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## East County arts center reports profit

### Rentals up 72%, new managers say

**By Liz Neely**  
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EL CAJON – Rentals and attendance are up at the East County Performing Arts Center one year after new management took over, according to a report released yesterday.

Art Beat Management, operated by Christian Community Theater, said it eked out a profit during its first year running the 1,142-seat venue. The group took over the city-owned facility in December 2005.

The downtown performing arts center saw a 72 percent jump in rentals and a 30 percent rise in attendance, said Paul Russell, executive director of Art Beat. Russell is also the executive and artistic director of Christian Community Theater.

The group signed a five-year contract with the city more than a year ago. The nonprofit gets an annual city subsidy of \$350,000. An independent audit is due March 1.

In a presentation to the council yesterday, Russell said Art Beat spent more than \$100,000 last year on capital improvements to the theater. They included repairs to the grid system and new curtains.

Most of the money came from the city in a separate subsidy for capital improvements, Russell said.

New lighting and a new stage floor are being installed.

The group reported presenting 16 nationally recognized acts in 2006. A two-night appearance by Laura Schlessinger sold out. An Elvis Presley tribute and The Platters almost sold out. A show called "An Irish Christmas" was the least popular with 313 seats sold.

Art Beat was chosen to run the theater in November 2005, seven months after the council ousted the Arts Center Foundation, which had been running the theater for nearly eight years, but had fallen behind on its bills to the city.

The final debt, according to city estimates, was pegged at \$2.3 million. The foundation and the city settled in July.

Roxanne Fulkerson, Art Beat's director of marketing, said the group wants to launch a cultural arts program for children. Russell said a "senior follies" show performed by adults 55 and older is on tap.

Art Beat has also unveiled a promotion called Club 99, where theater patrons can attend six shows for \$99. More information is available at [www.ecpaclive.com](http://www.ecpaclive.com).

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