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The Arts Industry in Rhode Island
A Fact Sheet

Rhode Island State Council on the Arts

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The Bottom Line:

* In the past year, Rhode Island's nonprofit arts industry had a spending impact exceeding $125 million. In addition the profitmaking sector — from the Warwick Musical Theatre to the state's more than 50 art galleries — adds millions more to the state's economy.

* The Rhode Island nonprofit arts industry employs more than 7,000 people. This is more than A.T. Cross, Bostitch, Hasbro, Health-Tex, and Narragansett Electric combined.

* Combined audience figures for R.I. arts events total millions of people. For example: in the last fiscal year, events funded in part by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts attracted 1,854,113 people. The state's FIRST NIGHT Celebration of the Arts drew more than 20,000 to its debut on New Year's Eve.

* The arts reach every area of the state to enrich the lives of its citizens. In addition to economic benefits, the arts effect education, community development and revitalization, tourism, intercultural relations, and the special needs of groups such as the disabled and the elderly.

* More and more Rhode Islanders are learning that investment in the arts is good business — now and for the future.

Rhode Island State Council on the Arts: 20 Years of Service

* The Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA), established in 1967, is a million dollar agency. Funded primarily by federal and state monies, RISCA's budget for this year includes $456,961 from the National Endowment for the Arts and $599,864 appropriated by the state legislature. Two additional sources, Very Special Arts USA and site matching funds for the Artists-in-Residence Program provide RISCA with $80,000 for a total operating budget of $1,136,815.

* In an average year, RISCA funds the projects and operations of more than 75 nonprofit arts organizations statewide. These organizations are responsible for the bulk of Rhode Island's $125 million spending impact. RISCA's funding is a key
element in these organizations' growth and their contributions to the state’s nationally recognized artistic excellence.

★ All RISCA grants are matched at least dollar for dollar by their recipients. (The single exception is the Fellowship Program which awards 10 $3,000 stipends annually to outstanding Rhode Island artists selected in open competition.)

★ RISCA programs benefit every community in the state. In addition to providing much-needed funding to organizations through three highly competitive grant award categories: General Operating Support, Project Support and Mini-Grants, RISCA administers several successful programs:

1. ARTISTS-IN-EDUCATION sends top professional artists to work with students in schools, community centers and other learning environments.

2. FOLK ARTS preserves, promotes and documents the state’s vital artistic heritage by working with artists and citizens from Rhode Island’s more than 30 ethnic population groups.

3. PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS TOURING provides partial funding for performances and exhibitions at parks, museums, libraries, schools, senior centers and “limited access” areas in the state. Last year more than a quarter of a million Rhode Islanders attended these events.

4. VERY SPECIAL ARTS/ARTSREACH involves the state’s disabled citizens in arts experiences designed to develop their artistic talents and to offer them opportunities in mainstream arts activities.

★ RISCA serves in cooperation with many other state agencies and organizations. Among RISCA’s “partners in the arts” are: the Department of Economic Development; the Department of Education; the Department of Environmental Management; the Department of Elderly Affairs; the Department of Transportation-Division of Airports; Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals; the R.I. Heritage Commission; Cultural Organization of the Arts; Dance Alliance; and the R.I. Foundation.

★ RISCA will continue its leadership role. Rhode Island’s 20 year commitment to its nonprofit arts industry has yielded enormous benefits to the state’s economy. However, this investment must be increased so that it will continue to have positive impact. Rhode Island’s business leaders, legislators and community spokesmen and women are encouraged to contact RISCA and make use of its resources to explore new ways to develop available funding sources and to create new partnerships in the arts.