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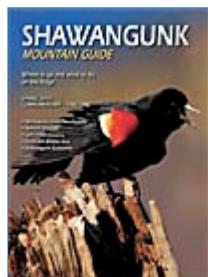
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Shawangunk Mountain Guide

The Arts As A Regional Moneymaker

New Report Summarizes The Fiscal Effects Of Culture

Jazz legend Roswell Rudd, Shadowland Theatre, the local art seen at galleries such as Stone Ridge's PS209, and film heavyweights like Oscar winner Melissa Leo and new BCDF Pictures of Kerhonkson are just the tip of a major arts juggernaut that increasingly defines our region. Courtesy photos

The Arts As A Regional Moneymaker
New Report Summarizes The Fiscal Effects Of Culture

By Chris Rowley

REGIONAL – Arts, theater, music, and film may only provide a small slice of employment in our economy, but the impact of "the arts" reaches far beyond the jobs they create. The legacy of Cragmoor's and Woodstock's artistic heritage still powers the real estate market there. The lure of the Shadowland Theater transforms the downbeat tone of Ellenville on summer season weekends, and turns the village into the liveliest townscape in our area. Restaurants thrive on the traffic, and eventually, real estate does too. Look up the Hudson Valley to the city of Hudson, once a relic, then an antiques market that grew filled with artists and galleries and now a hot real estate market.

Recently, the Center for Research Regional Education and Outreach (CRREO) at SUNY New Paltz released a report detailing the current strengths of the arts in the Hudson Valley.

Ulster County, where CRREO found 106 organizations involved in the arts, including dance, music, theater, festivals and literature as well as museums and galleries and a film studio, definitely punches above its weight in this area. A county with 181,000 residents has an arts economy worth \$15 million with another \$8.5 million in indirect effects for a total value of \$23.5 million. The arts in Ulster are also mostly the work of small organizations, well more

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than half being operations with budgets of \$50,000 or less.

Orange County, with 345,000 residents had 78 organizations that were tracked by CRREO. An estimated \$20.8 million in direct economic impact was calculated with another \$12.3 in indirect impacts. Two hundred full time jobs in the county depend on the arts, and another two hundred and eighty-six are dependent on the indirect effects.

Sullivan County produced thirty organizations, thirteen in the Performing Arts category. Here things were skewed a bit because Bethel Woods, the large scale music venue built on the site of the 1969 Woodstock Festival, also tips the scales at well more than \$1 million in revenues. Sullivan had 94 jobs directly related to the arts and another 250 on the indirect effects.

Further afield, the report noted that Dutchess County receives a total impact worth \$28.5 million from the arts, which also generates 1,015 jobs there. And, of course, Westchester has, by far, the largest total at \$300 million, but only 1,103 jobs.

Clearly, all our counties are rather different in this regard. But the dynamic effect on the vibrancy of a small town or village from having successful art galleries, or a theater, remains, with powerful after-effects on both tourism and the real estate market, which is also our region's biggest single economic power.

The report discussed collaborations between local business and arts organizations, where useful synergies may be found and many encouraging efforts in this area.

However, there are some clouds on the horizon, despite the fairly bright picture in the report. Due to cuts in public education there has been drastic reduction — and complete elimination in many cases — of arts programming in our schools. The current push to improve standards in reading, in math and science seems to ignore the role of culture in our world.

Downgrading the arts, cutting them from curricula, may well turn out to be a disastrous error. A region with vibrant arts will attract visitors and second home buyers. A region without them, well, not so much...

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