

Business leaders help grow the arts in Rapid City

By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota

Business leaders have always been a driving force for strengthening the arts and helping to grow cultural opportunities throughout Rapid City. Traditionally, business owners and executives are among the strongest community boosters—contributing time, talent and funding to those activities that define our hometown. Imagine Rapid City without Main Street Square, the City of Presidents project or the Dahl Arts Center—all supported by the Chamber of Commerce and the business community. Additionally, business leaders understand the power of a diverse economy and the role arts and cultural organizations play in building local economic prosperity for the Black Hills region.

The national statistics are impressive—research by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis shows that nonprofit and for-profit arts are a \$730 billion industry that directly employs 4.8 million arts workers **and** represents 4.2 percent of the nation's GDP—a larger share of the economy than transportation, tourism and agriculture. The arts industry in the Black Hills generates \$114 million in total economic impact annually, supporting 3,576 jobs and adding \$3.8 million in total government revenue.

We know that families from all over western South Dakota come to Rapid City for a variety of shows and events sponsored by nonprofit arts organizations. Those attendees spend an average of \$24.60 per person, per event, beyond the cost of their ticketed admission, on items such as meals, parking, hotels and babysitters—valuable revenue for local commerce **and** the community.

A vibrant arts scene is also a vital recruitment tool in attracting new talent. At a time when Rapid City is striving to build its workforce in a competitive environment, creative leisure time activities, entertainment opportunities and participatory arts events are all major factors in attracting new workers. And, with its widely acknowledged role in cultivating critical thinking abilities, our arts in education curriculum helps to prepare young people in Rapid City schools for challenging careers in any field.

With their long-range view of local development, business leaders are strong and effective partners in expanding the impact of the arts in Rapid City. Artists and arts organizations respect the contributions of the business community and applaud their efforts to make the entire area a better place to live.

To learn more about the economic impact of the arts and how you can help grow the arts throughout South Dakota, please visit www.ArtsSouthDakota.org.