

tourism tidbits

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1 MARCH 2009



NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OFFICIALLY TAKES REINS OF TOURISM AGENCY

Former Maggie Valley Chamber Director Lynn Collins Makes Transition to HCTDA

Lynn Collins, who served as the executive director of the Maggie Valley Chamber and Area Visitors Bureau since 2005, officially began her duties last month as the new executive director of Haywood County Tourism Development Authority.

"It's an exciting time," said Collins, who the Haywood County TDA Board of Directors voted to fill the position in December after an exhaustive search and extensive interview process. "Since being selected, I've been preparing to make a smooth transition—attending board meetings and conferring with board members, talking with the staff, and just becoming even more familiar with the workings of the organization than I already was—and it's paid off already this first month or so.

"I'm extremely pleased that the board recognized the qualities and experience I bring to this role," Collins said, "and I look

forward to doing all I can to continue and further the mission of the TDA in growing the economic impact of the tourism industry in the county."

Collins has more than 30 years of tourism and destination management experience, beginning in 1978 as the director of public relations and promotions at Maggie Valley's Ghost Town in the Sky and Magic Waters. Later in her career, after six years as the sales and marketing director at the Polk County, Florida, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Collins was promoted to serve as that organization's executive director—a post she held for 12 years managing a \$6 million budget, a 10-person marketing staff and 50 volunteers. During her tenure, the organization twice received the Convention & Visitors Bureau of the Year award from the Southeast Tourism Society, and visitor inquiries increased 300 percent.

"Her wealth of experience in this industry—especially as the director of a visitors bureau six times the size of the TDA—and her strong familiarity with the area, the county and the TDA are really tremendous assets to have in

an executive director," said Alice Aumen, chairman of the Haywood County Board of Directors. "We are thrilled to have her aboard and look forward to working with her in the coming months and years."

Collins, a resident of Maggie Valley, served as a TDA board member from 1983 to 1985, is only the second executive director in the organization's history.

"There are a lot of great things already in place here," Collins said. "I think my fresh take and some new approaches will only help us continually progress, and I am eager to forge new relationships and partnerships with individuals, businesses and other organizations throughout the county and region in order to reach our goals."

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This is the first installment of our newsletter that we will regularly send to our industry partners to update you on HCTDA news, as well as to inform you of current trends, events, and helpful information.

SEND US YOUR VIDEOS, GAIN EXPOSURE ON POPULAR VIDEO SITE



The HCTDA has recently launched a [YouTube Channel](#), and we want to include videos of your accommodation, attraction or restaurant. Capturing video is easier than ever, so send us a short (less than 3 minutes) clip. If you already have video content posted on YouTube, just e-mail us a link.

Board of Directors

Alice Aumen, Chair
Cataloochee Ranch

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Advertising Committee Chair
Town of Maggie Valley

Ken Stahl
Finance Committee Chair
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The Valley Inn

Skeeter Curtis
Ex-Officio
Haywood County Commissioner

Mark Clasby
Ex-Officio
Economic Development Commission

Julie Davis
Ex-Officio
Haywood County Finance Director

1% Funding Subcommittees

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Steve Sorrells
Judy Stamey

28721 (Clyde)

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Betsy Boyd
Buffy Messer
Dorie Pope

2009-10 Funding Process: Guidelines, Request Forms Available; File By March 31

The Haywood County Tourism Development Authority has made new 3-percent and 1-percent funding guidelines, along with funding request forms, available to the public.

The guidelines/request forms are available at the the HCTDA office in Waynesville. The forms can also be downloaded from [our Web site](#). The deadline for filing a funding application is 5 p.m. on March 31. Those applying for 3-percent funding should submit forms to the HCTDA office in Waynesville, and 1-percent applicants should submit to the appropriate subcommittee (addresses can be found in the guidelines).

Both categories—3-percent and 1-percent—include guidelines and request forms for Destination Marketing Organization Funding (for entities with bylaws, board of directors, mission statement, and regular meetings) and Event Matching Funds Grant (for event organizers, who must match the amount awarded them).

The Haywood County Tourism Development Authority's Board of Directors will consider all 3-percent requests for funding at its annual budget forum, slated for 3-4 pm on April 15 at Lake Junaluska's Terrace Hotel in Room 316. Those wishing to speak must sign up to do so, starting at 2:30 p.m., before the start of the forum. Speakers will be limited to three minutes each.

Subcommittees must submit their recommendations for 1-percent funding by 5 p.m. on April 13. The Finance Committee will review those recommendations at a 10 am meeting on April 16.

The board will then review and adopt both the 3-percent and 1-percent budgets at its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on April 22.

Update Information on Revamped VisitNC.com, Ensure Visibility on Site

The North Carolina Department of Commerce's Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development has revamped its [Web site](#). Take a look at their new clean and user-friendly design. While checking your information or filling out new forms, consider the advice and tips that the Division has passed along to us.

The new [VisitNC.com](#) is driven from your data—your listing titles and descriptions—and it also exposes weaknesses in the information. Please take a few minutes to think about your keywords, titles and description, and please update your information. When a visitor types a phrase into the keyword search box, the results are displayed in order of relevancy. There are some basic criteria for you to rank well.

The title for your listing and the description you've written are of primary importance for ranking well in the results returned to a visitor. If there is no description on your listing, you won't be found easily (or at all) by people searching for you. Tell people who you are and where you are. Then tell them why they can't miss visiting you and what makes you special. Give details. Use emotional words. Write like a marketer selling wonderful product(s). Do a little homework, and find out what the keywords are that bring traffic to your Web site. Use those words. Free tools that may help get you started are: <http://freekeywords.wordtracker.com> or <http://www.google.com/trends>.

If you are an attraction or event, be sure to use your location (and for accommodations, type of lodging) and the keywords that define you best in your title and again in your description.

The HCTDA has also partnered with the Division to post our news releases and link to [our Media page](#) on its site's [Media microsite](#).



HCTDA Enters World of Social Media with Launch of Facebook, MySpace Sites

Each with hundreds of millions of registered accounts and even more regular visitors, Facebook and MySpace are the top two social networking sites on the Internet—phenomena that have changed the way people interact on the Web. Many businesses



and organizations now use these so-called Social Media sites to extend their reach and expand their audience. The HCTDA can now count itself among this group.



Within the last month, the HCTDA has launched [MySpace](#) and [Facebook](#) pages (along with a channel on the immensely popular video site [YouTube](#)). This presence on these Social Media sites allow us to directly connect with potential visitors, providing interactive content, a blog, video, photos, quick responses to any questions, and more.

Personal accounts are free, so log on to both [MySpace](#) and [Facebook](#) and sign up. Then make sure to friend us on MySpace or become our fan on Facebook to stay updated and check out our latest content. If you have a Web site, consider adding links to our social media sites:

<http://www.myspace.com/smokymountainsnc>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Smoky-Mountains-North-Carolina/51800738330>

<http://www.youtube.com/smokymountainsnc>

Go Mobile and Reach a Wider Audience

The new Web browser is now the cell phone. Is your Web site compatible? People who are using their mobile devices to browse your site are on the go, so they don't have the use of a keyboard or mouse to search for vital information, and with a much smaller screen they cannot see the information that you now have on your Web site.

Millions of consumers are now using the mobile web, and usage is steadily growing—especially when you figure in that mobile devices outsell computers 20 to 1. According to several sources, the most popular pages on a mobile site are the “locations page” and the “scheduled events” page. On most of sites, those are not located on our homepage.

Visit www.mypigeonforge.com and look at the bottom of the homepage. You can submit your cell phone number and service carrier to receive more information, updates, and special offers. This is perfect for that instant response people today are looking for.

Unfortunately mobile browsers do not often adapt to your Web sites. For the audience that wants fast, on-demand information, your website is going to have to adapt to mobile browsers. For more information on mobile marketing, visit <http://itimarketing.wordpress.com>.

The following are some examples of .mobi sites which you can view on your mobile phone as well as your PC:

www.bgicvb.mobi

www.nkycvb.mobi

www.mypf.mobi

www.columbusga.mobi

IMPORTANT DATES

MARCH 25

Board of Directors Retreat

MARCH 31

Advertising Committee Meeting

MARCH 31

1% & 3% Funding Applications Due to Subcommittee & TDA Office, respectively

APRIL 15

Annual Budget Forum

APRIL 16

Finance Committee Meeting

APRIL 22

Board of Directors Monthly Meeting

MAY 13

1st Annual Tourism Luncheon



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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