

10 Reasons to Support the Arts in Barnstable County in 2026

The arts are fundamental to our humanity. They ennoble and inspire us—fostering creativity, empathy, and beauty. The arts also strengthen our communities socially, educationally, economically, and improve health and well-being. If you believe everyone should have the opportunity to participate in the arts and every child should be receiving a quality arts education, use the following 10 reasons to show why an investment in artists, creative workers, and arts organizations is vital to the nation's health and prosperity.

1. **Arts strengthen the economy.** The nation's arts and culture sector—nonprofit, commercial, education—is a \$1.2 trillion industry that supports 5.4 million jobs (2023). That is 4.2% of the nation's economy. **In Massachusetts, arts and culture is a \$29.7 billion industry—4.0% of the economy—and supports 130,263 jobs (bigger than powerhouse industries such as Construction, Education, and Transportation).** The arts *accelerate economic recovery*: a growth in arts employment has a positive and causal effect on overall employment. (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis). The nation's **nonprofit arts and culture industry** alone generated \$151.7 billion in economic activity in 2022—spending by arts organizations *and their audiences*—which supported 2.6 million jobs and generated \$29.1 billion in government revenue.
2. **Arts drive revenue to local businesses.** Arts attendees spend an average of \$38.46 per person, per event, beyond the cost of admission on items such as meals, parking, and lodging—vital income for local businesses. 30% of attendees come from outside the county in which the arts event took place; those non-local attendees average \$60.57 in spending beyond admission, and 77% said they traveled to the community specifically to attend that arts and culture event.
3. **Arts unify communities.** 72% of Americans believe “The arts provide shared experiences with people of different races, ethnicities, ages, beliefs, and identities.” 63% agree that the arts “help me understand other cultures in my community better”—perspectives observed across all demographic and economic categories.
4. **Arts strengthen mental health and well-being.** Just 45 minutes of art making can *lower the stress hormone cortisol* by 25%. More than half of Americans (60%) say the arts have “helped them cope during times of mental or emotional distress,” and 69% believe the arts “lift me up beyond everyday experiences.”
5. **Arts and culture are tourism drivers.** Arts travelers are ideal tourists, staying longer and spending more to seek out authentic culture experiences. 70% of Americans agree, “The arts improve the image and identity of my community,” and 53% say, “When planning a vacation, I consider the destination's arts and culture experiences when deciding where to visit.”
6. **Arts improve academic performance.** Students engaged in arts learning have higher GPAs, standardized test scores, and college-going rates as well as lower drop-out rates. These academic benefits are reaped by students across all socio-economic strata. *Nine-in-10 Americans* believe that every pre-K-12 student should be receiving an arts education; 83% support government funding for arts education.
7. **Arts spark creativity and innovation.** *Creativity* is among the top five applied skills sought by business leaders—per the Conference Board's *Ready to Innovate* report—with 72% saying creativity is of “high importance” when hiring. Research on creativity shows that Nobel laureates in the sciences are 17 times more likely to be actively engaged as an *arts maker* than other scientists.
8. **Arts have social impact.** University of Pennsylvania researchers have demonstrated that a high concentration of the arts in a city leads to greater civic engagement, more social cohesion, higher child welfare, and lower poverty rates.
9. **Arts improve healthcare.** Nearly one-half of the nation's healthcare institutions provide arts programming for patients, families, and even staff. 78% deliver these programs because of their healing benefits to patients—shorter hospital stays, better pain management, and less medication. 75% of Americans say if their doctor wrote them a prescription to participate in the arts as a way to improve their physical or mental health, they would likely follow that recommendation.
10. **Arts for the health and well-being of our military.** The arts can heal the mental, physical, and moral injuries of war for military servicemembers and Veterans—who rank the creative arts therapies in the top four (out of 40) interventions and treatments.