

tourism tidbits

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4 JUNE 2009



HCTDA TO REVAMP VISITORS GUIDE, WILL OFFER ELECTRONIC VERSION

NEW STRATEGY CUTS COSTS, GOES GREEN, MAKES GUIDE MORE USER-FRIENDLY

The Haywood County Tourism Development Authority recently decided to redesign and revamp its annual visitors guide, employing a greener, more cost-effective and more user-friendly strategy.

The most obvious change will be the physical dimensions of the 2010 edition of the magazine-style publication, which will be decreased to make it more pocket/purse-friendly and will result in affordable advertising rates. (The HCTDA will begin sending out rates, options and advertising request forms in August.)

The physical size of the publication will not be the only thing decreasing. As more and more potential visitors want to be able to access pertinent information in a timely and hassle-free fashion (read: online), the HCTDA will for the first time offer an online electronic

version of its visitors guide, allowing for a significant reduction in the number printed.

The electronic version, which will get its own Web address and will be easily accessible from the HCTDA homepage, will look identical to the print version, even allowing users to flip through the guide page-by-page or to print out the guide on their personal printer. Users will also be able to zoom in and out, save pages or the entire guide to their computer, or click on advertisements that will link to the desired Web page of the advertiser.

"Not only will the electronic version cut down on costs of printing the guide in large numbers but also will reduce the amount of money spent on mailing the publication to those who request it," said Lynn Collins, HCTDA executive director.

Now, she added, those seeking information about our area can have instant access to the visitors guide, rather than having to wait a week or more to receive it in the mail.

"Having an electronic version, accessible online, really makes a lot of sense for us and

our potential visitors," Collins said. "It reduces cost, greens our efforts, and makes the whole process more interactive and effective."

One of the best features of the electronic version is the added bonus for advertisers, which the HCTDA hopes will include various accommodations, attractions, restaurants, and retail shops. Advertising in the visitors guide has value like never before, thanks to the fact that the advertisement in the electronic version will link (whenever a user clicks anywhere on the ad) to the advertiser's Web site.

For an example of how the electronic version will look and function, visit the [Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce's version](#), created by the same company (NXT Book Media) that the HCTDA will use.

The print version will remain widely available—at visitors centers throughout the Southeast region and by request—and will arrive in a form useful both before and during a trip to Haywood County.

NOT ABLE TO ATTEND SOCIAL MEDIA WORKSHOPS?

The HCTDA held a hands-on social media workshop on June 9 to help interested parties get started in this new online venue and also to help those who have accounts go over some finer points about Facebook and Twitter. If you were unable to attend the workshop and feel you need a one-on-one session, please contact Ashley Rice at the HCTDA office to set up a meeting time. E-mail Ashley at ashley@smokeymountains.net or call 828-452-0152.

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Collins Attends Destination Management Association of NC's 2009 Conference

Lynn Collins, executive director of the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority, recently attended the Destination Management Association of North Carolina's 2009 Conference in Concord—a two-day conference that brings together TDA & CVB directors from across the state to participate in educational sessions. The agenda included sessions on social media; "The World According to a Hotel Operator"; "Adding Magic to Your Marketing"; "Greening Our Destination"; "Thriving in the New Economy"; and a tourism policy panel that included Lynn Minges of the NC Division of Tourism, Film & Sports Development, Senator Malcolm Graham, and Connie Wilson, the NC Travel Industry Association lobbyist. Their report provided an update on the state tourism budget and plan as well as the state budget, neither of which painted a rosy picture as far as budgets go. Minges did report that the Tourism Industry Association is predicting a 2-percent decrease in leisure travel this summer. "This conference was a great opportunity for me to learn about new trends, network with my peers and generate new ideas for our tourism program," Collins said.

Check Out New 'Farms of Haywood County' Brochure

A new brochure and map lists more than 30 locations to buy local produce, plants, trout, and more. The featured sites include farm stands, tailgate markets, nurseries, and others. Check out the new brochure and map online by [clicking here](#).

British Travel Writers Enjoy Horseback Riding, Fly-fishing During Haywood County Visit

The HCTDA hosted a group of British travel writers from June 7 to 9, along with two representatives from the NC Division of Tourism. The group had a great time in Haywood County, beginning with a delicious brunch at The Swag early Sunday afternoon. The group then took a drive on the Blue Ridge Parkway, which celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2010, to Graveyard Fields. The first day concluded with a cookout in Maggie Valley, with good Southern grub—including sweet-and-sour meatloaf, fried chicken, cole slaw, baked beans, and more—provided by Smackers Bar & Grill.

Day Two began with a hardy breakfast at the Maggie Valley restaurant. The group divided into two smaller groups for the morning's outdoor activities: horseback riding and fly-fishing.

Cataloochee Ranch provided the horseback riding, and those who participated, including the NC Division of Tourism's UK travel representative (who had never been riding previously) and Serena Lacey (who writes for a children's publication in London), thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Lacey said it was one of the top highlights of her trip to Western North Carolina. The second group went fly-fishing, courtesy of the Waynesville Fly Shop, which included a lesson. Gordon Tait caught two fish and Euan Cameron said he would definitely take his newly learned skills home with him to continue fishing.

The groups reconvened at Nick & Nate's Pizzeria in downtown Waynesville for lunch, followed by a stroll and some shopping along Main Street. After a bit of downtown following lunch, the group headed to Ghost Town in the Sky, where they experienced a performance by the cancan dancers as well as a gunfight. After a busy day, dinner at The Cork & Cleaver

Steakhouse at The Waynesville Inn Golf Resort & Spa hit the spot.

Thanks to all those who offered their services to ensure that the British travel writers enjoyed their time in Haywood County, including Smoky Falls Lodge, which provided lodging for the group. For those interested in contributing lodging, meals or activities during such media tours, we will soon be sending out forms on which you can indicate what you are willing to offer.

The HCTDA looks forward to partnering with the NC Division of Tourism's public relations department on future press tours.



HCTDA Looks to Improve Visitor Centers, Checks Out Similar Operations in Region

Sherry Warren, the HCTDA visitor center manager, is taking some time to visit some regional visitor centers in order to get ideas for improving the HCTDA Visitor Centers.

We will be adding to our merchandise for resale at the centers as well as adding computer kiosks for our visitors to utilize. We are also rearranging the way the brochures are displayed to make the centers more user friendly.

As always, we are striving to make operations at the Visitor Centers and the HCTDA office more efficient in order to focus our efforts on producing more business. If you have ideas and/or suggestions for Visitor Center improvements, please let Sherry know.

You can contact Sherry by e-mail at sherry@smokeymountains.net or by calling 828-452-0152.



Ashley Rice to Attend STS Marketing College in July

Ashley Rice will be attending the Southeast Tourism Society's Marketing College this July. Some of the courses offered include: "How We Build Brands/Positioning Your Destination," "Developing Internet & Marketing Strategies," "Group Tour Marketing," "Inquiry to Fulfillment to Conversion to Database," "Selling for Success," and many more.

"This is a great opportunity for me to learn new tourism marketing ideas and also a great educational tool for the HCTDA," said Ashley Rice.

The STS Marketing College is known as the premier educational program for the tourism industry. Ashley will be joining more than 300 tourism professionals for one week to learn, network and help the HCTDA grow as a destination marketing organization.

Ad Agency Presents 2009-2010 Media Strategy

After evaluating current and projected economic and travel/tourism trends, along with conducting meetings with the HCTDA Advertising Committee, The Tombras Group has recommended a media strategy for the upcoming budget year. Below are highlights of the strategy. If you would like to receive a copy of the media plan, please contact the HCTDA office.

Objective: Develop an advertising program that focuses more on key target markets but still generates widespread exposure for Haywood County key markets and states that are predisposed to consider Haywood County as a vacation destination.

Strategies: Explore media options that specifically target the TDA's top two markets, Charlotte & Atlanta; narrow our online publication geo-targeting to Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida; focus on regional issues of global publication; focus insertions on publication/issues that offer the most relevant editorial features/content; and focus on solo email blasts on target market Web sites.

Learn About 'Book Direct' at June 30th Workshop

At 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 30, at the Bethea Welcome Center at Lake Junaluska, the HCTDA will be hosting a workshop to view the "Book Direct" online booking service. This system would be embedded on the HCTDA Web site and would allow visitors to book direct to your accommodation/attraction online. Because "Book Direct" allows visitors to complete their reservations directly with the accommodation, this service is more affordable and saves the visitor several steps in the booking process.

We hope you will join us to view this demonstration and learn more about the program. The HCTDA is committed to offering more services to our industry partners in an effort to generate business. We need your input and feedback on this proposal. Please join us for a look at a new and exciting opportunity! RSVP by e-mailing us at hctda@smokeymountains.net or calling 828-452-0152 by June 29th.

GOT NEWS?

Send your news and information for possible inclusion in upcoming issues of "Tourism Tidbits."



IMPORTANT DATES

JUNE 24

Board of Directors
Monthly Meeting

JUNE 30

Online Booking Workshop

JULY 3

HCTDA Office Closed

JULY 4

Independence Day Holiday;
check our Web site for events

JULY 22

Board of Directors
Monthly Meeting



*Where the Sun Rises
on the Smokies*

STAFF

Lynn Collins, executive director
Sherry Warren, office manager
Ashley Rice, communications
Darren Miller, public & media relations

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