17, 2011)

Eli Lilly Internal International Conference
Indianapolis: Spoke on mental health in the homeless community (May 18, 2011)
Orlando: Spoke on mental health in the homeless community (June 7, 2011)

2013-2014 Media Features and Mentions

(earlier media mentions available upon request)

“Helping other women soar”
CNN 10: Visionary Women (March 24, 2014)

“How 6 Women Are Reviving Detroit From The Ground Up”
Forbes (March 19, 2014)

“Veronika empowers other women”
Gap One Stitch Closer (March 14, 2014)

“13 Inspiring Young Entrepreneurs are Rebuilding the City of Detroit”
PolicyMic (February 7, 2014)

“Warming Trend: Empowerment Plan hires the homeless to make coats that transform into sleeping bags”

Hour Detroit (February 1, 2014)

“The Empowerment Plan Startup Clothes and Trains Detroit’s Homeless”

Michipreneur (January 14, 2014)

“Campaign Seeks Sponsors for Warm Coats for Detroit’s Homeless Population”

Detroit 20-20 (January 7, 2014)

“How a Crazy Coat (and a Great Idea) Empowered Homeless Women in Detroit”

NationSwell: Meet the people renewing America (January 5, 2014)

“The Empowerment Plan Provides Detroit’s Homeless with Warm Coats That Double as Sleeping Bags”

Inhabitat (December 27, 2013)

“For Detroit’s homeless, a coat that’s far more than a coat”

Al Jazeera America (December 25, 2013)

“‘Empowerment Plan’ helps homeless get a new start”

The TODAY Show (December 20, 2013)

“Veronika creates coats & new opportunities in Detroit”

American Express Passion Project (December 17, 2013)

“9 Ways to Give Back This Season”

Parade Magazine (November 30, 2013)

“16 Women Who Made the World Happier This Year”

Ladies Home Journal (December 4, 2013)

“Veronika Scott: One Woman, One Brilliant Idea”

Marie Claire (October 29, 2013)

“The Empowerment Plan”

Al Jazeera America (August 29, 2013)

“The Empowerment Plan’s Veronika Scott Found A Better Way To Help The Homeless”

Huffington Post: Influencers and Innovation (August 14, 2013)

“‘Crazy Coat Lady’ Changing Lives for Detroit Homeless”

Womenetics.com (July 22, 2013)

“A Single Coat Design Combats Homelessness, In Detroit and Beyond”
Fast Company (June 28, 2013)

“Clothing and Empowering Detroit’s Homeless Population”
GOOD 100 (June 20, 2013)

“An Entrepreneurial Seedling Sprouts in Detroit”
NPR, All Things Considered (May 13, 2013)

“Sleeping Bag Coats Warm, Employ Detroit Homeless”
ABCNews.com (May 9, 2013)

“Sleeping Bag Coat Designed for the Homeless Draws Attention from Fashion Industry”
Huffington Post (May 7, 2013)

“Agents for Change: Sleeping Bag Coat for the Homeless Finds Fans in the Fashion World”
PBS Newshour (May 6, 2013)

“Crain’s 20 In Their 20’s”
Crain’s Detroit Business (April 28, 2013)

“influencers: veronika scott at work, The Empowerment Plan”
“influencers: veronika scott at home”
CB2: In The Loop (April 5, 2013)

“Design Project Benefits the Homeless”
Faces of GM (February 14, 2013)

“Helping The Homeless Survive The Winter”
Detroit 20-20 Person of the Week (February 8, 2013)

“I Think Detroit is Going to Come Back”
NBC Nightly News (January 2, 2013)

Documentaries

Detroit in Overdrive

Part of a mini series on Detroit filmed by the Discovery Channel and aired on Planet Green
(August 2, 2011)

Password: empowerdetroit