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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Arch Grants Awards \$1,920,000 to 35 Startup Companies *Arch Grants Has Officially Funded Over 200 Companies in St. Louis***

ST. LOUIS - [Arch Grants](#) has awarded \$1,920,000 in non-dilutive grants to its 2021 Cohort, which is comprised of 35 new startups and early-stage businesses. Each year, Arch Grants welcomes innovative, scalable and job-creating startups from around the world to participate in the nonprofit's annual Startup Competition for a chance to be awarded \$50,000 in non-dilutive grants and \$10,000 for relocation if they are located outside of Missouri and at least 150 miles from St. Louis.

"We could not be more excited to introduce the 2021 Arch Grants Cohort to this region," said Emily-Lohse Busch, Executive Director of Arch Grants. "These Founders are truly extraordinary and are eager to build their companies and their lives in St. Louis – and I know that St. Louis is just as eager to welcome their ideas and their solutions with open arms and open minds. With these new companies, Arch Grants has surpassed the 200-company mark, an important milestone in our drive to solidify St. Louis as a beacon for innovation in the country and throughout the world."

On Wednesday, Nov. 17, Arch Grants will be hosting the [2021 Arch Grants Virtual Gala](#) to welcome the 2021 Cohort, celebrate the impact that Arch Grants' portfolio companies have made in St. Louis and honor Jim McKelvey – Founder of Invisibly, Co-Founder of Square and author of The Innovation Stack – with the 2021 Entrepreneur Award for his outstanding contributions.

The newest grants represent Arch Grants' ongoing commitment to attracting and retaining extraordinary entrepreneurs locally, across the country and around the globe to build the future economy in St. Louis. Each of the winning companies will receive \$50,000 as well as pro-bono professional services from respected local firms, and \$10,000 for relocation if they are located outside of Missouri and at least 150 miles from St. Louis. In turn, the startups will commit to operating their businesses from St. Louis for a period of at least one year. Arch Grants' 2021 Cohort is the largest and most diverse group Arch Grants has ever funded, including companies which are moving to St. Louis from cities such as Atlanta, Denver, Dallas, Los Angeles, New York and more.

Since 2012, Arch Grants has awarded \$10,570,000 in cash grants to attract or retain 208 early-stage businesses in St. Louis, invigorating the city's startup scene with new talent and ideas and helping to shape the future of the St. Louis economy. Through Arch Grants' program activities and connections throughout the region, these companies have gone on to create over 2,347 jobs, generate over \$479 million in revenue and attract over \$411 million in follow-on capital.

Meet the 35 newest 2021 Arch Grants Companies, whose products and services will contribute to a limitless future for St. Louis and for the world:

- **[Athlytic](#)** – a fully integrated marketplace that connects student athlete influencers with endorsement partners by simplifying the process to manage partnerships and accelerate transactions.
  - Founders: [Ashton Keys](#) and [Jared Eummer](#)
  - Origin: Detroit, Mich.
- **[Bask & Bloom Essentials](#)** – a beauty brand focused on multi-textured hair that offers intense moisture with protection from breakage.
  - Founder: [Candera Thompson](#)
  - Origin: Bridgeton, Mo.
- **[Buck Surgical](#)** – a medical device company founded in St. Louis to develop surgical innovations that enhance care and expand patient access to treatment.
  - Co-Founders: [Donald W. Buck II, MD FACS](#) and [Jennifer Buck](#)
  - Origin: St. Louis, Mo.
- **[Cedars Health](#)** – a medical device company developing a minimally invasive solution to provide immediate and permanent relief of benign prostatic hyperplasia symptoms without complications.
  - Co-Founders: [Yoon Ho \(Raphael\) Chung](#) and Geon Sun (Kevin) Park
  - Origin: South Korea/St. Louis, Mo.
- **[Core and Rind](#)** – a clean-label, shelf-stable and plant-based cheese alternative challenging the norms in the middle aisles of the grocery store.
  - Co-Founders: [Rita Childers](#) and [Candi Haas](#)
  - Origin: St. Louis, Mo.
- **[Equalizer Games](#)** – a sports and education AI software platform that helps athletes improve player IQ through virtual coaching and interactive training.
  - Co-Founders: [John Tomlinson, Jr.](#), Kathy Tomlinson and [Marcus Matthews](#)
  - Origin: Dallas, Texas
- **[Erkios Systems](#)** – a cyber security company that protects organizations from data leaks that occur as a result of unauthorized access.
  - Co-Founders: [Sean Null](#), [Philip Van der Straeten](#) and Tom Newell
  - Origin: Kansas City, Mo.
- **[GABA](#)** – a career development marketplace that matches students aspiring to health careers to study tools and support services based on their learning preference and desired career.
  - Co-Founders: [Candice Blacknall MD/MBA](#) and Sergio Munoz
  - Origin: Atlanta, Ga.
- **[Halal Beauty Cosmetics](#)** – a consumer products company that provides 100% halal-certified cosmetics to Muslims who want to look and feel beautiful without compromising their faith.
  - Co-Founders: [Adeel Afshar](#) and [Aisha Afshar](#)
  - Origin: Des Plaines, Ill.
- **[Halo + Cleaver](#)** – a consumer products company that makes the most flavorful, low-sugar sauces and condiments on the market.
  - Co-Founders: [Matthew Richard](#) and [Rob Garwitz](#)
  - Origin: Denver, Colo./St. Louis, Mo.
- **[Harmonee](#)** – a mobile application software company that allows businesses to ask questions to targeted groups of people in exchange for donating funds to nonprofits that those people support, returning value to local communities.

- Co-Founders: [Tara Nesbitt](#), [David Rygiol](#) and [Justin Trusty](#)
- Origin: St. Louis, Mo.
- [Honeymoon Chocolates](#) – a consumer products company that crafts bean-to-bar chocolate sweetened with honey, making chocolate in solidarity with their cacao farmers by pledging to pay a premium for all cacao purchased.
  - Co-Founders: [Cameron Loyet](#) and Haley Loyet
  - Origin: St. Louis, Mo.
- [Imanyco](#) – a real-time speaker differentiator transcription app used to improve communication accessibility for the hearing-loss community.
  - Founder: [Saïda Florexil](#)
  - Origin: West Palm Beach, Fla.
- [InfraLytics](#) – an application software company that specializes in data analytics, machine learning and development of custom software and automation platforms for productization.
  - Co-Founders: [Akash Vidyadharan](#), [Tyler Carter](#) and [Kevin Prendergast](#)
  - Origin: Des Moines, Iowa
- [intramotev Autonomous Rail](#) – a cleantech company that develops autonomous, battery-electric railcars to make short-haul freight transport faster, cheaper, safer and more sustainable.
  - Co-Founders: [Timothy Luchini, PhD.](#), [Corey Vasel](#) and [Alex Peiffer](#)
  - Origin: St. Louis, Mo.
- [Inventora](#) – a simple inventory management and bookkeeping software-as-a-service tool for small businesses that make handmade products.
  - Co-Founders: [Jeremy Blalock](#) and [Dianna Allen](#)
  - Origin: St. Louis, Mo.
- [Looking Glass Interactive Web Application](#) – a web application that transforms complex architectural drawings into a simple-to-use, virtual walkthrough 3D-space so anyone can explore what future environments will become for use with any device.
  - Co-Founders: [Bradley Martin](#) and [Mauricio Espin](#)
  - Origin: St. Louis, Mo.
- [Mighty Cricket](#) – a next-generation protein company building a clean protein supply through their high-protein oatmeal, flavored protein powders and chocolate bars, which are all made with cricket-sourced protein powder.
  - Founder: [Sarah Schlafly](#)
  - Origin: St. Louis, Mo.
- [Mississippi Mud Coffee](#) – a wholesale production company specializing in organic coffee and café-inspired beverages.
  - Founder: [Christopher Ruess](#)
  - CEO: [T. Chandler Branch](#)
  - Origin: Maplewood, Mo.
- [Nebula Media Group](#) – an agency that provides customized website and digital accessibility solutions to small and midsize businesses to make their online presence accessible to all users.
  - Founder: [Will Bubenik](#)
  - Origin: Philadelphia, Pa.
- [No Limbits](#) – a ready-to-wear, adaptive clothing brand with the mission of increasing comfort, confidence and independence in those who struggle with clothing due to a disability.
  - Founder: [Erica Cole](#)
  - Origin: Iowa City, Iowa
- [oneKIN](#) – a mission-driven, retail-tech company that builds low-cost e-commerce tools to help small businesses scale and operate cost effectively.

- Co-Founders: [Marvin A. François](#) and [Jennifer Gomez](#)
- Origin: New York, N.Y.
- **[Optikal Care Inc.](#)** – a subscription service that breaks up the cost of an online eye vision test, a year's supply of contacts and contact care supplies into affordable monthly payments.
  - Co-Founders: [SueAnn Hollowell](#) and [Norman Stuart III](#)
  - Origin: Atlanta, Ga.
- **[Paerpay](#)** – an application software platform that enables merchants to accept contactless payments without the cost of hardware, changing processors or downloading apps.
  - Founder: [Derek Canton](#)
  - Origin: Boston, Mass.
- **[Pilotbird](#)** – an enterprise software and financial services software company that empowers insurance companies with innovative analytic solutions by leveraging social data points.
  - Founder: [Evgeny Aleksandrov](#)
  - Origin: New York, N.Y.
- **[Plabook](#)** – an education software platform that offers innovative reading technology, which uses artificial intelligence, natural language processing and speech recognition to help children learn how to read.
  - Co-Founders: [Dr. Philip Hickman](#) and Tammy Buckner
  - Origin: Kansas City, Mo.
- **[Preventogen](#)** – a biotech company that manufactures a new, advanced wound care product that kills all pathogens on contact, seals and protects the skin, accelerates healing, contains no antibiotics and is FDA-cleared.
  - Co-Founders: [Brad Chartrand](#), [Joe Thomure](#) and [Julie Morris](#)
  - Origin: Grover, Mo.
- **[Printerior](#)** – a circular additive manufacturing company that produces 3D printer filament, small-scale 3D printed objects and large-format 3D prints using recycled waste plastic that they collect through their recycling services.
  - Co-Founders: [Trenton Esser](#), Hayden Seidel and [Jordan Backes](#)
  - Origin: St. Louis, Mo.
- **[Rock The Score](#)** – a consumer products company that verifies rental payments from tenants and reports them to major credit bureaus as a tier-one tradeline, helping the tenant create a credit profile and improving credit scores.
  - Co-Founders: [Peter Wright](#) and [Thomas Beck](#)
  - Origin: Sunset Hills, Mo.
- **[Simerse](#)** – a geospatial company that creates synthetic data to enhance AI and computer vision models.
  - Founder: [Michael Naber](#)
  - Origin: Los Angeles, Calif.
- **[Soilless](#)** – a consumer products company that is designing an innovative indoor gardening system that allows users to grow their own fresh, healthy food.
  - Founder: [Westen Johnson](#) and [Julie Joo](#)
  - Origin: Austin, Texas
- **[Stereotheque](#)** – the leading marketplace and collaboration tool where anyone can find and hire on-demand creative teams.
  - Founder: [Tomas Uribe](#), [Kristian Diaz](#) and [Juan Soto](#)
  - Origin: New York, N.Y.
- **[Total Orbit](#)** – an education and training services platform that enables hospitals to engage patients on the key information that drives behavior and outcomes.

- Founder: [Michael Margraf](#), [Jeff Coburn](#) and [David P. Scott](#)
- Origin: St. Louis, Mo.
- [ZenHammer](#) – a mobile application software company that allows small residential contractors and subcontractors to manage critical business items and invoicing.
  - Co-Founders: [Edwin Williams](#), Robert Pryately and Matthew Mayfield
  - Origin: Johnson City, Tenn.
- [zPods](#) – the first U.S.-based company to provide kids with a customizable, sensory-friendly sleeping pod.
  - Co-Founders: [George Bailey](#), [Gary Kellmann](#) and [Jeff Wade](#)
  - Origin: St. Charles, Mo.

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