

## **Time to connect downtown's dots**

By Jamestown Renaissance Corporation Staff

Jamestown is close to a renaissance. It is close to having its arts, culture and heritage interact in a way that has real economic impact, in the same way the Renaissance transformed cities and economies centuries ago in Europe.

The pieces are all here, but the connections and synergies between them need to be made or expanded.

Jamestown is rich in renaissance-ready assets that have already demonstrated the power of collaboration, putting on, among other events, gallery shows, musical and theatrical performances and a local music showcase—and creating the Urban Literary Trail and POTTERS gALLerY.

But Jamestown could do more.

More clustered events that leverage, connect and accentuate downtown assets are needed. It is time to move from isolated events to providing coordinated experiences.

Visitors from Buffalo, Rochester, Cleveland, Toronto, or even the north side of Jamestown need a range of options to really enjoy downtown and want to return. Imagine local farmers setting up their market on an early Saturday morning while a street basketball festival gets underway on West Third Street. Nearby, artists arrive in the terrace adjacent to POTTERS gALLerY to work at easels. Later that afternoon, crowds gather on East Third Street to watch a clinic by local skateboarders, peruse freshly completed artwork and stop in for a snack or drink at a local restaurant. And that evening musicians perform on the waterfront while *Hoosiers* is screened in the Winter Garden Plaza. All of these are complementary, not competitive.

And the Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz Center has proven that this works.

During Lucy's 100th Birthday Celebration people from across the world were given the opportunity to be part of a Guinness Book of World Records attempt, or laugh with headliner performers and up-and-coming comedians, or attend a Lucy-themed baseball game or parade, or experience a live Lucy radio show, or take their children to a kid-friendly comedy performance, or watch "I Love Lucy" episodes on an outdoor screen, or simply party on Tracy Plaza.

Go back and count the use of the word "or" in the previous paragraph. Every attendee had the opportunity to experience Lucy in a number of ways. And by utilizing a variety of downtown venues, it maximized their experience of Jamestown and the spin-off to local businesses.

Labyrinth, a developing downtown dining destination, reported to the Lucy-Desi Center that it did more business over the five-day stretch during the 100th birthday celebration than it had in any month. Lisciandro's, an enduring downtown breakfast and lunch diner, noted having its

best two-day stretch ever. Other establishments admitted to being underprepared for the gathering crowds.

The evidence is not just anecdotal. Thorough analysis determined approximately 13,000 people visited Jamestown over the five-day experience—an admirable total for a community this size. These numbers are based on best practices for analyzing events, not guesses or assumptions. And an even more detailed economic impact analysis is forthcoming.

The Lucy-Desi Center found a way to connect the dots and translate our assets into an experience with true economic impact. It is time to replicate their model, make better use of our assets and move even closer to renaissance.