



Saint Louis Story Stitchers Artists Collective Receives \$500,000 Award

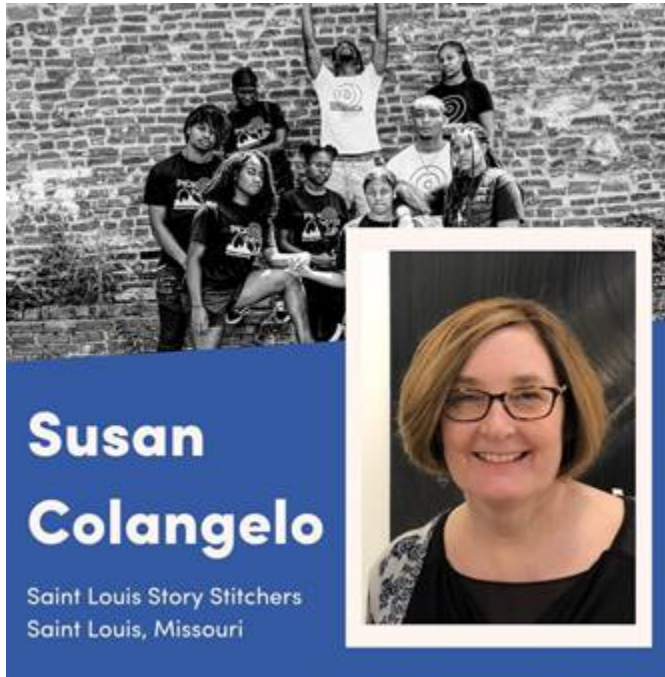
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ST. LOUIS - [The Lewis Prize for Music](#) – a philanthropic music arts organization advancing systems change through creative youth development – has announced its 2021 awards. Over \$2 million in funding will give young people access to music education, strengthen the well-being of their communities and put music at the center of efforts to establish equity.

Saint Louis Story Stitchers Artists Collective is composed of professional artists and minority youth ages 16-24, working together to create social change with a focus on gun violence prevention. Stitchers collect stories, reframe and retell them through art, writing and performance to promote understanding, civic pride, intergenerational relationships and literacy. Projects create a platform for community engagement through an artistic lens and with it the Saint Louis Story Stitchers work to shift perceptions and realities and bring hope to the Saint Louis community.

Saint Louis Story Stitchers and its partners provide young people with platforms for turning their creative efforts into personal strengths and community transformations. Whether performing at neighborhood festivals, participating in mural and creative placemaking initiatives or podcasting from its Stitchcast Studio, the young artists of Saint Louis Story Stitchers translate the complexities of what they experience into accessible and affirming narratives.



Susan Colangelo and Saint Louis Story Stitchers Artists Collective will use The Lewis Prize for Music to build toward the establishment of a youth music and technology center by growing its administrative and fundraising capacity.

Saint Louis Story Stitchers differs from other programs in the region in that it is youth-led, directly addressing the difficult issues that impact their daily lives. Youth have the opportunity to define topics of their work, listen and ask questions of other local youth, as well as invite and discuss difficult topics through their *StitchCast Studio* podcast (such as COVID-19, suicide, trauma, gun violence, homelessness, bullying, domestic violence, and poverty) with local experts. New episodes are published each month to storystitchers.org, [Spotify](#) and [apple podcast](#). Each episode of *StitchCast Studio* includes *Pick the City UP* art interludes which are original works of art and music by Saint Louis Story Stitchers.

"We are deeply honored to be a recipient of this transformational gift from The Lewis Prize For Music. Our youth are driving us towards their vision of a youth arts and technology center for teens and young adults that will provide meaningful activities in music and the arts, support learning and job skills in technology, provide a safe space to gather, build friendships, access mentors, and work on community service programs such as Story Stitchers' annual Pick the City UP Tour. To make the vision of our youth a reality, we will work to build capacity of our organization, strengthen collaborations with partners, and engage more youth in the process. Both the creative youth development field and evidence-based youth violence prevention from the St. Louis Violence Prevention Commission support these program aspects as beneficial to building resilience in at-risk youth, which in turn, can lessen their risk for exposure to youth crime. Our vision is to create a healthier and more peaceful region for all of us to enjoy. I hope that everyone will join us!"

*— Susan Colangelo, President and Executive Director
at Saint Louis Story Stitchers*