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# Innovative Models and Proven Programs

Rhode Island Foundation

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STRATEGY FOR ATTAINING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

## Innovative Models and Proven Programs

### CASE STUDY: AS220

*Can the arts lower the recidivism rate for youth released from the Rhode Island Training School? Can workshops in drumming, cartooning, and video open new avenues of constructive self-expression for at-risk city kids? AS220 said, "Let's find out."*

**Project:** Broad Street Studio

#### Why the Foundation Invested

Rhode Island desperately needs more youth services...particularly in our cities, where the number of adolescents has reached an all-time high. In 2001, AS220 launched a pilot arts immersion program to work with youth transitioning back to the community from the Rhode Island Training School. The goal: to see if the arts could raise self-

esteem, improve grades and behavior and maybe change some lives in the process. Is it working? The state thinks so. In 2002, the Department of Children, Youth and Families, together with the Department of Health, picked up a significant portion of the program's funding.

#### Background

In 2001, a Providence community arts center, AS220, opened its second location, Broad Street Studio, to welcome "a steady stream of new voices...especially...voices that might not be heard elsewhere, including those of at-risk youth." Among the activities at the Broad Street Studio: an after-school arts immersion program for youth just

*continues*



PETER SILVIA, JR.

*The arts immersion program challenges kids to try something new and potentially life-changing, in a safe and accepting environment.*

released from the Rhode Island Training School, the state's juvenile detention and correctional facility.

Five afternoons a week, professional artists conduct workshops in everything from mural painting to Afro-Caribbean drumming to photography. The arts immersion program challenges kids to try something new and potentially life-changing, in a safe and accepting environment. All workshops are free (though not cheap: the Broad Street Studio's annual budget is over \$200,000).

Founded as a non-juried exhibit space by artists in 1985, AS220 has a long history of welcoming youth into its programs and facilities. Which is one reason why, in 1998, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund Program for Exemplary Community Arts Centers picked AS220 to receive a multi-year \$325,000 grant. Among the grant's goals: to help AS220 broaden its outreach to high school youth.

The immersion program is part of that outreach. Other outreach activities for youth conducted through the Broad Street Studio include: The Muzine, an uncensored magazine of student writing; monthly youth performances and hip hop workshops; a half dozen arts exhibits by youth each year; and new income-producing activities like a CD recording label, a photo portrait studio, and a steel-drum orchestra for hire. ■