

## The Arts: A Force for Economic Development & Quality of Life

Written by By Rose Eason, Executive Director, GallupARTS  
Friday, 08 June 2018 03:30

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The positive economic impact of the arts is indisputable. Nationally, nonprofit arts and culture is a \$166 billion industry. In New Mexico, the arts and cultural sector contributes \$5.6 billion to the economy each year. In terms of employment, the State's arts industry is roughly equal in size to its construction industry and is 50% larger than its manufacturing industry.

These numbers hit close to home. In Gallup and McKinley County, one in four residents (25%) makes at least part of their living through the arts. Here, the arts are a way of life. Literally. For our communities, the arts are an economic lifeline—a thriving arts-based economy means thriving families.

That is why GallupARTS, your local nonprofit arts council, is dedicated to increasing opportunities for local artists, growing the Gallup area's art market, and strengthening the regional creative economy. Some of GallupARTS' recent accomplishments include:

Exhibiting 65 local artists at ART123 Gallery in the past 15 months, giving 29 their first-ever gallery show, helping to jumpstart careers. Additionally, our sister gallery, LOOM, featured 18 emerging Indigenous artists in 2017.

Employing over 430 local creatives to make, share, perform and teach during the last 12 ArtsCrawls, What's more: ArtsCrawl remains the Gallup's only free artist vending opportunity.

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Producing a free, three-part artist-led art business management workshop series in service of 72 local artist entrepreneurs.

By providing artists such opportunities, we create a rising tide that lifts all boats. By supporting artists, gallupARTS supports the entire community.

Moreover, gallupARTS leverages arts-based programs and events into community-wide economic development. Take ArtsCrawl, for example. According to a longitudinal survey completed during the 2017 season, a very (very!) conservative estimate of the amount of money ArtsCrawl generates for the local economy through event-related audience spending is \$80,000 per year. That's at least \$4,000 spent locally per event hour, which translates to more than one customer per minute for some downtown businesses. \$80K in revenue is also quadruple the cost of the event—an impressive return on investment. Programs like ArtsCrawl are irrefutably good for business.

As an arts nonprofit, gallupARTS is also a business and direct and significant contributor to our local economy. We create local jobs. We purchase local goods and services. Better yet: we deliver increased funding and resources to the community. gallupARTS is proud to have been awarded three competitive federal grants this year, totaling \$190,000 dollars and amounting to \$370,000 in projects. These grants pump money into the local economy; they get spent locally and have a multiplier effect. With these grants, we spread the wealth.

Equally, if not more importantly, gallupARTS' programs and projects improve the quality of life in our community. Not only are the arts a cornerstone of the tourism industry, attracting people to visit and bringing in money that way, they are also a primary means of attracting and retaining a quality, invested (and young) workforce.

One major quality-of-life initiative gallupARTS currently has in the works is a National Endowment for the Arts grant project to re-design Coal Avenue in downtown, in partnership with the City of Gallup, as a people-friendly, business-friendly, and event-friendly creative commons. A revitalized downtown will have significant economic impact. It will also make Gallup a more desirable place to live.

Likewise, gallupARTS' entire program lineup—ART123 Gallery, ArtsCrawl, the Second Street

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Arts Festival, Young Artists of McKinley County, art classes, public art projects—make Gallup a more exciting, attractive, welcoming, and vibrant town. Our programs, and the arts generally, have a beneficial communal effect and promote true prosperity: they provide entertainment, create beautiful spaces, bring inspiration and joy, and strengthen the social fabric of our community. They also promote economic prosperity, as a job-creating, family-supporting, wealth-generating, tourism-driving force.

gallupARTS has made significant headway as an arts, community and economic developer in Gallup and McKinley County. It has big projects in the works, and even more grand plans underway to help Gallup fulfill its potential as a creative and cultural hub, with all the attendant economic benefits. What can you do to help? Buy art from local artists. Attend performing arts events. Join in our community engagement programs. Advocate for funding for the arts at local, state and national levels.

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