

# Arts for his city's sake

Pawtucket mayor honored for role in arts renaissance

09:31 AM EST on Friday, January 23, 2004

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## ARTS BOOSTER:

Pawtucket Mayor James E. Doyle, center, and his wife, Joan, left, talk with Mary Lou Catelli, of Lincoln, a second grade teacher at Nathaniel Greene Elementary School in Pawtucket. Mayor Doyle was honored last night by the Arts and Business Council of Rhode Island for his commitment to the arts. Journal photo / Glenn Osmundson

PAWTUCKET -- Six years ago, the city had no arts and entertainment district, no annual film or sculpture festival, no Pawtucket Foundation to lobby for policies favorable to the arts.

The Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre was still in Providence, not in its newly refurbished theater in the Pawtucket Armory annex.

The old Lebanon Mill complex, across the Blackstone River from City Hall, was an underutilized factory, not the combination of artists' lofts and studios that is being carved out of the buildings now.

All of these developments have taken place since 1998, when Mayor James E. Doyle took office, inaugurating an administration that many view as art-friendly.

Last night, Doyle, whose support of the arts is founded on the prosaic belief that "when you assist artists, you are helping small businesses, which can ultimately revitalize a city," was recognized by a group that annually pays tribute to art supporters, the Arts and Business Council of Rhode Island.

At a gala banquet attended by 600 people at Rhodes-on-the-Pawtucket, Doyle was given the council's Arts Advocate Award, the first time a Pawtucket mayor has been so honored.

He was feted along with Washington Trust Co. CEO John C. Warren, Providence developer Arnold "Buff" Chace, business consultant James Mahoney, Chorus of Westerly director George Kent, the Providence Black

Repertory Company and painter Maxwell Mays.

Rising to receive the award last night, Doyle received a standing ovation from the more than 100 supporters who traveled from Pawtucket to the banquet in Cranston.

Doyle paraphrased Andy Warhol, who said everyone gets 15 minutes of fame, and said, "If that's true, then I consider myself very fortunate as I've had more than my 15 minutes. ... and the reason for that, ladies and gentlemen, is the support I've received from all the people of Pawtucket, and all the people who are sitting at the 11 tables, who came here tonight to express their feelings and support me as the recipient of this award."

Rick Roth, who founded the annual Mirror Image film festival the year after he moved his T-shirt printing company to Pawtucket from Cambridge, Mass., said a lot of the credit for the arts renaissance in Pawtucket belongs to Doyle personally: Doyle and his administration take a "hands-off" approach to artistic content, Roth said, that is rare among politicians who lend their support to the arts.

"We're given a free rein there, and that is very unusual," Roth declared.

Roth started the film festival in 2000 as part of Pawtucket Convergence, now the Pawtucket Arts Festival, an annual event that showcases the arts in the city. In 2001, a Convergence official whom Roth declines to name tried to have the movies he was going to show pre-screened.

Roth, sensing an attempt to bar films with adult themes, objected, and the Doyle administration intervened, working out a compromise.

Instead of having the movies pre-screened, the film festival adopted a policy of admitting no one under 21 without a parent and guardian.

The compromise protected community sensibilities without interfering with the filmmakers' artistic integrity, Roth said. It also prevented underage drinking.

The film festival is co-sponsored by the Samuel Adams brewery, and, besides live music and movies, features lots of beer.