

SOUTH JERSEY BEAD SOCIETY HISTORY

Organization:

Although the exact origins of the South Jersey Bead Society (SJBS) are unclear, it started in the late 1990s with a few women who got together to bead. One of their first meeting places was in the home of Victoria Gray Harding in Pennsauken, NJ. By 1999, the group began to formally organize. They originally wanted to name the group "The Delaware Valley Bead Society," learned that the name had already been taken, so titled the group as it is known today: the South Jersey Bead Society.

SJBS became a NJ non-profit organization on October 1, 2002: Kimberly Swenson, Sherry London and Marilyn Reichenbach as trustees, and Kimberly Swenson signed the Certificate as Registrant.

New Jersey requires that non-profit corporations file an Annual Report along with a filing fee.

Unfortunately, the newborn non-profit SJBS was not aware of these requirements, so an amended and restated Certificate of Incorporation was filed on February 1, 2007. Laurie Strauss signed the Certificate as one of the Co-Presidents at the time, and the Amended and Restated Certificate states that 46 members attended the meeting to approve the amended Certificate.

In 2011, the IRS approved the SJBS as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.

Meeting Locations:

From the homes of early members to our current meeting site at the Katz JCC, SJBS has met and held workshops at a variety of places in South Jersey, including:

- The Bead Cellar
- Merchantville Art Center
- Markheim Art Center
- Mount Laurel Library
- Moorestown Community House
- Cherry Hill Library
- Mount Laurel Fire House (2 locations)
- Mount Laurel Community Center
- ZOOM

Shows, Workshops and Retreats:

As education about and appreciation of the art of beading is a large part of SJBS mission as a non-profit entity, SJBS has sponsored bead shows and classes/workshops from nearly the beginning:

- The first bead show, named Bead Fest, was a one-day event held in 2002 at the Evergreens retirement community in Moorestown. It featured classes, bead shopping and food.
- Another SJBS Bead Fest was organized by Victoria Harding in the early years and held on the basketball court of the Moorestown Community House. Victoria invited vendors, including Veni Vendi Beadi and Woodstock Trading Co., for bead shopping, food and raffles. The first Bead Challenge was held at this show.
- SJBS Bead Binge was held in 2003 at the Cherry Hill National Guard Armory. The name of our show was changed at the request of Interweave Publishers, who trademarked the name and sponsored a Bead Fest show outside of Philadelphia that same year. Bead Binge was the main fundraiser for SJBS from 2003 to 2016 (except 2014, when the Armory underwent renovations). Bead Binge was a two-day event that included 20-40 vendors, bead demos, raffles and food. The vendors sold a vast array of beads of all types and materials, including seed beads, lampwork, polymer clay, glass, gemstone, metal and wood, as well as various tools and findings.

- As competition from other bead shows increased, and internet shopping gained popularity, revenue declined. After the 2016 Bead Binge, a budget committee was formed to ensure adequate funding for the future of SJBS.
- Two initiatives were created: the SJBS Annual Raffle of a handcrafted beaded item donated by a nationally renowned bead artist, and the Annual Brown Bag Auction of kits and handcrafted, finished items. Together they have become successful SJBS fundraisers.
- SJBS has held many classes/workshops for its membership and others over the years. Some now known as Local Spotlights, are taught by members of SJBS or local talent from other bead societies. Many are taught by national or international bead artists such as Carol Cypher, Marcia DeCoster, Diane Fitzgerald, Cindy Holsclaw, June Huber, Amy Katz, Jean Power, Sherry Serafini, Kassie Shaw, Miriam Shimon, and Melissa Grakowsky Shippee, among many others.
- The first SJBS Bead Retreat was held in October of 2006 with Shelley Nybakke as the instructor. Since then, the retreats have been held each October (with the exception of 2020 due to Covid-19) with nationally-known bead artists such as Nikia Angel, Nancy Cain, Leslee Frumin, Melanie Potter, Julia Pretl, Cynthia Rutledge, Betty Stephan, and Jill Wiseman, among others.
- Bead Retreats have been held at the Kirkridge Retreat & Study Center in Bangor, PA and Pendle Hill Quaker Retreat Center in Wallingford, PA in past years. For 2023, the SJBS Bead Retreat will be held at a new venue: Malvern Retreat House in Malvern, PA.

Education through the Lending Library:

The Lending Library has been an integral part of SJBS education mission. The library has grown to more than 300 books and resources. As new items are added, older ones are sold. Library sales and late fees help support the Lending Library budget allocation.

Community Service Activities:

Community Service is an ongoing part of fulfilling SJBS mission as a non-profit organization. SJBS has supported a number of bead-related programs and organizations through donations of money, beads and/or volunteers who provide bead education or presentations.

- In 2003, Lissa Atkins organized a donation of finished bracelets to Ronald McDonald House. This was the beginning of SJBS involvement with the Ronald McDonald House. Each week, SJBS volunteers helped families with children make beaded bracelets. Kathy Foster has been coordinating these activities from 2004 until COVID-19 interfered in 2020.
- In 2004 and 2005, SJBS made donations to Beads for Education, a non-profit organization that helps women in Kenya and the Maasai region use their beading craft to become self-sufficient, and helps girls stay in school from primary through University.
- In 2006, SJBS made a presentation about beads and bracelet making to a 4-H Club in Burlington County and made monetary donations to the Boys & Girls Club of NJ Summer Art Program, the Philly Police Athletic League arts activities, and the Perkins Center for the Arts in Collingswood to pay for summer camp for a couple of children from Camden, NJ. SJBS also made bracelets for a charity auction sponsored by Archer & Greiner to support cancer research. The bracelets were made with Swarovski crystals in colors that matched the various cancer ribbons.
- In 2007, SJBS put on a display of 73 pieces of members' beaded jewelry at the Cherry Hill Public Library, and the Courier Post printed an article about the exhibit. SJBS also organized a presentation at the Cherry Hill Public Library by Nancy Josephson about Haitian beadwork and her new book,

Spirits in Sequins: Vodou Flags of Haiti. SJBS members also volunteered to make jewelry with kids at the Camden County Cultural & Heritage Commission's Arts 4 Teens Festival.

- In 2007-2008, a Mothers' Day bracelet-making event was organized by Co-President Laurie Strauss.
- In 2012, Lissa Atkins organized a make-and-take memory wire bracelet fundraiser event for BookMates, a non-profit Jewish women's literacy group. Later that year, Kathy Foster and Johanna Zitto coordinated a bracelet make-and-take event at the NJ Veterans Memorial Home in Vineland, NJ.
- In 2022-2023, Co-President Lois Linker and member Kathy Foster brought a donation of beads on SJBS' behalf to Havertown, PA to support Beads for a Cure. Co-President Johanna Zitto brought our bead donation to Beat It Beads supporting the fight against breast cancer.
- Throughout the Bead Binge years, SJBS has loyally supported Beads of Courage, a non-profit organization that provides arts-in-medicine programs for children coping with serious illnesses. Since 2019, SJBS support was continued through the sale of beaded ornament patterns and kits designed and donated by long-time members Johanna Zitto and Nicki Russo, also proprietor of Madison Made Jewelry.

In addition to the events or donations noted above, SJBS has made donations of beads, money, time and/or expertise to the following organizations: The Bead Museum, Beads of Courage, Beads for Education, Beads for Life, Beads for a Cure, Beat It Beads, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Jewels for Julia, and Ronald McDonald House.

Online Presence:

Co-Presidents Kimberly Swenson and Sherry London announced the first SJBS website to members in 2002. After professional IT host services proved too expensive, the SJBS website was moved in 2012 to Wild Apricot, which specializes in membership, events, and communication support for nonprofits and small associations. A board position was created for Webmaster, who regularly maintains member email communications and the Calendar of Events. An unexpected benefit is that SJBS reaches a wide audience—out-of-region/state visitors can join SJBS and non-members can register for SJBS Zoom classes.

SJBS has had a Facebook page since 2010. As of 2023, the SJBS Facebook page has 1200 followers! It features photos and videos full of color and beautiful beadwork, as well as beady news from SJBS 'members and vendor members.

Zoom kept SJSB meetings going in 2020 when Covid-19 threatened to put an end to them. Lois Linker and Lissa Atkins courageously forged ahead with Zoom. While other bead societies' gatherings were sidelined, SJBS continued to meet and even held Zoom classes in 2020.

This fearless foray into Zoom may have been one of the things that garnered SJBS international exposure. The publication *Bead Workers Guild* interviewed Lissa Atkins, SJBS Advertising Chairperson, and published an article about SJBS in their July 2020 issue! The *Bead Workers Guild* journal is a quarterly publication -- the only British magazine dedicated to bead weaving.

Today:

Through tough economic and societal changes over the years, SJBS has grown to approximately 100 members from several states. The organization continues to evolve and adapt according to diverse member interests and skill levels and is still admired for its collegial supportive culture.

Based on original documents, interviews with past and present SJBS members, and online research by Lissa Atkins.

Respectfully compiled and submitted by:
Kathy Keefe, SJBS Membership Chair
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