

Initiative seeks to spread arts communitywide

Business First

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The Arts Services Initiative of WNY has launched a new program aimed at increasing access to the region's arts and cultural scene.

The Arts Access program will connect individuals to free and low-cost arts and cultural programming through free tickets and an online database of free and low-cost opportunities.

The program includes two parts:

- Part one is geared toward families enrolled in the government's supplemental nutritional assistance program (SNAP), who can use the Arts Access pass to receive free tickets to performances at theaters and other cultural venues, as well as free shuttle service from six locations in Erie and Niagara counties.
- The second part of the program is a website (arts-access.org), which will list free and low-cost events available to everyone in the community. The site will include free events as well as pay-what-you-can previews, rush tickets and other special offers.

Tod Kniazuk, ASI executive director, said the program will break down barriers to access, making arts and cultural available to everyone.

Funding comes from the NYS Council on the Arts, Empire State Development, the [John R. Oishei Foundation](#), [M&T Bank](#) Charitable Foundation, Fund for the Arts as well as in-kind support from Crowley Webb & Associates.

The program was developed in collaboration with Arts Partners for Learning, the Mobile Safety Net Team and the Theatre Alliance of Buffalo, whose 19 members are all signed up to participate by providing free tickets to performances.

[Jeffrey Pirrone](#) heads up the Mobile Safety Net Team, which will connect the Arts Access program to its network of 50 social service and community organizations.

"While it won't solve poverty or alleviate basic human need issues, Arts Access will provide a much needed and well deserved respite for individuals and families from the stresses of everyday life," he said.

Tracey Drury covers health/medical, nonprofits and insurance

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