

Montana: Land of Creativity
***The Power and Potential of Arts-Driven
Economic Impact in Montana***

© Montana Arts Council, 2009

DVD Script:

When most people visualize Montana they think of Big Sky Country with its open space, majestic mountains and lakes... expansive plains, cowboys and big trucks.

But let's look again. Montana is also "The Land of Creativity." Why? Because of all the talented *artists* who call Montana their home...and because of the enormous growth of the arts industry here in the last 40 years.

With less than a million people in Montana, it might surprise you to learn that more people are employed in the arts than in the state's mining industry, the wood products manufacturing industry, or the buildings materials retail market. Montana has a wealth of artists and artisans, and they are located in every county of the state.

When we say "The Arts," some people think, "The Arts? What do the arts have to do with me? Why should I care?" Even if we aren't conscious of it, we all care a great deal. The arts impact almost everything we do in the course of a normal day.

When you get dressed in the morning, whether you wear a suit or a pair of jeans, someone designed your clothes.

The TV programs and the movies you watch are all forms of art, involving writers, actors, editors, cameras, and designers in sound, lighting, sets and costumes.

We listen to the radio at home, in the car or while we work. Just think about how music has impacted you, your entire life!

You read the paper each morning. It's all about art: writing, graphic and web design, storytelling and photography.

And what about that coffee cup you reach for each morning? An artist gave it its shape, color and texture – and created something that made you want to buy it. Some people have a coffee cup for any mood!

When we use the term "art," many people immediately think: visual art. But the arts also include literature, music, theatre, dance, fine handcrafts and traditional art, sculpture, and design – for landscapes, architecture, fashion and graphics, engineering, not to mention motion pictures, video and media arts.

All the arts play a significant role in energizing Montana's communities and invigorating their economies.

The *National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices* says: "To compete in today's economy, a robust creative sector is necessary. The United States economy relies heavily on services, information, technology and intellectual property. Along with the increasing dominance of these enterprises comes the need for greater creativity and innovation in the workforce... The arts and cultural sectors are proven anchors for attracting and improving these assets. Investment in the arts may be among the most innovative workforce development tools at the disposal of state governments."

According to the nationwide *Business Committee for the Arts*: "The arts are a major force in the growth and development of our global business world. Through the arts, people learn creativity and innovation. The partnership between the arts and business improves not only economic development but also the social fabric and enlightenment of society."

Business Week Online says: "Artists are significant and vastly underestimated contributors and generators of local economic growth. The more creative types working in a regional economy, the better is its outlook for improved earnings, productivity, and competitiveness. According to the Travel Industry Association of America, arts and cultural amenities attract tourism dollars. A state's cultural amenities – festivals, museums, historical monuments – are all important destinations for tourism."

Almost a third of travelers note that a specific arts, cultural or heritage event influenced their decision about where to travel. Cultural travelers spend more and stay longer than the average tourist, generating more money for the state.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors reports that the creative industries play a major role in building and sustaining economically vibrant communities. Creative industries serve as magnets to attract businesses and employees. They are the main reason for stimulating a marked increase in cultural tourism.

In Montana, we measure arts-driven economic impact. The state has conducted several major studies.

- One out of every 78 people in Montana's labor market is a working artist, nearly 6,000 Montanans.
- Over the last thirty years, the number of artists in Montana's labor market grew three times faster than the rest of the state's labor force.
- Artists produce an economic impact of close to a quarter BILLION dollars per year in Montana. Montana artists earn most of their income from out-of-state buyers.
- There are over 400 incorporated arts organizations in Montana that generate an economic impact of 80 million dollars each year.

The arts run deep in the roots of Montana. Take, for example, Montana's most famous citizen: An artist. Charlie Russell.

The **Charles M. Russell Art Auction** in Great Falls is one of the largest western art auctions in the world. In 2008, total sales of close to three million dollars set new records. Since the first auction in 1969, the CM Russell Auction has sold artwork totaling more than 27 million dollars.

Fort Peck Theatre was developed to entertain workers building the Fort Peck Dam. Today, the restored 1200-seat theatre attracts an audience from three states and Canada. Local businesses say the summer theatre is one reason they are open. The theatre's strong tourism draw fills hotel beds and increases restaurant sales.

Arlee artist **Dana Boussard**, has a national reputation. Her artwork can be found at the Anchorage Airport, the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, the American Association of Retired Persons headquarters in Washington DC, and in many other sites across the country.

Bill Allison, a lifelong rancher and leather crafter, says that he would still be ranching if it weren't for the drought that's gripped eastern Montana. Instead, he and his wife and daughter now run a saddle shop in Roundup. They ship their handcrafted wares throughout the United States and as far away as Australia.

Over fifty years ago, Archie Bray, Sr., founded what is known as "The Pottery" on the grounds of his Helena brick yard, the Western Clay Manufacturing Company. Today, ceramic artists from around the world travel to Helena to work and study, enriching their creative and artistic talents at the **Archie Bray Foundation**. The foundation is world renowned as the place where the modern movement in the ceramics arts industry started.

Tourists entering the Blackfeet Reservation from any direction are greeted by a pair of life-size horseman, crafted by St. Ignatius artist **Jay Laber**. He calls his sculptures Rez Wrecks because they're made from rusted car bodies, hubcaps, barbed wire and scrap metals. They are also landmarks that magnificently capture a sense of place.

From humble beginnings in the early 1970s, the **Missoula Children's Theatre** today has a budget of 4.5 million dollars and stages musicals with 55,000 children from all 50 states, Canada, Europe, South America, Asia and the Persian Gulf. They generate 80% of their income from out of state and spend 80% of it in state. Talk about economic impact!

Philip Aaberg's Grammy-nominated CD "*Live From Montana*" was recorded during a reunion at the school in Chester. **George Winston**, another pianist with Montana roots, wrote the liner notes. The cover art was created by Montana artist **Monte Dolack**.

Robert Morgan is one of Montana's most beloved western artists. Bob's work is in public and private collections throughout the United States. His art was featured as the official poster for the 2005 *Toys for Tots* national campaign.

Judy Blunt was raised on a Montana ranch in a remote area 60 miles south of Malta, near Regina. Her essays and poems have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Big Sky Journal* and *Oprah Magazine*. In 2002 she turned the story of her ranch life into an award-winning memoir,

called "*Breaking Clean*." The book won the Mountains and Plains Nonfiction Book Award, the Willa Cather Literary Award, and was one of *The New York Times*'s Notable Books.

Al Chandler Goodstrike of Hays, Montana, is an enrolled member of the Gros Ventre nation. He is known for his tipi and hide painting, painting rawhide shields, rattles, parfleche bags and drums. Al has won national awards for his work, and he was recently honored with induction into the Montana Arts Council's Montana Circle of American Master Artists.

And those are just a few of the stories of Montana's rich artistic industry.

In Montana the arts complement our natural resource industries and spur economic growth by encouraging artists, cultural organizations and entrepreneurs.

Economic developers tell us that creativity and innovation are what differentiates a successful industry with good paying jobs. This success can only be fostered by a strong and vigorous arts industry.

The arts generate benefits that help attract business firms, entrepreneurs and talented, skilled workers. Businesses today select a location based on its cultural characteristics.

The energy and skills of Montana's arts industry represents one of our state's most efficient sources of economic growth. Eight-five percent of Montana's businesses are small, with fewer than four employees. This entrepreneurial world includes the majority of Montana's artists and arts businesses.

So that's where the Montana Arts Council focuses its public dollar resources – to build skills, build markets and build ways for Montana's artistry, creativity and innovation to flourish.

(THE END)

Script written by Arlynn Fishbaugh, Executive Director for the Montana Arts Council.

For more information or to obtain a copy of the DVD, please contact Stefanie Flynn at the Montana Arts Council, 406-444-6510 or sflynn@mt.gov.