

NEWS RELEASE



*Where the Sun Rises
on the Smokies*

HAYWOOD COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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Summer Months Prove to be Major Boon for Haywood County Tourism

Occupancy Tax Figures Up 22 Percent to Start Fiscal Year, Several Factors Spur Significant Growth

HAYWOOD COUNTY, N.C. (October 24, 2007)—Tourists flocked to Haywood County this summer like never before, according to figures released this week by the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority.

Occupancy tax dollars—a 3-percent fee collected by accommodations from their guests and the key statistic in measuring tourism growth—increased significantly this July and August compared to the same months in 2006. July figures (which were the first of fiscal year 2007-2008) grew 13 percent and tourism in August resulted in a remarkable 34-percent surge—record highs for each month.

The unprecedented success this summer season can be attributed to several factors, starting with an aggressive marketing program over the last two years, said Scotty Medford Ellis, executive director of the Haywood County TDA.

“Tourism is always heavily dependent on weather, and the weather here in July and August couldn’t have been any better,” Ellis said.

Many accommodation owners, along with staff at the Canton and Balsam visitors centers, indicated seeing many more families during the summer, she said.

“Ghost Town in the Sky really played a vital role in attracting these vacationing families,” Ellis said. “The reopening of this great amusement park has helped make Haywood County a family-friendly destination.”

Along with the influx of families, motorcycles were a common sight during the last two months of summer. With riders drawn to the winding and scenic roads of Western North Carolina, Haywood County has a unique advantage in luring them off the Blue Ridge Parkway.

“Wheels Through Time Museum is an essential part of the equation,” Ellis said.

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“Its appeal to motorcycle and automobile enthusiasts gets riders, who otherwise might just cruise on by, to stop and stay in Haywood County,” she added. “Dale Walksler’s own efforts in promoting the museum and the county has certainly helped bring more and more visitors here every year.”

Early indications suggest that September and October (for which official figures have yet to be calculated) will experience equally significant increases in occupancy tax collection.

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