

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Diane Drollinger 314 330 1103 (cell)

Arts and Education Council Merges into Network for Strong Communities

A unique nonprofit partnership has formed to continue and strengthen the impact of the arts in the St. Louis region. Arts and Education Council, (A&E), which has a 60+ year legacy of supporting arts organizations across the St. Louis region, has merged with Network for Strong Communities, a nonprofit resource hub with offices in St. Louis, Springfield and Sikeston, Missouri.

A&E, a united arts fund supported by corporations, foundations, and individuals, has been a catalyst in supporting new arts nonprofits, signature arts organization and art educators across the St. Louis region with over \$100m of grants through the decades. A&E remains an important partner to the arts ecosystem across the St. Louis region and art educators at a time when dollars for school-based arts programs are diminishing.

NSC provides comprehensive resources to nonprofits and community initiatives, including training for nonprofit professionals and volunteers, administrative support, and fiscal management services. It also offers customized consulting services for boards and staff which can include strategy, operational assessments, board, and staff development and convening models for nonprofits. NSC has also served as a grantmaker for community initiatives.

NSC and A&E are building on a decade-long relationship of administrative and fiscal management services that will allow A&E to have even greater impact across the St. Louis region as each organization can further leverage existing strengths. "NSC's focus on capacity building, community development and cross-sector collaboration aligns well with A&E's needs of greater operational efficiency and increased collaboration", states A&E Board Chair Chris Dornfeld, President and Co-Founder of Whistle Systems. "The A&E Board of Directors is excited to join NSC, as this merger enables new collaborations, new innovations and the next generation of talent to access more resources – a win for the entire St. Louis region."

Diane Drollinger, CEO of NSC, is encouraged by the unique partnership. Drollinger, a former arts administrator, grantmaker, and professional musician, believes the arts have the capacity to enrich communities through partnerships with other nonprofits that offer health, education, and environmental support in the region. "NSC serves a diverse group of community organizations, most of which will find their missions enhanced with an arts component that can create access points for community members needing services. In addition, the economic impact of the arts has long been documented. Continuing to champion the arts community as one of the best assets in the St. Louis region will be foundational to attracting new business and promoting economic health," she concluded.

Martha Uhlhorn, President of the NSC Board of Directors and Owner/President of La Bonne Bouchee Wholesale Bakery and Gourmet to Go added, "The operational efficiencies that NSC offers A&E will create a solid foundation for community support. We are pleased to welcome A&E into NSC," she stated.

Arts organizations will learn more about grants programs in the fall of 2024. For more information, contact 314-289-4000.

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About the Arts and Education Council – The Arts and Education Council ensures the 16-county, bi-state region is rich with arts and cultural experiences through inclusive programs and services that support more than sixty organizations each year. 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.

About Network for Strong Communities – Network for Strong Communities is a resource hub for nonprofits and the community sector, training and serving over 3,000 nonprofit professionals annually. NSC offers affordable, quality business operations and strategic support services to hundreds of organizations across Missouri and southwestern Illinois. Founded in 1996, NSC operates a nonprofit co-locator in St. Louis County. NSC serves all nonprofits, including foundations and corporate community investment partners.