The Kansas City Museum prides itself on partnering with nonprofit organizations and working together to achieve common goals in community development, organizational capacity building and youth leadership, while elevating the artistic and creative economy that is at the core of Kansas City’s history and future.

As the Museum continues to work in the space of real-world learning and begins to create a workforce development program for youth and veterans with paid internships and jobs, the Museum is excited to explore and focus on partnerships locally with nonprofit organizations that use arts and culture to comprehensively focus on youth development. To that end, the Kansas City Museum is proud to highlight Art as Mentorship, a nonprofit that recently opened office and programming space in the Historic Northeast, where the Kansas City Museum is located.

Art as Mentorship began as a music education collaboration between Latin Grammy-nominated Making Movies musicians Enrique and Diego Chi and Juan-Carlos Chaurand and local community center Mattie Rhodes, connecting underserved immigrant, Latinx and low-income youth with mentors after school and during the summer. Over and over, they saw how music and songwriting empowered these young people.

By Art as Mentorship and Kansas City Museum

Enrique Chi, Art as Mentorship Founder and Executive-Artistic Director, in the Historic Northeast office.

Making Movies performing in Panamá.

After seven years of growth, they incorporated into a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2017, with the mission to empower young people to write their own success stories and the belief that the future will be made brighter by enabling the healing qualities of music to unite us.

Now led by five professional musicians and a network of Grammy Award-winning professionals and music industry mentors, Art as Mentorship has year-round programming (the Rebel Song Academy and the AMERI’KANA Project), with two sites and five satellite programs throughout the region. Their unique approach to music education encompasses the whole child, working to transform young artists through access to world-class mentorship, real-world skill development and mental health support.

“What was happening is that we gave kids a space to be celebrated for their vulnerability. They were writing about what was going on in their neighborhood, or in their families, or what they were going through, and then they’re applauded for it. The professional mentors, the recording, the performances aside, the space where it’s okay and normalized to say out loud your emotional processing — that’s the magic sauce.

— Enrique Chi, Art as Mentorship Founder and Executive-Artistic Director
Art as Mentorship’s annual Celebrate AMERI’KANA Music & Arts Festival will take place Saturday, Sept. 10, at Concourse Park in the Historic Northeast neighborhood just a few blocks from the Kansas City Museum. A vibrant and festive day of music, Celebrate AMERI’KANA will bring together national, local and youth performers and artisans for an all-day, family-friendly celebration of BIPOC musicians and the diverse Kansas City arts community. The festival is transitioning to a completely free event in 2023, making it even more accessible in one of Kansas City’s most diverse communities.

The Rebel Song Academy at the heart of Art as Mentorship’s programming helps young artists explore their full potential through creativity and mentorship opportunities — fostering their inherent sense of exploration and achievement. Students are guided from the creative process of songwriting all the way through to the real-world entrepreneurial aspects of recording, releasing and performing their compositions. The Kansas City Museum hosted the summer camp in 2018, outdoor performances, and virtual programming during the pandemic. The Museum looks forward to future creative collaborations.

Three participants of The Rebel Song Academy share their perspective by answering the following questions in writing: How was your experience at the Rebel Song Academy? What was a personal highlight for you in the program? What was the biggest takeaway or lesson from the whole experience?

**Isabella White (15 years old)**

“My experience was welcoming and super joyful. Honestly, it was the place I felt most at home, and I really looked forward to going every week. I would go, and feel better and feel heard and cared about. It was what I needed. I also learned a lot about music theory and songwriting that I’ll definitely use in the future so I’m really grateful for that.

A personal highlight for me was when we all performed our songs for each other in the last couple rehearsals. It was great to hear everybody and just chill with my friends in a comfy environment. It was also fun how everyone was being super supportive. We all hype each other up, it’s great.

The biggest takeaway . . . That it’s good to be uniquely and unapologetically myself, and that there are definitely environments where I can be safe and welcomed. I just have to find my interests. And I did.”

**Jose Aguero (16 years old)**

“Rebel Song Academy, the place is amazing. I like the teachers and the students who are in the Academy. They have helped me become less nervous about others’ opinions.

A personal highlight for me? The students. Finding people like me who are expressing themselves and having fun, is the best thing I could ask for.

My biggest takeaway from Rebel Song Academy is, to be you, have fun, listen to advice, and lastly be great.”

**Sam Heavener (16 years old)**

“My experience with RSA was really fun, I really loved doing it and is definitely something I would love to keep going to and keep on writing music with the help of all the mentors.

A personal highlight would definitely be performing at the end of the 12 weeks at Spread Hope (concert). It was definitely nerve racking for me but getting up on stage in front of people showing them what you have been working on is something I wouldn’t forget. Especially listening to everyone’s songs there as well, just an overall amazing thing.

One of the biggest lessons that I learned going through this camp is that it’s OK to mess up at stuff and either sing out of tune or play a chord wrong and else people in the program won’t judge you but support you in every way they can.”

To learn more about Art as Mentorship, visit: [artasmentorship.org](http://artasmentorship.org).