



KeepArtHappening.org

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Winner named in 2020 stARTup Creative Competition

#### *Collaboration between Arts and Education Council and PNC Foundation enters its fourth year*

**ST. LOUIS, Sept. 24, 2020** – The Arts and Education Council has named **Soul Shed University** as the winner of the fourth annual stARTup Creative Competition. The competition, supported by the PNC Foundation and the Arts and Education Council, encourages the development of great artistic ideas that strengthen and enhance the St. Louis arts community.

**Soul Shed University**, founded by JerMarco Britton, is a 12-month introductory program designed to empower the independent musicians of today with all the necessary tools to begin and sustain a music career. Partnering with St. Louis-based professionals within the music business and a few specialized areas of focus, Soul Shed University takes the concept of a master class and expands it into a full curriculum. Students receive instruction outside the realm of academia and have the opportunity to build and engage in the community with their contemporaries. Soul Shed University offers four areas of study: music performance, music business, music education and wellness.

“Soul Shed University fills a critical need in our arts community for musicians of all genres to receive access to the tools and education necessary to create thriving careers,” said Cynthia A. Prost, Arts and Education Council president and CEO. “Through this program, participants can develop these skills with fellow musicians in a virtual format — and when it’s safe to do so, in person. We look forward to providing the resources, mentorship and connections needed to help JerMarco empower local musicians.”

Beginning Oct. 1, Soul Shed University will receive a \$20,000 prize; one year of space and incubation support in the Centene Center for the Arts, the Arts and Education Council’s arts incubator; free performance and meeting space; access to technology and Wi-Fi; and mentoring, idea-sharing and professional development opportunities.

“Innovation and entrepreneurship are among the attributes that define St. Louis’ robust startup landscape, business community and arts environment,” said Michael Scully, PNC regional president for St. Louis. “The stARTup Creative Competition provides a vehicle for bringing together what makes each of these communities successful, turning artistic concepts and business plans into projects that enhance the community in a meaningful way.”

Winners were selected by a panel of local arts and entrepreneurial experts, including **Debbie Marshall**, PNC Bank; **Sheila Burkett**, Spry Digital; and **Matt Homann**, Filament.

For more information about the Arts and Education Council and the stARTup Creative Competition, visit [KeepArtHappening.org](http://KeepArtHappening.org).

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[Download the Soul Shed University logo and photos here.](#)

**About the Arts and Education Council: *Keep Art Happening*.** – The Arts and Education Council ensures the 16-county, bi-state region is rich with arts and cultural experiences for all through programs and services that support more than 70 organizations each year, including: general operating grants; arts incubation at the Centene Center for the Arts; PNC Program Grants; the Creative Impact Fund, with lead support from Bayer Fund; the Arts and Education Fund for Teachers; Bayer Fund Rural Community Arts Program

grants; Arts and Healing Initiative, with lead funding from Missouri Foundation for Health and additional funding from the Crawford Taylor Foundation, Missouri Arts Council, Marillac Mission Fund, Graybar and Church on the Rock; the Art Education Fund, underwritten by Wells Fargo Advisors; the Catalyst Innovation Lab; the Katherine Dunham Fellowship; the stARTup Creative Competition; Leadership Roundtables; Arts Marketers; the St. Louis Suburban Music Educators Association; the Keep Art Happening Scholarship; and the St. Louis Arts Awards.

The Arts and Education Council is entirely funded by individual donors, corporations and foundations in the St. Louis region. Since its inception in 1963 as the region's only privately-supported united arts fund, the Arts and Education Council has raised and distributed more than \$100 million in private funding for the arts – a significant contribution that directly impacts the quality of life in our region. The Arts and Education Council meets all 20 Better Business Bureau Charity Standards and has earned the Wise Giving Seal of Approval, a three-star rating from Charity Navigator and a Guidestar Exchange Gold Participant rating.

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**Instagram:** [Arts\\_Education\\_Council](https://www.instagram.com/Arts_Education_Council)

**About PNC Foundation** - The PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group ([www.pnc.com](http://www.pnc.com)), actively supports organizations that provide services for the benefit of communities in which it has a significant presence. The foundation focuses its philanthropic mission on early childhood education and community and economic development, which includes the arts and culture. Through Grow Up Great, its signature cause that began in 2004, PNC has created a bilingual \$500 million, multi-year initiative to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life.