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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### ***RIALTO SQUARE THEATRE***

#### ***Announces Rialto Arts District in Downtown Joliet***



Joliet, IL- The Rialto Square Theatre and the Joliet City Center Partnership announce the establishment of the Rialto Arts District which will feature visual artists in-residence beginning June 15<sup>th</sup>. The public will be able to visit these studios, surrounding the Rialto Square Theatre, and view artists at work as well as their artistic creations which will be available for sale.

This pilot program is part of an expanding arts initiative that will surround the previously announced Joliet Fine Arts Festival of the Masters which will be held June 30 and July 1 on Chicago Street in downtown Joliet. Groups of artists will set-up studios and artist-run galleries in the store fronts which are part of the Rialto commercial

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properties. These studios will be open during special events and at regular times during the week. More specific times will be announced in the near future.

Randy Green, General Manager of the Rialto Square Theatre explains the origination of this idea. “What we are establishing is certainly nothing new. The creation of arts districts has been important to the successful evolution of downtown areas across the country. What is new is that it is about to happen here in downtown Joliet.” “The Rialto Square Theatre has been ground zero for entertainment and performing arts in Joliet and Will County for decades. What we are creating with the support of the City Center Partnership is an environment for visual artists to join in and bring their cultural and artistic talents to the mix of performing arts and entertainment that are part of downtown Joliet.”

Tom Mahalik, Vice-President of the City Center Partnership further explains, “This is another great step for our downtown. We are very excited to have artists of this caliber join our downtown community.”

This creative development plan was fostered by the vision and leadership of Dr. Rita V. Rogan whose connection with Joliet goes back to family ties. Dr. Rogan, a clinical psychologist and working artist, has been associated with a group of artists (the Plein Air Painters of Chicago – Southwest) and have involved them in the process of economic development. “Though I left Joliet when I was 18, I have carried the pride we felt as children knowing that our city was ‘All American’ because the town elders had placed the Arts at the heart of the community” explains Rogan. “Since I have been

away, I have been lucky enough to invest in ‘growing’ an artist’s community in Michigan. That effort came from the pure energy of the artists in contrast to the situation I have found since my return to Joliet. Here, the leaders themselves are spearheading this major revival of the arts. The artists who will fill the studio and gallery spaces are not only richly varied in their styles of expression, but celebrate and encourage each others’ differences. This is the true spirit of the arts. We will all benefit from the desire of the City planners to once again allow the streets of our downtown to pulse with the arts.”

The artists, whose members include award-winning Chicago artist, Sergio Rocha; Susan Flanagan, pastel cover artist of Tinley Park; Steve Miller, faculty of the Art Institute of Chicago, and Rita Rogan, Great American Artworks Pastel Boxtop Artist and instructor; as well as 20+ others, will open their doors on Friday, June 15<sup>th</sup> at 10am with an opening ceremony in front of the Rialto Square Theatre at 9:30am.

“The expected success of this program coupled with the response to the Joliet Fine Art Festival of the Masters will enable us to move into the next phase of development later this summer.” “The next phase would be a long-term commitment to these artists for their use of these commercial spaces so that the Rialto Arts District becomes a destination for people who are looking for visual arts studios and galleries.” comments Green.

For information on the Rialto Arts District call the Rialto Administrative Office (815)726-7171.

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