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Wheeling Heritage Partners to Foster Creative and Commercial Growth in Wheeling

WHEELING, W.Va. – Dec. 8, 2022 – In partnership with Bridgeway Capital and RED, Wheeling Heritage announces the launch of a new year-long program designed to enhance economic opportunities for local creative entrepreneurs. The Alliance for Creative Rural Economies Program (ACRE) seeks to bring creativity-driven economic development to Wheeling by supporting creative entrepreneurs who are committed to sustaining and scaling their business in ways that benefit the community.

"As we work to revitalize Wheeling, we understand that the people and community play a big role," said Scott Schenerlein, Executive Director at Wheeling Heritage. "We are pleased to partner with others to bring the ACRE Program to Wheeling as a resource for creative entrepreneurs. We hope to see a lot of participation."

The ACRE Program is designed to increase overall equitable economic opportunity in disinvested areas across a multistate region of Appalachia. Participating creative entrepreneurs will hone the skills needed to make the next leap in their businesses and realize meaningful economic and social impact for their community. The three main outcomes of the program include:

- Increase the visibility of a specific region, city, and/or town's creative economy via ACRE Partners' regional branding activities and local community engagements.
- Support entrepreneurial peer networks through intentional cohorts of creative businesses that learn, grow, and connect over the course of a year (and beyond).
- Deliver targeted, resonant, and high-touch business education programs for creative entrepreneurs aiming to achieve measurable and lasting progress.

"Wheeling Heritage is very excited to partner in bringing this new program to Wheeling," said Betsy Sweeny, Director of Heritage Programming at Wheeling Heritage. "The goal of our small business and entrepreneurship programming is to support individuals in every phase of their development. Historically we've done a good job of providing that support to individuals in their early planning stages with CO.STARTERS, providing a marketplace for creators in the Artisan Center, and creating an opportunity for crowd sourced funding through Show of Hands. The ACRE program fills a critical gap specifically for those interested in the creative economy and empowers them to scale their business through resources and connections to capital."

The ACRE Program seeks creative entrepreneurs to join a yearlong cohort-based program that will help creatives in the Wheeling, WV area grow their businesses, make lasting connections, and access

opportunities to make a lasting impact for themselves and their communities. The program will accept up to 15 creative businesses to join a yearlong ACRE Partners cohort composed of like-minded entrepreneurs who seek to improve and evolve their creative and business practices. The ACRE cohort will gather, learn together, and share in their successes and challenges. Participants are highlighted on the ACRE website and celebrated through imagery, storytelling, and community events.

Wheeling Heritage will host an information session on Tuesday, Dec. 20 at 5:30 p.m. at Wheeling Heritage, 1400 Main Street, Wheeling. Those interested can register for the in-person session here. Light refreshments will be available. For those who cannot attend on Dec. 20, a pre-recorded information session is available on the ACRE website.

Interested applicants can learn more and apply by visiting arcepartners.org.

About Wheeling Heritage:
Wheeling Heritage is a catalyst for the revitalization of Wheeling. Through historic preservation, community development, and the arts, we help to tell Wheeling's story and shape its future. We seek to improve the quality of life in Wheeling by preserving and investing in our city, collaborating with others, and engaging the citizens of Wheeling in our work.