

To whom it may concern:

As the founder and executive director of the Great Neck Arts Center, a not for profit cultural arts organization and School for the Arts, I am acutely aware of the impact that the arts make directly, personally and immediately on a community, the agencies in that community and the individuals who both reside and work there.

With the support of our local mayors, assemblyman, senator, schools, library, service organizations and from the business and private sectors, the Great Neck Arts Center began with classes for children and adults, now numbering close to 1,000 per semester. A gallery was added that is free and open to the public to view exhibits by regional and international artists. A film series was begun that attracts adults (100-150 each week) to previews of films that are often not even seen in this region or are only seen in limited locations. Special events create opportunities for the public to participate in interesting discussions and conversations with fascinating individuals in the arts, such as actors Gabriel Byrne, Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson, and Joan Allen. These individuals do not often appear in our region. Scholarships make it possible to reach out to the underserved members of the region and integrate them into our programming. These are only a sampling of the things that happen here.

What then has happened is that these visitors, students, audiences and artists shop, eat and visit the local and regional businesses, restaurants and galleries. Our staff has grown from two to 14 full time and part time people. Our faculty consists of 54 teachers who come from Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island. Visitors to our gallery come from as far away as Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Jersey. Our community gains in exposure to new populations because the Arts Center is here.

The Arts Center is active in helping focus attention on the community. Free concerts and other events attract many from outside our immediate town. Community leaders turn to us often for assistance in creating interesting and dynamic events that will help them attract crowds to local street fairs or other events designed to benefit the downtown.

We work with local and regional school districts to create workshops and programs for their teachers and their students in order to enrich the curriculum, help with professional training and development for teachers, and expose students to the benefits of integrating the arts into regular classroom curriculum. Our affiliation with the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, was earned because of the work that we do. In turn, that affiliation has raised the profile of our community among national political, arts, and education leaders.

We know in the most positive way just how significant an impact an arts center and artists of all stripes can have on a community and we work every day to bring more people into that awareness.

Respectfully,

Regina Keller Gil

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