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It's good business to help the arts

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> and Peggy Amsterdam

> are presidents, respectively, of PNC Bank for the region and Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance

> Arts and culture in Philadelphia are vibrant and valuable, but vulnerable.

> The hard data to back that up can be found in 2008 Portfolio, a report recently released by the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance and sponsored by PNC. It's a comprehensive study that includes valuable information from 281 organizations that belong to the alliance.

> Anyone who has lived in the region for the last 10 years knows its cultural offerings have grown. In fact, to take them all in, you would have to attend three performances every hour, take 13 tours each day, and attend 14 openings each week. Best of all, the arts are a bargain; close to half of all visits are free of charge.

> The economic impact of arts and culture is significant. Fifteen million visitors a year dine, shop and stay here, and the sector has 43,000 paid and volunteer workers. Overall, the organizations that make it happen are efficient and fiscally responsible, as each dollar invested in fund-raising generates nine dollars in income.

> But despite the sector's strong growth, accessibility and management, arts organizations are vulnerable. Forty percent operate at a deficit, and those that are in the black operate at an average margin of 5 percent.

> PNC has enjoyed a long and proud relationship with the Cultural Alliance and its member organizations, sponsoring the Philadelphia Flower Show, Arden Theater, Philadelphia Orchestra, and more. Other companies share our commitment. PECO, for example, sponsors the Lights of Liberty show, and Shire Pharmaceuticals contributes to multiple museums and arts initiatives.

> Still, only 2 percent of cultural organizations' income comes from corporate contributions. That must change.

> The benefits of investing in arts and culture are substantial. Culture is about the next

generation, and the organizations in 2008 Portfolio hosted more than 35,000 school groups last year.

> The quality and multitude of arts and cultural activities also attract and retain talented workers in our region. They attract visitors as well, promoting tourism and bolstering businesses.

> Supporting the arts can be more than writing a check, and it doesn't take a major corporation to do it. You can sponsor a school attending an exhibit, entertain clients at a show, or purchase tickets for employee outings. You can join a board, volunteer, or provide pro bono services for a local arts organization.

> As we reshape Philadelphia and the region, arts and culture must take center stage. Philadelphia is a leader in artistic innovation, but it cannot continue to succeed without greater stewardship and investment from the business community.

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