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**SOULS GROWN DEEP ANNOUNCES FIVE INITIATIVES
TO BENEFIT GEE'S BEND, ALABAMA**

**Souls Grown Deep's Financial Support of Gee's Bend
Furtheres its Dedication to the Communities that Gave Rise to the Art in Its Collection,
Provides New Ways for Donors to Contribute to the Region,
And Builds on the Commitment of its Endowment to Impact Investing**

January 23, 2020 (Atlanta, GA) – Souls Grown Deep (SGD) announced today that it is investing in five new initiatives to improve the quality of life in Gee's Bend, Alabama. The region is home to multiple generations of quiltmakers, many of whom have work in the Souls Grown Deep Foundation's collection or are represented in those of major museums around the country through SGD's collections transfer program. Furthering SGD's dedication to promoting racial and social justice and economic opportunity in the region, the five initiatives create new opportunities for the quiltmakers to achieve financial success, sponsor arts education programs for local teachers and students to engage with the distinct visual culture of the community, and contribute to fair representation in the 2020 census.

Maxwell L. Anderson, president of Souls Grown Deep, explains its vision and goals: "Our primary focus has been to change the canon of art history to admit African American artists of the South. With these five initiatives, we seek to address institutional inequities that have historically excluded those artists and their communities from recognition." He added: "The art world is waking up to its many social responsibilities, and we are proud to play a small part in shouldering those."

To foster economic success for the Gee's Bend quiltmakers, Souls Grown Deep has partnered with the nonprofit Nest to create new avenues for the promotion and sale of new quilts. Souls Grown Deep is also fostering the continuity of quilting traditions in Gee's Bend through financial support for the revitalization of the Bend's Freedom Quilting Bee, which has the potential to provide another point of sale for quilts and employment for the women of the community. A new Gee's Bend Quilt Trail will also increase visibility and wayfinding for the craft in the region.

Souls Grown Deep will also provide funding for the training and implementation of a Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) program at Gee's Bend's sole elementary school. By incorporating artworks from the region into the curriculum, the VTS program will enhance critical thinking and visual literacy across a variety of subjects while providing new perspectives on the quilts for students and teachers in the local

community. Additional support from SGD will help Gee's Bend receive accurate representation in the 2020 census, allowing for this historically undercounted area to receive benefits necessary for safety, economic growth, and social wellbeing.

More information on each of the five new initiatives is included below. **To follow updates and to make a contribution to these Gee's Bend initiatives and other SGD projects, please visit soulsgrowndeep.org.**

These philanthropic activities build on SGD's 2019 commitment of its entire one million dollar endowment to impact investing, as part of the [Member Community of Upstart Co-Lab](#), a nonprofit organization connecting the \$12 trillion of socially responsible and impact investing capital in the U.S. to the \$804 billion U.S. creative economy. SGD will make an investment in Community Investment Management to support loans to small businesses in the creative economy led by women and people of color; Impact Shares' NAACP Minority Empowerment ETF (ticker: NACP) to achieve broad equity market exposure to US Large and Mid-Cap companies that fit the NAACP's vision of good corporate citizens; and term certificates offered by Self-Help Credit Union, a community development finance institution which focuses on the creative economy as part of its mission to create economic opportunity for all.

SGD & NEST

Souls Grown Deep has partnered with [Nest](#), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) building a new handworker economy to increase global workforce inclusivity, promote gender equity, and preserve time honored cultural traditions. Together, Nest and SGD aim to develop a holistic, sustainable approach to supporting the Gee's Bend quilters, leveraging the local craft history to bring dollars directly back to the community.

Since 2012, Souls Grown Deep has worked with Artists Rights Society to assist Gee's Bend quilters in protecting, managing, and profiting from their intellectual property. As part of its ongoing work to document the cultural traditions of Gee's Bend, SGD also provides no-cost studio photography of quilts to quiltmakers for use in sales and licensing. Nest and SGD are currently exploring reputable licensing partners with whom quilters, or their heirs, can pursue possible product licensing opportunities for contemporary and historic quilts. The partners are also exploring opportunities to leverage quilt demand to develop a holistic tourism initiative including craft-driven attractions and experiences, leisure activities, and hospitality ventures.

GEE'S BEND QUILT TRAIL

Souls Grown Deep and The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development, in collaboration with Pentagram—the world's largest independent design consultancy—are working to reinstate the Gee's Bend Quilt Trail. The original Trail was created more than a decade ago to mark the homes of the ten quilters whose quilts were featured in USPS *Quilts of Gee's Bend* series of postage stamps, following the highly successful touring exhibition of the same name in 2006. The original wooden signs commemorating quilts by Mary Lee Bendolph, Minnie Sue Coleman, Lottie Mooney, Ruth Pettway Mosely, Arlonzia Pettway, Jessie T. Pettway, Loretta Pettway, Plummer T. Pettway, Patty Ann Williams,

and Annie Mae Young have deteriorated significantly. SGD and its partners are replacing these signs with more durable versions.

Additionally, SGD is planning a separate series of roadside markers commemorating quilts placed by Souls Grown Deep into the permanent collection of a museum as part of its [collection transfer program](#). Since 2014, the foundation has placed quilts by 68 Gee's Bend quilters into the permanent collections of 20 museums.

The final trail will mark the homes of dozens of quiltmakers spanning three generations. Each marker will be available for sponsorship. In addition, SGD will be launching online and mobile resources to accompany wayfinding signage.

FREEDOM QUILTING BEE

Souls Grown Deep has provided a planning grant to the Federation of Southern Cooperatives in support of The Freedom Quilting Bee Legacy, a community-based organization working to revitalize and reimagine the original FQB building and its surrounding 13 acres. The original Freedom Quilting Bee began in 1966, but formally closed in 2012. The Bee in its heyday yielded access to the widespread creative traditions of Gee's Bend and provided a regular source of employment for women in the community. Future development could include a cultural center and gallery exploring the history of Gee's Bend; a library and resource center for the community; a learning center providing workshops on quilting, gardening and agriculture, financial literacy, child development, and senior care; a marketplace for locally sourced goods ranging from fresh produce to quilts and other handcrafts; or accommodations for tourists and workshop participants, walking and biking trails, and community gardens.

ABC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Gee's Bend's sole elementary school, ABC Elementary, in Alberta, Alabama, is participating in the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) program through the support of Souls Grown Deep. SGD is providing an on-site, multi-day VTS training practicum for ABC Elementary school teachers, with a programmatic focus on artworks from Alabama, intended to integrate the region's unparalleled creativity into the curriculum for the benefit of schoolchildren and their families.

Under the leadership of its principal, this small, historically underfunded elementary school, has made strides to strengthen its academic offerings through curricular development and educator training that focuses on critical thinking skills to better prepare teachers and students for the challenges and opportunities of a 21st-century education.

VTS will be an essential component in the reconsideration of the school's curriculum. As an educational nonprofit that trains educators in schools, museums, and institutions of higher education, VTS fosters collaborative, inclusive, and community-building dialogues through its unique and successful student-centered facilitation method and professional development programs. While the focus will be on art education, educators at ABC Elementary School will also be given tools for implementing VTS student-centered critical thinking strategies across all disciplines.

2020 CENSUS

Historically undercounted, the population of Gee's Bend (consisting of the towns of Boykin & Alberta, Alabama) is located within Census Tract 347 in Wilcox County, which had the lowest census participation rate in Alabama in 2010. SGD is coordinating with members of the Gee's Bend community, civic organizations, and churches to maximize participation, and ensure accurate tabulation of the number of residents in each community. Additional outreach efforts are being made to assist community members in applying for temporary employment opportunities as census takers.

SGD will provide publicly accessible internet-connected computers in Gee's Bend for use by community members to complete census forms online. This access is essential for the community to actively participate, as 62.5% of the tract's households have no home internet subscription and there is no public library or other space with internet-connected computers available for public use. Additionally, census workers living in designated Hard to Count Tracts are most effective at maximizing participation, yet the job applications are also online. Therefore, Souls Grown Deep will also make these resources available for community members to apply for work as census takers. After the 2020 Census, these computers will remain available for public use.

The forthcoming benefits from precise census counts include fair access to federal funds and grants, data to attract businesses and developers, and accurate representation in the U.S. House of Representatives. Local governments also use the census for public safety and emergency preparedness.

SGD IMPACT INVESTMENTS

In its first round of impact investments from its endowment, Souls Grown Deep will make investments in Community Investment Management, Impact Shares' NAACP Minority Empowerment ETF, and term certificates offered by Self-Help Credit Union.

Community Investment Management provides strategic debt funding to small businesses led by women entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs of color, and other under-served borrowers in the U.S. 25% of small businesses loans under-written by CIM support creative economy businesses in sectors like food, fashion and media.

Impact Shares is a nonprofit broker-dealer of Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) seeking to generate both financial and social returns. Impact Shares' NAACP Minority Empowerment ETF tracks the Morningstar Minority Empowerment Index, which is designed to provide exposure to U.S. companies with strong racial and ethnic diversity policies in place, empowering employees irrespective of their race or nationality. As of 12/31/2019, the NACP Net Asset Value (NAV) was 30.1%.

Since 1980, Self-Help Credit Union (SHCU) has created and protected ownership and economic opportunity by providing responsible financial services, lending to small businesses and nonprofits, developing real estate, and promoting fair financial practices. It particularly serves people of color, women, rural residents, and low-wealth families and communities. SHCU's comprehensive community

development activities have emphasized co-working space for creative entrepreneurs, revitalizing abandoned mill buildings as centers for economic and cultural development, and preservation of historic buildings and the heritage of downtown areas in Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia.

About the Souls Grown Deep Community Partnership & Foundation

Souls Grown Deep Community Partnership is dedicated to improving the quality of life of communities that gave rise to the art made by African American artists of the South in the care of the Souls Grown Deep Foundation. It advances its mission by fostering economic empowerment, racial and social justice, and educational advancement in select regions across the Southeast. The Partnership derives its name from a 1921 poem by Langston Hughes (1902-67) titled *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*, the last line of which is "My soul has grown deep like the rivers."

Souls Grown Deep Foundation holds the largest and foremost collection of works of African American artists from the Southern United States, encompassing some 1,000 works by more than 160 artists. The Foundation advances its mission by advocating the contributions of these artists in the canon of American art history, accomplished through collection transfers, scholarship, exhibitions, education, public programs, and publications.

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