

Felicia Thomas Creates a Welcoming Craft Space at FSC Workshop in District Heights, Maryland

by Clark Tate | Feb 8, 2022



The FSC workshop is a bright, energetic commercial crafting space in District Heights, Maryland.

“Energy,” says Felicia Thomas. “Energy, energy, energy.” It’s what she credits for the magic manifested in her commercial crafting space, the FSC Workshop. She also calls it customer service. If our hour-long conversation and the workshop’s smile-

filled, dance-interrupted, song-singing Instagram is any indication, that service is transcendent. And her energy comes straight from the heart.

Thomas designed her space with energy in mind. It's bright, with white walls, sun-yellow stools, and a stunning mural by Mia DuVall. "I said I need something that's going to include everyone, and I'm really into astrology. So she came up with the idea of the gold leaf and the zodiac sign," she says. The painting shows Thomas accessorized to the nines with those shimmering zodiac signs circling her face. She's flashing a peace sign and flanked by blousy blue flowers and butterflies. She looks like a modern-day saint of maker spaces. It definitely sets a mood, a really good one.

"Ninety percent of my customers are returning customers," says Thomas. She credits the return rate to her skill at connecting with people and showing them a good time. "The number one thing that I've made sure that my customers have is an experience," Thomas says of her classes. "My candle making class is very popular because we play games during the class." She loves upending expectations, especially those of men "dragged" in by their wife or girlfriend. "By the end of the game, you would have thought that they were at a football game," she says.

"I think that's why I have the returning customers so much," says Thomas. "Because they want to bring people back to say, 'hey, this was not what we thought it was going to be.'"





“Not only are they my customers, but I value them as they are family,” Thomas says. “And that has really helped me a lot, and definitely helped them, and the people in my community. Because the more that the people are coming to support me, the more that I’m able to give back to them.”

“I always give good affirmations to my customers,” she says, telling them that they’re doing a wonderful job. “Even if it looks different,” she laughs. “Because, technically, art – we can’t say what a person’s idea of art is, because it’s our own individuality. So I just stress that to them. And they leave, you know, so happy and so joyous...I’m just really very blessed.”

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Like so many before her, Thomas came to crafting via the University of YouTube. She was looking for fun things to do with her daughter, taking her to events and craft shows around Washington DC. At one of them, she bought a bar of soap for seven dollars. When she got it home, it melted. Frustrated, she hopped online to find out why. “And then that just opened up a whole door. And I just started making soap,” Thomas says. “And then my friends and family just started buying soap from me. And then I just became the soap lady.”

If soap making was a flirtation with craft, sewing became a true love. It started with one project, making a maxi skirt. Now, she models creations on her personal Instagram page. They’re lovely, fierce, and fun. They’re fashion.

Thanks to a strong social media following, every craft project she starts – soap, clothing, furniture upholstery and refurbishing – takes off quickly. A little too quickly. “I kept getting stuck with one thing, and I couldn’t do all the other things that I love to do,” she says. That’s partially what drove her to launch the FSC Workshop, named after her nickname and Instagram handle @feesewcrafty.



Felicia started the FSC Workshop for people who are interested in doing a variety of crafts like she is.

The FSC Workshop offers a variety of classes and sells some of Thomas's creations online. She teaches customers to sew and to make candles, jewelry, soap, body butter, and sugar scrub. She also offers doormat, glass, and pottery painting events.

"When I decided to open up FSC workshop, it was for people who are like me who are interested in doing different crafts," she says. "They will actually have a space to come to and be able to learn and ask questions from an experienced crafter. The area that I live in is a predominantly Black community," she says. "So I definitely wanted to make sure that it was in my community. So people can come and enjoy themselves and have a wonderful time."

"Every time someone comes into the shop, they always say, 'Oh, I would expect this in Annapolis, or Alexandria,' basically predominantly white areas to be honest with you," says Thomas. "So to be able to bring people that look like me, to come into not only a creative space, but a clean space," she interrupts herself to explain, "which is really weird." She is often surprised to hear first time customers say, "Oh my God! It's so clean in here," says Thomas. "As if they were expecting it to look rundown."



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"I want not only adults, but kids in my community to know that we deserve to have something nice too," says Thomas. "You

deserve to be able to come to a clean, safe, creative space and be able to enjoy yourself and not feel like because it's a Black owned business that it's going to look run down or you're not going to get the customer service that you deserve."

She created that space for her community, but it wasn't easy. Thomas quit her job in transportation on Christmas Day of 2019. She opened the shop in February of 2020. On March 16 there was a notice on the door. "Can you imagine putting down the floors into your shop and next think you know, you get a phone call from the government saying, 'oh, you can't open up your shop?'" Thomas asks. "And you've quit your job. You don't have money. It's the scariest thing ever."

She went back to what she knows. She started sewing masks, really gorgeous ones. (Head to her Instagram for examples.) By June or July she had earned around \$45,000. "That's why it's so important to have crafters, because that saved me. Knowing how to sew saved me," she says. "Crafting saved my business, saved my home, saved my car. My car was repossessed, and I was able to pay off my car." In some ways, she says, the pandemic helped her, creating a demand for crafts while she established the workshop and began building a client base after lockdowns.

"Every time you have a situation that comes up, or you think it's the end of the world, once you cross over that door, oh, there's gonna be another door. But that door before was to prepare you for the next door that you go through," says Thomas. "And you have to be able to make yourself stronger, to be able to walk through each and every single door, because there's somebody else right behind you that's walking through the door that you just walked through. And if they can see you make it through the next door. They're going to be able to make it."

**Clark Tate**

contributor

Clark Tate is a freelance writer and lifelong knitter. After graduating from never-ending scarves to more complex projects, Clark also graduated with a Master's in Environmental Science. She then worked as a restoration ecologist for six years, before moving on to an obsession with braided hats and writing articles about people and the environments they live in. She's written for Hakai Magazine, Summit Daily News, Salt Lake City Weekly, and [GearLab.com](https://www.gearlab.com/). You can find further examples of her work at lclarktate.com.

5 Comments

**Heather McCroan** on February 9, 2022 at 11:28 am

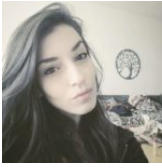
This! This is exactly what I want to do! A craft space with all kinds of crafts like sewing, painting, cooking, etc. I love a variety of crafts and have wanted to create a craft maker space for a while. I just don't know how to get that started. I may have to take a road trip.

[Reply](#)**Paula Y. Martin** on February 9, 2022 at 12:34 pm

I absolutely love this idea and have searched for a place in my area to do this very thing! Congratulations Felicia Thomas on

being a light and increasing the joy and creativity in your community!!!

Reply



Amanda Freeman on February 9, 2022 at 1:31 pm

What an inspiring story!!! I am also opening up a community studio space soon in my area (Denver), and this was exactly what I needed to read to keep my head up 😊

Reply



Valerie Stewart on February 9, 2022 at 6:58 pm

It's so good to see Felicia prosper. She's a beautiful young lady who has reached her star, and is striving for the moon. Congratulations huntee.

Reply



Stephanie Banks on June 6, 2022 at 1:59 am

I am so proud of you Felicia! I have been following you since your sewing journey with making skirts, I am a crafter as well. I love to teach other's what I have learned. Over the years I have done jewelry making classes and sewing classes. My mom was a crafter as well she sold her items in the community to family and friends. She was known for her crafting. I appreciate your hard work and stepping out on the desires of your heart. I love how you were able to start your crafting business in your community. I admire what you are doing. I pray for a clear answer and direction on where God is directing me with my crafting, I love the idea of a crafting space in my community as well. Hope to visit Feesewcrafty Workshop one day. May God continue to bless you & your daughter.

Reply

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