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## **Arts are economic generator in Mid-Hudson region, SUNY New Paltz study finds**

### **SUNY study says cultural endeavors are key economic generator for region**

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NEW PALTZ >> The arts bring nearly \$500 million per year in economic benefits to a seven-county area in the Hudson Valley, a new study has concluded.

[The study, released Thursday](#) by the Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach at SUNY New Paltz, touts the contributions of businesses that work with cultural organizations in the region.

“We hoped and believed that if we could demonstrate a substantial economic impact by arts and cultural institutions in the region, one that paralleled their already widely appreciated social and cultural impact, greater support for them would flow, and the region would benefit in multiple ways,” said Gerald Benjamin, the director of the center and the college’s associate vice president for regional engagement.

Researchers reviewed information from 517 organizations in Ulster, Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester counties and found \$498 million in economic benefit.

“Every dollar spent by arts and culture organizations and their audiences cycles through the county and regional economies, generating business and creating jobs,” the study said. “Tourism is a major driver in the region, fueled in no small part by its arts and culture sector. We show here that arts and culture in our region is good for both our spirits and our pocketbooks.”

Study co-author Janis Benincasa said the study was intended to put arts and cultural activities on the same level as manufacturing and retail economic development.

“I think that everybody appreciates the arts. It looks pretty, sounds great, but people don’t see it as any kind of an economic engine and it really is,” she said.

Arts-related economic benefits outlined in the report included \$41.2 million from lodging, \$160 million from food and beverages, \$43.3 million from recreation, \$134 million from retail purchases and \$119 million from transportation.

The report said \$245 million was spent in 2011 by arts and cultural organizations on salaries, administrative services, insurance and related expenses, information services, professional services, transportation, retail trade, real estate, programs and other services.

“That (year) was the largest available data set,” Benincasa said. “Otherwise we would have left out far more organizations. So we are able to identify the greatest number of organizations and gather the greatest amount of information for 2011.”

In a review of impacts in counties from spending by arts and cultural groups, the study found:

- Ulster County had 372 jobs related to arts and culture; \$23.5 million in spending by arts-related organizations; 1.1 million day visitors and 380,000 overnight visitors for events; and had audiences put \$161 million into the local economy.
- Dutchess County has 1,015 jobs related to arts and culture; \$28.5 million in spending by arts-related organizations; 413,000 day visitors and 231,000 overnight visitors for events; and had audiences put \$62 million put into the economy.
- Sullivan County had 344 jobs related to arts and culture; \$32.6 million in spending by arts-related organizations; 130,000 day visitors and 38,000 overnight visitors for events; and had audiences put \$10.9 million into the economy.

The study was supported by the New York Community Trust Arts & Culture Research Fund. Researchers said they were guided, in part, by seeking to determine the impact of the region being declared a National Heritage Area in 1996 and the value of arts that followed “important movements in American art and architecture through the work of Andrew Jackson Downing, Alexander Jackson Davis, Thomas Cole, and their associates” in the Hudson Valley.

“Contemporary Hudson Valley arts, culture and historical organizations continue in this tradition of helping to define regional character,” the researchers wrote. “Their work — historic preservation, art and history exhibitions, festivals, musical and theater performances, publications, lectures, conferences and symposia, film, radio and Web projects — express local and regional identity while simultaneously informing the valley’s strong sense of place.”

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