

# May Mental Health Month: A Red Circle Launches National Arts & Wellness Hub to Support Youth Healing Through Creativity

*The Creative Spot in Ferguson blends art, music, & therapy into replicable, community-led solution for youth mental wellness and trauma recovery.*

FERGUSON, MO, UNITED STATES, May 15, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ten years after Ferguson's uprising reshaped the national dialogue on race and justice, a new story is rising from the same streets—this time led by art and community healing. A Red Circle, a North St. Louis County nonprofit, has officially launched [The Creative Spot](#), an arts and wellness hub located at 414 S. Florissant Road.

Now open to the public, A Red Circle's Creative Spot offers year-round creative programming—including music, visual art, drumming, storytelling, and intergenerational events—designed to help the community process trauma and reclaim joy.



A Red Circle, a North St. Louis County-based nonprofit advancing racial equity through food access, education advocacy, and community wellness.

"The community was reeling in grief after the uprising—but even then, we didn't sit still," said Erica R. Williams, Executive Director of A Red Circle. "We organized, we protested, and we built spaces of joy. The Creative Spot is part of that movement. It's a space for healing, imagination, and legacy—designed to meet our people with care and belonging."

The center opened May 2–3 with a ribbon cutting and two-day celebration attended by over 100 people. Guests explored softly lit rooms filled with youth artwork and communal gathering spaces. Painting stations, music performances, and welcome banners created a vibrant,

affirming environment for local families, educators, artists, and officials.

“This isn’t just a building—it’s a portal,” said Jessica Johnson, Community Arts Director of The Creative Spot. “Our people deserve beautiful spaces designed with them in mind.”

Restored with support from Forward Through Ferguson, private donors, and community partners, the building is now a sanctuary for resilience. At a time when schools are slashing arts and mental health budgets, A Red Circle's Creative Spot provides an urgently needed alternative. Most programs are free, all are culturally grounded and trauma-informed.



A Red Circle's Community Arts Director Jessica Johnson; Executive Director Erica Williams; MO State Rep. Kem Smith; Artist Lady J Huston, accepting resolution at the grand opening of The Creative Spot, 414 S. Florissant Rd. Ferguson, MO. Phot

A Red Circle's Creative Spot programs are now underway, including:

“

When school budgets cut the arts and wellness, we didn’t wait—we built a permanent space where youth heal, create, and rise. This is what restoration looks like, from Ferguson to the nation.”

*Erica R. Williams, Executive Director of A Red Circle 501c3*

- \* Creative Drop-Ins: Fridays, 12–5 PM – karaoke, crafting, informal tours
- \* Drumming 4 Peace Camp: July 14–18
- \* Kwanzaa Stage Show – “The Village It Takes”: Auditions Wednesdays, 5–8 PM, performers receive stipends
- \* Monthly Art Healing Workshops: Launching January 2026
- \* StoryLab Podcast Studio: In development

Residents can also use art supplies freely, complete school art projects, or reserve the space for small ensemble rehearsals. A professional recording studio is planned, with

a fundraising goal of \$32,000 to support community access to music therapy, podcasting, and album creation. To reach The Creative Spot directly, call (314) 528-2303.

According to *Frontiers in Psychology*, arts-based therapies help regulate emotion and support recovery from trauma. Music therapy, in particular, is effective for PTSD, autism, depression, anxiety, and grief. “Right now, I go after school when I can. But when summer starts, I’ll be here every day,” said 14-year-old Ferguson resident Malik. “I can write music, talk to people who

understand me, and not feel like I'm carrying everything by myself."

Opening weekend welcomed local leaders and supporters, including:

- \* Mayor Ella Jones (Ferguson)
- \* Senator Angela Mosley
- \* State Representatives Kem Smith, Yolonda Fountain-Henderson, Stephanie Boykin, Chanel Mosley
- \* Mayor Reginald Jones (Dellwood)
- \* Councilperson Naquittia Noah
- \* Chief Troy Doyle and Patricia Washington (Ferguson Police)
- \* Delegate LaRhonda Wilson from Congressman Wesley Bell's office
- \* A Red Circle Board Members: Marilyn Aleem, Jerome Carroll, Charles Johnson, Tori Sombright, Vanessa Howard



A Red Circle's Community Arts Program Coordinator and Artist-in-Residence Joyce "Lady J" Huston at the grand opening of The Creative Spot, 414 S. Florissant Rd. Ferguson, MO. Photo: Caitlin Ung

Each affirmed the space as a vital step in Ferguson's long-term healing.

A Red Circle announced its new sponsorship program, which invites individuals and organizations to [support The Creative Spot](#) via "Sponsor the Spot."

- \* Friend of the Arts (\$25–\$49): Listed in "Friends" roll, small branded gift
- \* Creative Supporter (\$50–\$99): Discounts on select programs, digital media
- \* Program Partner (\$100–\$999): Complimentary tickets, public recognition, option to host a small event
- \* Program Sponsor (\\$1,000–\\$2,500): Event materials credit, artist gift, social media shout-out
- \* Community Builder (\\$2,501–\\$5,000): Logo in promotions, VIP reception
- \* Changemaker Partner (\\$5,001–\\$10,000): Prominent logo placement, meet-and-greets
- \* Visionary Circle (\\$10,001–\\$25,000): "In Partnership With" event billing, VIP event hosting
- \* Empowering Voices (\\$25,001+): Recording studio naming rights, permanent recognition, studio use discounts

Why This Matters: According to the CDC, more than 2 million U.S. students—disproportionately in Black communities—lack access to arts education. Meanwhile, federal budget proposals threaten key mental health programs. A Red Circle's Creative Spot offers a replicable, community-based response where creativity meets care.

The Creative Spot's launch plans to celebrate:

- \* Mental Health Awareness Month (May)
- \* National Black Family Day (May 19)
- \* Black Music Month (June)
- \* Juneteenth (June 19)
- \* International Youth Day (August 12)
- \* National Arts in Education Week (September)
- \* National Drum Month (November)
- \* Kwanzaa (December)
- \* Giving Tuesday (December 2)

Year-round themes include local control, Black Futures, and community wellness. This is what rebuilding after Ferguson looks like—not just restored buildings, but restored voices. Not just programming, but purpose, power, and possibility.

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#### About Jessica D. Johnson

Jessica D. Johnson is the Director of Community Arts at A Red Circle, a nonprofit dedicated to advancing racial equity and community betterment in North St. Louis County. A visual artist and musician, she was among the organization's earliest volunteers and was appointed Arts Coordinator in 2019.

She currently leads The Creative Spot in Ferguson, Missouri—a national model for youth-led mental health and healing through creative expression. The space offers drop-in art workshops, music therapy, intergenerational events, and trauma-informed programming that uses art as a path to restoration.

Jessica's work centers around reclaiming joy, elevating community voice, and investing in young people as agents of change. She believes art is a human right, and creativity is how we come home to ourselves.

About A Red Circle: Founded in 2017, A Red Circle is a nonprofit organization based in North St. Louis County promoting community wellness through arts, agriculture, education, and economic empowerment. Learn more at <http://www.aredcircle.org> or call A Red Circle's Creative Spot at (314) 528-2303.

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