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OPINION

## Business support for the arts bolsters R.I.'s economy

Guest Column:  
Gina DiSpirito

The arts define Providence. Mention the Renaissance City to most out-of-staters and they are likely to bring up "WaterFire Providence," the seasonal art installation and tourist attraction.

The arts community keeps Providence vibrant; it attracts tourists in the summer and students in the fall. So when businesses turn their backs on the arts organizations of our community, they are doing more than failing to support our city's culture. They are making bad business moves!

Watching the bustling Downcity area while "WaterFire" is in full blaze — the families and couples gathering by the river and strolling along the promenade, stopping to enjoy the performances of artists and performers along the way; the patios of restaurants full of diners where the night before tables may have remained empty; shoppers exploring retailers in the heart of Downcity they otherwise might have missed on their drive through the area — who can deny the economic impact of these events?

Earlier this summer, the Arts and Economic Prosperity Study helped put figures to that intuitive truth. According to the report, authored by Americans for the Arts, last year alone, the arts supported the equivalent of 2,759 jobs in Providence and generated resident household income of \$55.6 million. These same programs are also helping the state and local government, generating \$5.5 million and \$5.6 million, respectively, for the two bodies.

What does this mean for your bottom line? Supporting the arts is good business.

At Glad Works, we have close relationships with a number of local arts organizations, from Festival Ballet Providence to "WaterFire" and Trinity Repertory Company. These contributions of my time and my work are not one-sided.

On an immediate level, these projects help build visibility for the amazing work my team can accomplish for our clients. We also get recognized in certain circles specifically because of some of the pro bono work we've done, and that type of recognition builds momentum.

As a designer, art always has been a huge part of my work and of my life, so it was a natural fit for Glad Works to promote the arts. But any business can get involved. From attending events to volunteering to donating in-kind products or services, businesses have a unique opportunity to support the arts in ways that individuals can't.

The Arts & Business Council of Rhode Island is a nonprofit arts service organization that works to promote cultural and economic growth through leadership, partnerships and programs that link the arts and business sectors.

Through events like the Encore Awards that celebrate businesses that contribute to the arts, and panel discussions moderated by community leaders such as Roger Mandle, president of the Rhode Island School of Design, and exploring topics like how the sensibilities of the arts can help inform successful businesses, the Arts & Business Council helps bring commerce and creativity together for their mutual benefit.

This type of innovative thinking helps our local businesses and our bottom lines. Please visit [www.artsandbusinessri.org](http://www.artsandbusinessri.org) to find out how to get involved! •

*Gina DiSpirito is the founder and creative director of the advertising agency Glad Works and the secretary of the Arts & Business Council of Rhode Island.*

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