



## **CO.ACT DETROIT LAUNCHES NEW SPACE AND PROGRAMS IN NEW CENTER**

Regional nonprofit hub announces major grant and introduces array of programs

**DETROIT, MICHIGAN – JUNE 26, 2019** – Co.act Detroit is celebrating the opening of its new collaborative space on Woodward Avenue in Detroit’s New Center with a two-day experience designed to unite Southeast Michigan’s nonprofit community around collaboration, possibility thinking and idea generation. “Co.activists Unite,” the organization’s public launch, will provide participants with a preview of programs and an opportunity for cross-sector leaders to connect and learn from changemakers from the region and beyond.

Co.act was funded by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation in 2017 and formed through a collaborative group, including TechTown, Michigan Nonprofit Association, Community Wealth Partners and others. Over the last year, staff have been hired, programs and partnerships piloted, and an ongoing assessment of nonprofit needs and gaps has been underway. This week marks the official launch.

Co.act and the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation also will use this opportunity to announce a \$1.5 million grant to establish the Co.act Detroit Activate Fund. The Activate Fund is designed to strengthen nonprofit capacity in four focus areas: 1) nonprofit fundamentals, 2) people and talent cultivation, 3) network connectedness, and 4) organization culture.

“This grant from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation allows us to provide direct support to approximately 30 nonprofit organizations in Southeast Michigan,” said Allandra Bulger, executive director of Co.act Detroit. “The Fund is undergirded by a shared vision for capacity building in the nonprofit sector and rooted in principles of social and racial equity.”

The Activate Fund will help strengthen the internal capacity of nonprofits to achieve their missions and strengthen nonprofits’ capacity for collaboration and social change.

“Co.act Detroit and the Activate Fund give the nonprofit community the collective brain power of some of the most experienced and knowledgeable nonprofit support organizations from across the region,” said Dave Egner, president and CEO, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. “Ultimately, the Foundation is interested in continuing to foster a more connected and collaborative community among our region’s nonprofits.”

“Co.activists Unite” offers attendees a flavor of Co.act Detroit offerings, including capacity building programming, cultivated conversations, intentional community building and thought-provoking speakers.

Featured speakers over the two-day launch include:

**Dr. Brandi Blessett**, associate professor at the University of Cincinnati and a member of the Section on Democracy and Social Justice APSSA, whose work focuses on social justice and how the criminal justice system affects communities of color. Dr. Blessett will reflect on the role that nonprofit and cross-sector participants can play in re-imagining the city of Detroit. She will share best practices in co-creation, models to engage with vulnerable communities and examples of effective organizations and impact strategies.

**Jessamyn Shams-Lau**, author and executive director of the Peery Foundation will discuss her new book, *Unicorns Unite*, a nitty-gritty look at how foundations and nonprofits relate today and why we are stuck in the status quo. A high school dropout turned MBA, Shams-Lau currently leads the Peery Foundation, where she co-creates and stewards the foundation's Grantee-Centric approach to philanthropy.

In addition to the featured speakers, the launch will preview upcoming Co.act programs and partner organizations including: the Michigan Nonprofit Association, Data Driven Detroit, Michigan Community Resources and NEW: Solutions for Nonprofits. Responding to an issue raised by nonprofit partners, Co.act is also launching its first Self Care Happy Hour featuring a Kombucha Bar, smoothies, and outlets for creative expression.

"Leading up to this launch we spent a lot of time listening to community leaders in the region, and what we are rolling out reflects what we have heard" Bulger said. "Our goal is to be a resource, a connector and an advocate for a new way of working in the nonprofit sector. We believe that when organizations are encouraged to collaborate rather than compete, powerful transformation is possible."

Interested changemakers can sign up for Co.activists Unite! at <https://coactivistsunite.com/#/> . Launch events are free-of-charge to nonprofit organizations, but require advance registration.