Scapegoat Garden performs *In Plain Sight*, a contemporary dance inspired by tapestries in the museum’s collection.

**Community Engagement Initiative**

2013 Evaluation Report: Key Findings Summary

Submitted To:
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art
April 2014

Anita M. Baker, Ed. D.
Jamie Bassell

EVALUATION SERVICES CO • 101 E. Blair Tr. • Lambertville, NJ 08530
A docent reads aloud at Second Saturdays for Families: Bonjour!, January 12, 2013

As part of her residency, MATRIX artist Deb Sokolow works with youth from True Colors
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Engagement Initiative (CEI), launched in 2008 by Director and CEO Susan Talbott, was established to attract and sustain new and diverse audiences; it also serves to strengthen relationships with the museum’s traditional audiences, to enhance visitor experiences, and to improve the lives of residents of the Greater Hartford community. Implemented by the Education and Visitor Services Department under the direction of Johanna Plummer, Georgette Auerbach Koopman Director of Education, CEI welcomes and inspires new and existing audiences while ensuring the Wadsworth is a vital part of the city and the greater Hartford community.

To make certain that CEI has had the anticipated impact on the museum and its target audiences, the Wadsworth contracted Anita Baker of Evaluation Services in 2012 to provide results-based information to guide ongoing and future programming. At that time, the museum was only collecting survey data from school teachers. By the end of 2013, evaluation efforts expanded to include data collection, analysis, and reporting for ten programs utilizing multiple strategies and research partners.

Key findings from the 2013 report include:

- Proven success in diversifying the Wadsworth’s audience in terms of race, age, and education level.
- Education programs accounted for 39% of total museum attendance in FY13, bringing more than 41,800 people to the museum. This is more than a 10 percentage point increase compared to the year CEI was initiated.
- Families engaged through Second Saturdays programming were diverse (20% Black or African American, 17% Hispanic, 51% White, 12% other), and more than 90% of survey respondents reported positive outcomes in feeling welcomed, enjoying the hands-on art activities, and strengthening relationships with their children.
- Evaluation results from programming targeting children and youth in school time and out-of-school time settings (e.g. Museum on the Move, Community Arts Program, and School Tours) demonstrate positive learning outcomes, engagement with art on the part of participants, repeat visitation to the museum, and a sense of feeling welcomed by the museum and its staff.
- Adults who participate in programming (e.g. First Thursdays) are diverse, and an average of 95% report increasing their sense of pride in the community and developing their interest in culture. An evaluation of the Connections Gallery, a special exhibition space with materials specifically designed for participatory experiences, also showed that offering different ways for visitors to engage with art leads to increased time spent in the gallery.
- The Wadsworth has benefitted institutionally from CEI, both due to its focus on engaging new and existing audiences, and in creating cultural change by showing the positive benefits of these efforts and of ongoing, systematic evaluation of programs.

Recommendations based on the findings focus on continuing to incorporate the practice of evaluation in the museum’s decision-making processes and enhancing communication with key stakeholders – board, staff, and funders – so that the museum continues on its path of cultural change through community engagement.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE: OVERVIEW

The Wadsworth developed new programs and strategies to support the CEI mission: The Community Engagement Initiative welcomes and inspires new and existing audiences while ensuring the Wadsworth is a vital part of the city and the greater Hartford community. New and ongoing CEI programs are shown below. Those marked with an asterisk represent programs that were part of the comprehensive research and evaluation undertaken as part of CEI.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE (CEI) AT A GLANCE

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<th><strong>Ongoing Programs</strong></th>
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<td>Community Days*</td>
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<td>School Tours*</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Thursdays*</td>
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<td>Hartford Youth Art Renaissance</td>
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<td>Library ARTPass</td>
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*part of the comprehensive research and evaluation

During the spring of 2012, the Wadsworth was selected to participate in the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving’s Building Evaluation Capacity (BEC) initiative, which is designed to provide comprehensive evaluation training.¹ As a result, the Wadsworth team realized the organization would benefit by commissioning external evaluation of CEI. Anita Baker of Evaluation Services, who also serves as the BEC trainer and facilitator, designed the participatory evaluation of CEI calendar year 2012 and 2013 programming. The workplan included: an annual implementation study (i.e., review of attendance and program reports); direct collection of feedback and other data from multiple audiences; and review of other research and evaluation taking place at the museum. The evaluation was designed specifically to answer key questions about CEI (see following), to support feedback requirements regarding the Wadsworth’s grant with the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and to provide results-based information to guide ongoing decision-making.

¹ BEC is designed to increase both evaluation capacity and organization-wide use of evaluative thinking. Participating organizations receive 30+ hours of content presentation, activities, and evaluation-related technical assistance.
CEI Evaluation Questions

1. How and to what extent has the Wadsworth met its goals to better engage target populations?
2. How and to what extent has the Wadsworth increased engagement in its school and family programs?
3. How and to what extent has the Wadsworth enhanced visitors’ experiences of the museum?
4. How and to what extent has the Wadsworth broadened its reach across multiple audiences?
5. To what extent have there been cultural changes within the Wadsworth Atheneum?

Throughout the initiative, evaluation activity increased and became more complex. By the end of 2013, there were 10 different evaluation or research activities, most of which included the active participation of Wadsworth staff from the Education and Visitor Services Department.

KEY FINDINGS: ENGAGING MULTIPLE AUDIENCES

During FY13, more than 106,000 people visited the Wadsworth Atheneum (97,622 during calendar year 2013). Review of museum attendance records show that the museum is successfully attracting visitors beyond targeted levels and robust participation in CEI programs has had a positive impact on attendance. Given that almost half of the museum’s galleries were closed for renovations since CEI began, this is especially significant. During 2013:

- The total number of visits (106,796) exceeded the goal as did projected revenue and the number of repeat visits by museum members. Almost one-third of non-members (30%) indicated they had visited two or more times during the year.
- The Wadsworth exceeded its goals regarding attendance by visitors from both the city of Hartford and Hartford County.
- Attendance results for FY13 were better than those for FY12 in every category. When comparing the 2011 and 2013 adult walk-in visitor studies, there were substantial increases in the proportion of first time walk-in visitors (30% v. 56%). Among those who were returning, there was also an increase in the proportion who had visited twice or more in prior years (69% in 2011 v. 77% in 2013).
- As shown below, programs attracted diverse participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult Walk-In Visitors</th>
<th>Second Saturdays</th>
<th>First Thursdays</th>
<th>Community Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African-American</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Education programs accounted for 39% of total museum attendance FY13 and brought more than 41,800 people to the museum. This is more than a 10 percentage point increase compared to the year CEI was initiated.

Available visitor feedback showed that CEI also focused on enhancing visitors’ experiences and helped reveal visitors’ motivations for attending. Overall, adult walk-in visitors, those who attended programs (Second Saturdays, First Thursdays, and Community
Days), felt welcome and comfortable, felt inspired to return, and enjoyed their visits overall. Visitors provided uniformly positive feedback about activities as well as valued group and/or personal experiences. Visitors' reasons for visiting the Wadsworth varied depending on the type of event or program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who are Wadsworth Visitors?</th>
<th>Adult Walk-in Visitors</th>
<th>Second Saturdays Participants</th>
<th>Community Day Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explorers: those motivated by personal curiosity</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Seekers: those who attend because the museum is an important destination</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Hobbyists: those motivated by specific knowledge-related goals</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitators: those motivated by another person</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rechargers: those seeking a contemplative experience</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Visitor types were categorized based on the work of John Falk, *Identity and Museum Visitor Experience*, Left Coast Press, 2012. Some respondents identified more than one motivation for visiting.

KEY FINDINGS: ENHANCING VISITOR ENGAGEMENT

As part of its regular and expanded CEI programming, the Wadsworth made multiple efforts to effectively engage Hartford area individuals, communities, and families. This resulted in substantial, meaningful participation by those targeted. All programs and the Connections Gallery contributed to the success of CEI. The programs were well-attended and well-received. Visitors provided positive feedback about activities as well as valued group and/or personal experiences.

More than any other event/program, Second Saturdays for Families provided a productive strategy for involving new families and for inspiring repeat visitation. Second Saturdays engaged visitors with diverse backgrounds and educational characteristics, as well as motivations, to attend. Second Saturdays were well-attended throughout 2013; bringing visitors who were the most diverse in terms of racial/ethnic backgrounds, age, and education level, and it attracted visitors from across the state. Second Saturdays also promoted longer-term desired impact: participants clearly developed a strong sense of belonging at the museum or perceived the Wadsworth through Second Saturdays as a place where their families could develop such an attachment.

- A total of 95% or more of the visitors reported they felt welcome at the museum, felt comfortable and inspired to return and enjoyed their visits overall.
- Second Saturdays activities and programming were well received each year. More than 89% of respondents in all three years provided positive ratings for the hands-on art activities and special activities. A total of 90% or more provided positive ratings of the live music.
• There was an increase in positive impact in adult participants’ interest in art, strengthened relationships with children, and developing children’s interest in art. Most significantly, a total of 78% of 2012 respondents compared to 91% of 2013 respondents agreed the program had helped strengthen their relationships with their children.

Community Days (EnvisionFest 2013, Juneteenth 2013) provided unique opportunities to welcome and inspire audiences and they were well-received by participants. Respondents indicated they visited with others and they provided favorable ratings for all the key activities. Further, almost all participants agreed that the events helped them develop their interest in art and culture, felt relevant to their own identities, and helped to promote a sense of belonging to the community.

The Summer Pre-Collegiate Program annually provided Hartford high school students with scholarships to the University of Hartford’s Summer High School Visual Arts Program. These scholarships (valued at roughly $2,000 each) provided tuition, materials, transportation, and weekly stipends: 14 scholarships have been provided since 2010. Three Pre-Collegiate Program participants have gone on to attend the Hartford Art School, one with a full tuition scholarship and two others with partial scholarships.

Summer Community Studio allowed youth from nine Hartford community organizations to participate in docent-guided tours and a hands-on studio experience. Their teachers and group leaders indicated that the tours met their expectations and thought their participants felt welcome (97%), felt inspired to return (91%), felt comfortable (91%), and enjoyed the visit overall (100%). Most respondents reported there was evidence that their students were learning through the visits and that students benefitted from having participated.

Efforts to engage school communities were well received and important learning outcomes resulted. As part of its regular and expanded CEI programming, the Wadsworth made multiple efforts to effectively engage school communities. This resulted in substantial participation by those targeted.

Museum on the Move is a program for students with in-museum and off-site components led by staff, teachers, and museum docents. Many student participants were members of under-served populations, and important outcomes were achieved. In 2012 research conducted by the University of Connecticut showed students improved their writing, especially in the use of art terminology. Observational data from 2013 University of Connecticut research confirmed student engagement with artwork and student receptivity to “reading and analyzing” paintings and sculptures.

School tours are a key strategy that the museum uses to introduce young people to the Wadsworth and the world of art. The vast majority of teachers of students from all grade levels in both years thought their students experienced important outcomes during the docent-guided tours. Most notably in 2013, 99% of teachers thought their groups felt welcome, 93% thought they responded to the tour content and 95% agreed students had opportunities to participate through questions; 97% of teacher respondents indicated the tours met their expectations.
During calendar year 2013 school tours involved more than 12,800 students and 133 individual schools. Many of the students who participated in school tours were children who are members of under-served groups CEI was designed to attract and serve. All visiting children are encouraged to return with their families and many do.

It is estimated that overall about a quarter of the students participating in school tours were African American (23%), slightly more than one third were Hispanic/Latino (39%) and about one third (33%) were Caucasian (a small percentage were from other racial/ethnic groups). Among those students from schools in the City of Hartford (about 43% of all children) it is estimated that about 32% were African American, 59% were Hispanic/Latino and 7% were Caucasian.

The Community Arts Program addressed a critical need in the City of Hartford to provide access to art both at the museum and at existing neighborhood centers. It was uniformly perceived as a very successful program. The 2013 pilot was designed to allow the museum to partner with local organizations to offer arts enrichment to both Out-of-School Time (student) and Library (older adult) audiences. Through interviews with key officials at participating organizations, positive initial outcomes were documented.

- The Community Arts Program connected participants to the City of Hartford, to the Wadsworth Atheneum and to various aspects of art curriculum.
- Participants could cite ways in which students and older constituents learned during the program.
- Participants are eager for future collaborations with the Wadsworth Atheneum.

Participant responses for First Thursdays also showed that it is another productive outreach strategy for involving new visitors and for inspiring repeat visitation among a diverse group of participants in the Hartford area. Participants reported coming together to experience the power of art and they felt welcomed by and connected to the institution.

- First Thursdays is instrumental in involving adults from multiple racial/ethnic backgrounds in Wadsworth programs (including almost twice as many who identify as Black/or African American or Hispanic/Latino as compared to the general adult walk-in visitor population). First Thursdays also attracts visitors from across the state and especially Hartford County.
- Almost all First Thursdays participants indicated that their participation had been meaningful. Between 93%-97% of respondents agreed that through their participation in First Thursdays they were exposed to new things; increased their sense of pride in the community; developed their interest in art; and developed interest in culture.

The Connections Gallery, launched in October 2009, is the only area of the museum where visitor feedback is continuously solicited, and each exhibition generates a wide variety of responses. Two studies of the Connections Gallery showed it provided an important opportunity for visitors to engage with the museum. Intensive observations of visitors showed that the Connections Gallery was reaching a desired level of success regarding visitor engagement. Diligent visitors spent more time in the gallery on average than many visitors in museums with comparably sized exhibitions. About 40% of the studied visitors stopped at the
art, read labels or wall text, or worked on the art activity (drawing still life). Many did all three. Additionally, about two-thirds of the visitors who were observed viewed other visitors’ contributions, and about 10% of them worked on a comment card themselves. Additional study by museum researcher Karen Wizevich identified **additional clear positive outcomes and some challenges for the Connections Gallery.**

- Visitors, those with and without children and those who use and those who do not use the hands-on elements, greatly enjoyed the *Connections Gallery: Still Life* exhibition and reported it made it easier to learn about art, despite the space itself being less than ideal.
- The hands-on art elements did not detract from visitors looking at the “real” art. Even those visitors who did not participate in the hands-on art elements (the vast majority) appreciated the participatory elements and wanted to see more of them throughout the museum; just the presence of the hands-on elements seemed to increase visitors’ thoughtfulness about art.

**KEY FINDINGS: CULTURAL CHANGE AT THE MUSEUM**

During both 2012 and 2013, the staff of the Wadsworth Atheneum were asked to complete a survey about their opinions of the Community Engagement Initiative and participant engagement in the museum. Most of the staff respondents rated the majority of the CEI programs as important.

- There was a noteworthy increase from 60% to 74% in the number of staff who think CEI has had an impact on the museum. In addition, there was a small increase in the percentage of staff who think CEI has had an impact on the community and the programs definitely benefit underserved residents of the Hartford community.
- Over 80% of respondents in both years identified Second Saturdays, Community Days, and Museum on the Move as important. More respondents indicated that First Thursdays were important in 2013 (89%) compared to 2012 (69%).
- A high percentage of respondents (75% or more in both years) reported that they definitely agreed with CEI goals, definitely thought the CEI programs are valuable and helping to reach the goals of CEI, and definitely approved of the changes happening in the museum.

Staff top priorities for CEI moving forward include: **increased general community attendance and engagement, increased diversity and reaching underserved audiences, engaging youth and schools, enhancing visitors’ experiences, museum accessibility and affordability, and – especially in 2013 – sustaining specific programs.**

Throughout the final months of 2013, key Wadsworth staff members and community stakeholders worked together with Randi Korn and Associates (RK&A) to develop an Impact Planning Framework for CEI. The goal was to collaboratively clarify the intended ongoing impact of CEI and the following impact statement was developed:

*Participants embrace the Wadsworth as their place to come together and experience the power of art.*
RECOMMENDATIONS

Highlights for recommended actions follow. For a complete list of recommendations, see the full 2013 CEI Evaluation Report.

- Use evaluation findings about favorable program outcomes, visitor diversity, and positive visitor engagement to set institutional priorities that guide the development of a sustainability plan for CEI that makes a strong case for continued financial support.
- Finalize and implement Impact Plans developed with Randi Korn & Associates. Align and sustain data collection and analysis into ongoing efforts to demonstrate impact.
- Continue to collect and analyze data about CEI programs. Develop organizational evaluation plans to streamline and make critical choices about evaluation efforts. Develop financial and staff resources to support this evaluation work.
- Continue fostering cultural change at the museum through increased awareness and communication of CEI and related programming among Trustees, staff, and volunteers to ensure institution-wide understanding of final evaluation findings including:
  - The success of CEI programs and their impact on overall visitation and diversity;
  - The potential for the interpretive strategies tested in the Connections Gallery to engage visitors; and
  - The need for continued attention to cultural change within the museum.
- Enhance communications about CEI by sharing results of evaluation findings with partners and other key stakeholders as well as increasing awareness and communication about CEI and related programming.

4th grade Museum on the Move students from Global Academy on a docent-guided tour
WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART

Susan Talbott, Director and CEO

Education and Visitors Services Department
Johanna Plummer, Georgette Auerbach Koopman Director of Education
Lauren Cross, Community Programs Coordinator
Jama Holchin, Education Assistant
Emily Pacini Ide, School and Teacher Programs Specialist
Charlene Shang Miller, Docent and Tour Programs Manager
Anne Butler Rice, Public Programs Manager
Nina Goodale Salazar, Teaching Artist
Susan Carey, Visitor Services Manager
Courtney Hebert, Group Visit Associate
Carolyn Zemantic, Visitor Services Associate
Jan Beatty, Visitor Services Associate

Wadsworth Atheneum Docent Council

HFPG Building Evaluation Capacity Program and Alumni Group 2012-2014
Johanna Plummer, Georgette Auerbach Koopman Director of Education
Jama Holchin, Education Assistant
Patricia Hickson, Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art
Dina Silva, Development Manager (left the museum in 2013)
Susan Carey, Visitor Services Manager
Lauren Cross, Community Programs Coordinator
Erica Roggeveen Byrne, Institutional Partnerships and Grants Manager

Flower sculptures decorate the museum’s lawn during EnvisionFest Community Day 2013
Support for the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art’s Community Engagement Initiative and education programs from 2010-2013 provided by:

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

TRAVELERS

Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development

aetna

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S&S Worldwide

The Hartford

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Ellen Jeanne Goldfarb Memorial Charitable Trust

ASB Charitable Foundation, Inc.

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Greater Hartford Arts Council

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