



message from
the director...

WHY DO THE ARTS MEAN BUSINESS?

Since 1969, the Business Committee for the Arts in New York City has done a triennial, field-wide survey of businesses to determine: why they support the arts, how they support the arts and to what extent they support the arts.

But first, how do we define “the arts” at the Fitton Center? We define the arts as just about any creative endeavor. That can mean visual arts like painting, drawing, sculpture, or, music in any genre, theatre, any form of dance, and certainly virtual arts like computer graphics and art, design, architectural design, fabric design, and so on. And at the Fitton Center we include the for-profit arts like film and cinema, recording, writing, and more. We use an inclusive definition that author Richard Florida would consider a part of his definition of the creative class.

This survey is the only survey in the U.S. that tracks nonprofit arts support from small, midsize and large companies. So let’s take a look and see if this report can help us understand why the arts mean business:

According to the survey, business giving to the arts fell 14 percent from 2006-2009.

Business giving to any philanthropic cause is down by 18 percent, and fewer businesses are giving at all. Funding is declining across the board. Since 2007, the Fitton Center has lost public funding of \$50,000 from the City of Hamilton, \$50,000 from Butler County Commissioners, and our annual grant from the Ohio Arts Council has dwindled from \$26,000 to \$11,000 and may decline even more with an \$8 billion state deficit.

Among the decreased number of businesses that continue to support the arts, median gift amounts actually rose among small businesses (from \$500 to \$700) and mid-size businesses (from \$2000 to \$2250). As a result, among businesses giving to the arts, small and mid-size businesses more than ever contribute the largest share of arts dollars. Small businesses contribute 69 percent, midsize businesses contribute 24 percent, and large businesses contribute 7 percent.

So, why do businesses support the arts? When respondents to this survey were asked what is the most important factor in considering increased funding for the arts, the resounding answer was: *Profitability*. Supporting the arts was good for their bottom line. After profitability, respondents chose “link to social causes or education” as the next most important factor in supporting the arts.

And finally, as we look at why The Arts Mean Business, a study entitled Ready to Innovate, produced in 2008 by Americans for the Arts, The Conference Board, and the American Association of School Administrators, U.S. employers rate **creativity and innovation** among the top five skills that will increase in importance over the next five years.

And they rank it among the top challenges facing CEOs. But it’s pretty clear that investment in the arts today – especially for young people – will benefit businesses for years to come.

What’s the economic impact? The **nonprofit** arts in America are a **\$166 billion** industry. Add the **for-profit** arts like cinema, publishing, and the recording industries and the arts in this country are enormous contributors to jobs and the local, state, and federal tax base.

Regionally, according to a recent UC Education and Research survey, the 18 member nonprofit arts organizations of ArtsWave in our region generated \$200 million in economic activity with the Fitton Center being about \$4.5 million of that activity. And that’s 18 organizations out of nearly 300 nonprofit arts organizations in the region.

So, the economic impact of the arts nationally and in our region is well-documented. And by the way, the next time you hear someone say there is really no job market in the arts, remind them that over **231,000** people are employed in creative jobs in Ohio alone.

Beyond economic impact, the arts have been proven again and again as excellent tools for revitalizing communities and downtowns, aiding in the abatement of social problems, providing benefits in the area of health and wellness, and helping students be more successful in school.

When these affects are coupled with the intrinsic benefits of arts participation like:

- *Discovering what it means to be human*
- *Expanding knowledge of and empathy for other places and people*
- *Finding ways to express ourselves more completely*
- *Uncovering hidden talents while gaining transferable skills*
- *Gaining self-confidence and raising self-esteem.*
- *And so many more.*

Collectively the economic and intrinsic value of the arts just make our world a better place.

That’s why so many communities are following the lead of Hamilton and giving the arts a chance to work their magic. The arts are not the silver bullet, they are not the single answer to what makes a community great, but you can’t have a great community without great art and without vibrant arts activity. So the arts must play a key role in economic development, community building, and adding **creativity and innovation** to the quality of life.

That’s the role the Fitton Center plays in the region and thanks to our many sponsors, donors and participants, we will be able to continue that role well into the future.

Rick H. Jones – Executive Director