

SPECIAL REPORT: 10 Kansas City Startups to Watch in 2021



Olathe-built COVID-fighting biotech could be 'Coolest Thing made in Kansas' — Voting now open

By: Startland News Staff - September 16, 2020



An Olathe startup that began offering its biotech to researchers in April — just as the pandemic hit — already is receiving statewide recognition for a product that ultimately could help take down COVID-19.

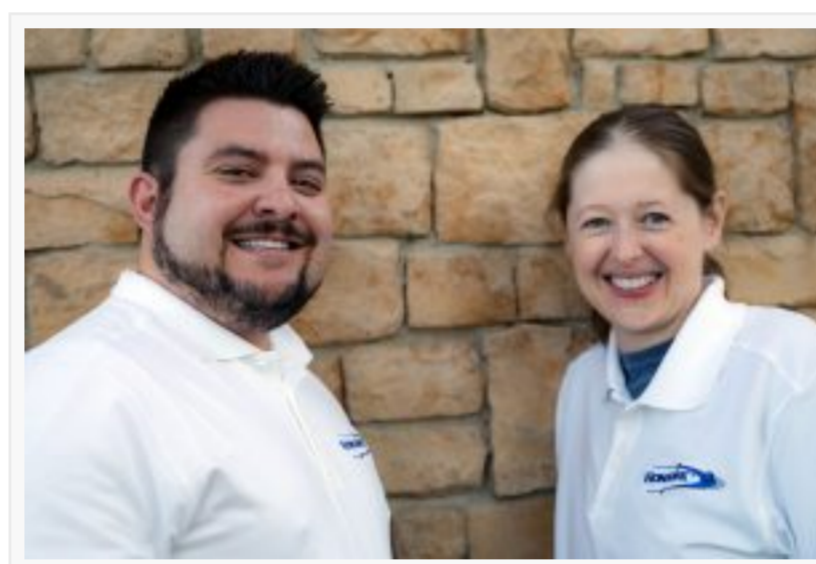
T-Blocks were announced Wednesday as one of the Top 16 nominees for the Kansas Chamber's "Coolest Thing Made in Kansas" prize, which highlights Sunflower State manufacturers. Grown by Ronawk at the health tech startup's Johnson County lab, the product is one of five Kansas City metro competitors for the honor.

Click [here](#) to vote for the "Coolest Thing Made in Kansas."

"We hope this creates an opportunity to tell folks more about our T-Blocks, so we can do some good in the KC area," said [A.J. Mellott, president and co-founder of Ronawk](#).

Built on modular and expandable 3D substrates, T-Blocks (Tissue-Blocks) enable researchers across the globe to rapidly expand growth of cells — up to one trillion at a time — used in critical research that could save lives and shatter the COVID curve once and for all, he detailed.

Ronawk formally launched in February 2019. Mellott and [co-founder Heather Decker, who also serves as CTO](#), initially weren't expecting to use T-Blocks in the fight against a global pandemic a year into the endeavor, Mellott said, noting the product has broader applications.



A.J. Mellott and Heather Decker, Ronawk

"[What we're creating is] going to help overcome some of the diseases that currently the whole world is facing and fighting against," he said.

Click [here](#) to read more about T-Blocks and Ronawk, one of Startland News' 2020 Top Venture Capital-Backed Companies in Kansas City.

The four other Kansas City-area products featured as nominees for "Coolest Thing Made in Kansas" include:

- Autoland, Garmin International, Inc., Olathe
- Al Davis Memorial Torch, Dimensional Innovations, Overland Park
- Microlitel, KMDI, Inc., Kansas City
- Pies, Tippin's Gourmet Pies, LLC, Kansas City

Additional Kansas nominees rounding out the Top 16 include:

- EMP Shield, EMP Shields, LLC, Burlington
- SawHaul carrier, GearHaul, Chanute
- Custom Built Dredge, Custom Dredge Works, Inc., Topeka
- James Webb Space Telescope Struts, Aerospace Corporation, Newton
- Rawhide Portable Corral, Rawhide Portable Corral, Abilene
- BG Rev-It tool, BG Products, Wichita
- Custom Limestone Rock Signs, Fisher Rocks, Belleville
- Stanfield Heating Pad, Osborne Industries, Inc. Osborne
- Kalmar Ottawa Terminal Tractor, Kalmar, Ottawa
- CLX Ra Gaming PC Special Edition, CLX Gaming, Wichita
- Coleman-Mach, MACH 15 A/C, RV Products (a division of Airxcel), Wichita

Voting in the Top 16 round is open now through Sept. 21, with the Top 8 set to be announced Sept. 22. Nominees will then be pared down to Top 4, Top 2 and ultimately an overall winner through four phases of voting.

The "Coolest Thing Made in Kansas is expected to be revealed Oct. 6.

Click [here](#) to view the full contest calendar and rules.

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