

H.L. BONHAM  
REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT &  
TOURISM CENTER

SMYTH COUNTY  
TOURISM  
ASSOCIATION



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## Smyth County Community Tourism Brochure Opportunity

It's **your** story, Smyth County...and we are going to tell it in a beautiful brochure, booklet form. On the one hand, it's a piece of advertising that will help you sell your business to travelers. On the other hand, it's a heritage preservation piece to be treasured by travelers and local folk alike. It is a piece of the Smyth County tourism puzzle you can be proud of--not just another map with a bunch of ads on it, but a real piece of archivable history.

It will tell those passing through some of the great stories of this wonderful place and its people...and, while these visitors are here getting to know you, may they happily buy stuff from your shop, stay at your place of lodging, eat at your restaurant...and then go home and tell their friends how wonderful you are. Through the power of the grapevine, may their friends then visit and spread even more prosperity with you, too. And, so on and so forth.

### Here's how it works:

The brochure, which will promote area tourism-related businesses, attractions, and points of interest, will be placed in all 13 Virginia Welcome Centers and in each of the 58 state-certified visitor's centers in Virginia. Your entity will also receive worldwide Internet exposure on both the state travel web site, [www.virginia.org](http://www.virginia.org), and on the regional tourism web site, [www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com](http://www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com). How much exposure you get is up to you.

Put yourself in the traveler's shoes: You're passing through Smyth County and you're looking for somewhere unique to visit, something fun to do. You need to know more about the place. At the local visitor's center, you happen across a rack of brochures, where one in particular catches your attention. The caption at the top reads "Mountains of Possibilities". Picking it up, you see it's a small booklet, about four inches by nine inches. The front cover is filled with a beautiful scene of mountains, lakes, and people happily relaxing. You instantly wonder if you'll read stories inside about the people and mountains on the cover. You instinctively know this is no ordinary brochure, listing phone numbers and street addresses; no, this is something more.

Opening your new treasure, you begin to read tales about the locals. Fascinating stories about infamous people: A writer, who influenced the likes of Hemingway and Steinbeck; a Reality TV star, who also just happens to be a native (and a goat farmer); a local historian, whose grandmother's story of slavery breaks your heart, yet inspires your soul. But there are stories about everyday people, too...and how they came to do business and live and love in Smyth County. "Are these ads?" you think..."They don't really look like ads." This feels more like storytelling....with pictures....and with insight into a sense of this place and its people.

There are stories of places to hike, camp, roam mountains, and explore terrain. There are stories about places to eat, to shop, and to find your inner spirit. "This is Smyth County?" you think. "I never knew such a place existed." You keep the brochure because it will guide you through your journey here, **and** you'll want to share it with your friends and family when you get home.

Okay, back to you, the Smyth County merchant, business person, or attraction representative. To get more information on how you can be a part of this community-wide project, please plan to attend the community meeting on **Tuesday, May 27, at the Chilhowie Town Hall Community Room, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**

## Virginia Mountains' *Most Beautiful People*

### Even Forest Gump Knows, "Beauty is as beauty does."

It's that time of year again; time for People Magazine's *100 Most Beautiful People* issue. While we may agree with their picks from what we see on the outside, here in the Virginia Mountains we know it's what's inside that really counts. So, we're taking nominations for the Virginia Mountains' *Most Beautiful People* (on the inside).

You know the kind of people we're looking for: They are doing good things with their lives; they are helping others; they give something back to society; they lead by example--and that example is service; they make the world a better place; they inspire us to be better human beings. Perhaps they have touched only one life, a few, or thousands with their good works. Maybe they advocate for those who do not have a voice. They would likely be too humble to talk about themselves, so this is your chance to shine a light on them.

There are two ways you can nominate someone for the Virginia Mountains *Most Beautiful People* list. Cast your vote electronically, by completing the form below, or come to the Tourist Information Center at 408 Whitetop Road, Chilhowie, I-81, Exit 35, just across the street from the Exxon Station, and cast your vote by paper ballot.

If your nominee is selected as one of the Virginia Mountains' *Most Beautiful People*, he or she will be featured on our regional tourism web site and in other promotional materials for our area. Your nominee must be a resident of the Town of Chilhowie, Marion, or Saltville, or of the unincorporated area of Smyth County, Virginia.

**Hurry! The deadline to submit nominations is June 30, 2008.**

Cast a vote for someone who deserves it today and let the rest of the world know about the beautiful people of the Virginia Mountains.

Winners will be selected by July 15, 2008 and announced on [www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com](http://www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com) in August 2008.

You may submit more than one nominee. Some form of nominee contact information and reason for submission must be provided. Thank you for helping us to discover the Virginia Mountains' *Most Beautiful People*.



Shine the Light on a Deserving Someone You Know.

You Pick the Virginia Mountains' *Most Beautiful People*.

**"It's what's  
inside that  
makes you  
shine..."**

~ LeAnn Rimes

## Save Gas This Summer – You CAN Be a Tourist in Your Own Backyard!

You don't need to travel hundreds of miles for a new adventure or a much-needed escape as warmer weather rolls around.

With gas costs edging ever-upward, you might have thought you'd have to forego the weekend getaways and trips to exciting places this year. But, we've got some great news for you! If you're like most people, you've spent many years traveling everywhere else while, perhaps, some of your best experiences still await you right in your own backyard.

For the travel season, we want to help you discover, or rediscover, Smyth County and the beautiful Virginia mountains.

We'll feature area points of interest on [www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com](http://www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com) through Labor Day 2008. You may never even have known about some of these attractions and amazing places. Maybe you've heard of some of them, but have never actually seen them for yourself. Some tried and true local favorites may surprise and delight you if it's been awhile since you last visited.

When you go, please let them know you read about them on [www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com](http://www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com) and please share these treasures we're so lucky to have right here at home with someone else so they can enjoy them, too! Have a fun and safe spring and summer being a Hometown Tourist in the Virginia Mountains.



Horse and buggy rides at the Settler's Museum during last year's Settler's Day event — The museum is our current featured local attraction

Photo courtesy of Sara Kegley

## NASCAR Comes to Smyth County



**Big Tom Buchanan & Tony Stewart** in front of the "Moonshine to Motorsports" section of the historical timeline at the visitors' center.



**Racing star Tony Stewart, Big Tom Buchanan, and Tourism Association Chairman Charlie Clark**, share a laugh at the media event.



**Tony Stewart poses with Jeff Hess of Virginia Tourism Corporation**, who helped staff the visitors' center during the event.



**Sheridan Ridge media announcement from Chilhowie, Virginia in the middle of New York's Times Square**

A few NASCAR superstars visited Smyth County on Thursday March 13, 2008, for the national media announcement of the Sheridan Ridge Private Reserve project. Tony Stewart, Elliott Sadler, Denny Hamlin, Greg Zipadelli and Jeff Hammond, advisory board members for the project, will each call Smyth County home in the not-so-distant future.

The kick-off was held at the renowned Town House Grill restaurant in Chilhowie, where the street and surrounding area was blocked off for the event. The Sheridan Ridge board easily shared their thoughts and hopes for the venue to enhance the Smyth County community, with Virginia Natives Hamlin and Sadler expressing heartfelt memories of time spent in the mountain of Virginia while growing up. State and local government officials were in attendance to speak of the positive impact this resort community will have on Southwest Virginia and to lend support for the project.

Just before stepping in front of the cameras for the event, driver Tony Stewart and his crew chief Greg Zipadelli visited the H.L. Bonham Regional Development & Tourism Center, where they met with volunteers and staff. They graciously posed for photographs with local celebrity Big Tom Buchanan, of *Survivor Africa* and *Survivor All-Stars* fame, in front of the "Moonshine to Motorsports" section of the Smyth County Historical Timeline.

Following the media conference, Smyth County's newest residents hopped a ride in a helicopter from the tourism center to get a bird's eye view of their new mountain retreat.

Local, regional, and national media outlets attended the event. Reuters national pipeline picked up the announcement resulting in wide-spread media exposure, including a projection of the announcement from the mountains of Southwest Virginia into the middle of New York's Times Square.

The following day, [www.nascar.com](http://www.nascar.com) ran the announcement, resulting in a 1000% increase in web traffic for the local tourism web site, [www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com](http://www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com). The Smyth County tourism site was provided a link from the Sheridan Ridge site, [www.sheridanridgeva.com](http://www.sheridanridgeva.com), which brought in the new web visitors, who were likely looking for information on the community surrounding Sheridan Ridge.

Sheridan Ridge Private Reserve is a 1,400 acre upscale adventure and motorsports-influenced resort community now under development in Smyth County. The project, named in honor of her daughter is the vision of Lou Ann Earnhardt, whose years of experience in real estate development and contracting coupled with her desire to meet the down-time needs of the NASCAR community, celebrity and fan alike, have resulted in a one-of-a-kind lifestyle resort. See their web site, noted above or follow the Sheridan Ridge link from the local tourism web site above, for more information on the resort's unique and exciting amenities.

**Just before stepping in front of the cameras, driver Tony Stewart and his crew chief Greg Zipadelli toured the visitor's center.**



**NASCAR celebrities sharing their thoughts and hopes for the project in Smyth County.**

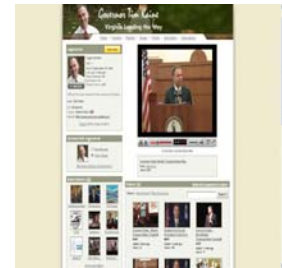
## Smyth County Tourism Video Featured on Governor's New *YouTube* Channel

**Richmond**—Governor Timothy M. Kaine announced on May 6, 2008, the creation of his own YouTube channel on the popular online video sharing site that allows people to watch and share originally created videos. The channel, [www.youtube.com/vagovernor](http://www.youtube.com/vagovernor), which features video clips of public service announcements, speeches and public forums with the Governor, also displays a "Subscriptions" section, where the Governor's office has included a link to our own Smyth County tourism video.

The local tourism video, [www.youtube.com/VisitVAMountains](http://www.youtube.com/VisitVAMountains), has been posted on YouTube since July 2007. Governor Kaine's channel is part of the Virginia government community if channels, which includes a channel hosted by the state's tourism agency, the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC). VTC launched its YouTube channel earlier this year and also displays the Smyth County Tourism video, helping to promote the Southwestern Virginia mountain region and Smyth County.

"It is through these partnerships that we'll see a positive impact from tourism in Smyth County and Southwestern Virginia even as we face difficult economic times," said Director of Tourism Barbara DeBord of the Smyth County Tourism Association. "It's in these times that we most need to increase our marketing to raise awareness of our area as a getaway destination. As Americans take shorter trips and stay closer to home, we're positioned perfectly to become the destination of choice to half the population of the Eastern U.S. because we're within a day's driving distance. We're pleased to be a part of the Virginia online community, and we're very appreciate of this support to our local efforts."

Thanks to Secretary of Technology Aneesh Chopra's progressive leadership of the Virginia Information Technologies Agency, Virginia is one of the first states to launch a YouTube channel. Go to [www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com](http://www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com) for the YouTube Channel link.



Screen shot from Virginia Governor Kaine's new YouTube Channel

**"...we're very appreciative of this support to our local efforts."**

## Appalachian Regional Commission Grant Update

In June 2007, the Smyth County Tourism Association was awarded a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), which partnered with the National endowment for the Arts to assist communities in the ARC region. The grant, called the Appalachian Gateway Initiative: Natural and Cultural Heritage Tourism Development, is part of the ARC's effort to promote asset-based economic development in Appalachia. The initiative emphasizes the inclusion of the arts, heritage preservation, and conservation in tourism development projects. Seven organizations and communities, including Smyth County, were awarded the grant out of a total of thirty-six applications. Smyth County is the only Virginia community awarded this grant.

The ARC hired the Conservation Fund (TCF) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) to conduct the assessment that was awarded to tourism association.

One representative from each organization visited Smyth County December 5-7, 2007, to tour the area and meet with a representatives from tourism related attractions, natural & outdoor recreational resources, and cultural, historic, and heritage sites and attractions.

The final tourism assessment report is available online at [www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com/SmythCountyTourismAssessmentReport.pdf](http://www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com/SmythCountyTourismAssessmentReport.pdf).

For questions, comments, or to find out how you can be involved in future grant projects, please call us at the tourism center at

(276) 646-3306 or email

[info@VisitVirginiaMountains.com](mailto:info@VisitVirginiaMountains.com).



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS



## Museum of the Middle Appalachians Celebrates New Expansion

The Museum of the Middle Appalachians in Saltville celebrated the opening of the museum expansion on Saturday April 5, 2008 at 2:00p.m.

After many delays and countless hours of preparation, the dream of an expanded exhibit space finally came true. The building next door was purchased in 2004. The two buildings were connected with two passageways and renovated to include a new exhibit hall, a meeting room and a preparation/work room.

The Design Minds of Alexandria, VA was hired to do the design work. Project Mammoth became a community effort as The Friends of the Museum, local historians and other resource people spent countless hours behind the scenes to research, write and plan the content for the new exhibits. Exhibit fabrication was contracted with Color-Ad of Manassas, Virginia.

The main exhibit hall was closed to the public for only two weeks. The Saltville Hall and the store remained open to visitors with an exhibit of "Wildlife of the Appalachians".

The new exhibits tell a story that begins with the geology responsible for the presence of salt and gypsum, and moves through Native Americans and early settlement, to present day salt production. A time line, accented by a local core sample, posts significant events of the region as it highlights the walls around each of the exhibit rooms. Many new exhibits have been added and previous exhibits have all been changed in some way. New additions include a sixteen foot painting of a mastodon, a Paleo-Indian throwing an atlatl, a woodland period hut, a tramway bucket, and many photographs and murals. Interactive stations bring the exhibits to life with sounds and dioramas. There is something to appeal to everyone.

Project Mammoth is truly a dream come true.

Call (276) 496-3633 or visit [www.museum-mid-app.org](http://www.museum-mid-app.org) for more information.

## Wilderness Road & Settler's Museum Featured on National Geographic Map

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and the National Geographic Society released a new Appalachian Driving Tours Map in March 2008. Commissioned by the ARC, the map features 28 driving trails in the Appalachian Region that lead to a broad array of historical, archaeological, cultural, and scenic sites.

Featured as one of the new driving tours this year is the *Wilderness Road, Virginia's Heritage Migration Trail*, along which visitors can retrace the steps of 18th century pioneers and early settlers. The driving tour spans from Winchester to the Cumberland Gap. Smyth County Tourism Association staff has worked to represent Smyth County in the *Wilderness Road* project since 2005. The Settler's Museum in Atkins, Virginia, is now highlighted as a point of interest on the new map as place where tourists can learn about the Ulster Scots-Irish and Palatine German's migration story.

To learn more about Smyth County on the *Wilderness Road* visit our web site at [www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com](http://www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com) and click on the *Wilderness Road* logo on our homepage. For more information on visiting the Settler's Museum log on to [www.settlersmuseum.com](http://www.settlersmuseum.com). The 28 Appalachian Driving Tours may be found online at [www.visitappalachia.org](http://www.visitappalachia.org).



**New interactive station at the Museum of the Middle Appalachians.**

Photo courtesy of Eleanor W. Jones.

**“Many new exhibits have been added and previous exhibits have all been changed in some way.”**



**The Wilderness Road is one of 28 featured driving tours on the new National Geographic geo-tourism map.**

**The Settler's Museum of Southwest Virginia in Atkins is mentioned by name.**

## New Local Archaeological Exhibit at Visitor's Center!



Display of local artifacts at Visitor's Center.

Come in to see the tourism center's newest display, compliments of Dan Kegley, president of the Wolf Hills Chapter of the Archaeological Society of Virginia. See local finds including such as artifacts from the Fox and Bonham sites, including projectile points, ceramic shards and game stones, and bones. You'll even get to see fragments of an actual cob of maize (corn), which has been preserved for at least 400 years due to carbonization from fire!



Welcome to  
**Archaeology**  
from the  
Wolf Hills  
Chapter of the  
Archeological Society of Virginia



## Saltville Tourism Director Assisting Visitor's Center

Since February 2008 the H.L. Bonham Regional Development and Tourism Center has had a much-needed addition to its staff base. Town Council for the Town of Saltville voted to allow Saltville Tourism Director Charlie Bill Totten to work from the visitor's center on Fridays. This addition of manpower not only supplements the human resources at the center, but also benefits the town by having a person who is knowledgeable in its wealth of tourism attractions, points of interest, and amenities available to give direction to incoming travelers to the center on where they might visit and spend their tourism dollars while in Smyth County.



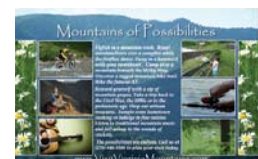
From Left to Right: Visitor Center Volunteers Joy Brooks and Margaret McKinnon, Visitor Center Operations and Marketing Manager, Kristy Nunley, Director of Tourism, Barbara DeBord, and Saltville Tourism Director, Charlie Bill Totten on the Helen Williams Barbrow Interpretive Trail.

"We're fortunate to have Charlie Bill working with us at the visitor's center," said Smyth County Tourism Association Director Barbara DeBord. "His expertise and knowledge of Saltville is a great benefit to travelers—and to locals—looking to explore Smyth County."

**"We're fortunate to have Charlie Bill working with us at the visitor's center. His expertise and knowledge of Saltville is a great benefit to travelers—and to locals—looking to explore Smyth County."**

## Free Virginia Mountains Postcards Available

Pick up free postcards, courtesy of the Smyth County Tourism Association, at the H.L. Bonham Regional Development and Tourism Center. Send to family and friends yourself or pick them up for your out-of-town guests to use while they are here for a visit.



To get your free postcards, stop in at the tourism center just off I-81 exit 35 across from the Exxon station in Chilhowie.

## Volunteer Opportunities at Tourism Center

Just 3-4 hours per week can make a big difference. If you've been looking for an opportunity to get involved in the Smyth County community, learn something new, share what you already know, meet people, and have fun, this is for you! The H.L. Bonham Regional Development & Tourism Center is seeking volunteers to become Travel Counselors and Community Ambassadors. If you've ever wanted to be a part of the tourism industry, this is your chance.

Free training is provided by the Smyth County Tourism Association with assistance from the Virginia Tourism Corporation and includes familiarization "fam" tours of local attractions, restaurants, shopping, outdoor recreation areas, tourism-related points of interest, and lodging establishments, including hotels, B&Bs, cabins, and campgrounds. You may be surprised to learn how much there is to do in your own back yard, and you'll be able to share that knowledge with visitors from across the world, and some just across the road, who want to explore Smyth County and our beautiful Virginia mountains.

To share the benefits of volunteering with those you love, ask about family or couple's volunteering opportunities. Flexible scheduling will be accommodated as much as possible. Short- and long-term commitments are available. Don't miss a chance to do something good for your community and to have some fun at the same time!



Visitor's center volunteers meet up with Appalachian Trail hikers while on a "fam" tour of the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area Headquarters (MRNRA).

The MRNRA receives more than a million visitors annually.

## VATC What's New in 2009?

Each year, the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) sales and public relations departments compile *What's New*, a compilation of new, renovated or expanded attractions, accommodations, meetings spaces, sports venues, and travel services opening in Virginia.

*What's New in 2009* will cover openings from late 2008 through 2009. Let us know of your new additions to the tourism community by July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Simply fill out the form located the state tourism industry web site, at [www.vatc.org/pr/whatsnew/whatsnew2009form.asp](http://www.vatc.org/pr/whatsnew/whatsnew2009form.asp).

The VTC consumer travel web site, [www.virginia.org](http://www.virginia.org) also offers a free web page to Virginia tourism-related businesses, points of interest, and attractions. See more details on page 8 of this newsletter.

"We can't tell the world about you, if we don't know about you," said Barbara DeBord, Smyth County Tourism Association tourism director. "With only two staff people at the tourism center, there's no way we can reach out to every business door to door and still do the work of the tourism association. We want to make sure each Smyth County, Chilhowie, Marion, and Saltville business that should be on the state web site is there. Please help us make sure Smyth County is represented in this way. Give us your information today to make sure Virginia travelers know you're here."

## "Rescue Me" — A Benefit for Animals

Stop by the visitor's center to pick up your tickets to this special benefit to be presented by Z103 and 102.5 on **Saturday, June 21, 2008**, at the Holston Hills Country Club in Marion, VA. Hosting organizations are the Appalachian Animal Rescue and Promised Land Animal Rescue. Music will be provided by The Travelers Revision from 9pm to midnight.

Don't miss out on a chance to do something good for the animals in Smyth County! To donate without attending, come by the visitor's center to access the donation box.

### Contact Information:

Terri Blevins ~ AAR ~ 276-685-8104  
[terriclarkblevins@comcast.net](mailto:terriclarkblevins@comcast.net)

Susan Graf ~ PLAR ~ 276-686-8522  
Email ~ [planimalrescue@yahoo.com](mailto:planimalrescue@yahoo.com)

### Mailing Information:

The Benefit  
P.O. Box 5017  
Chilhowie, VA 24319

Tell the  
world  
you're  
here  
and  
ready  
for  
business!



*The kind of society we are illustrated by how we treat our animals, our children, and our elderly.*  
~ Native American philosophy

Pick up your tickets for "Rescue Me" at the tourism center.

H.L. BONHAM  
REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT &  
TOURISM CENTER

SMYTH COUNTY  
TOURISM ASSOCIATION

408 Whitetop Road  
Chilhowie, VA 24319

Phone: 276-646-3306  
Fax: 276-646-3301

Email:  
info@VisitVirginiaMountains.com

[www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com](http://www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com) - Mountains of Possibilities

## THE SMYTH COUNTY TOURISM ASSOCIATION:

### TOURISM FOR GOOD

*The mission of the Smyth County Tourism Association is to increase economic growth of Smyth County and its partners through sustainable tourism.*

*The association aims to market the region's history, culture, outdoor recreation, and natural resources. The association works toward bringing about a heightened priority of thoughtful community planning and development. Promotions for the local area and region include preservation-based tourism that features our unique heritage, agriculture, and ecology.*

The Board of Directors, consists of the mayor of each of the three towns of Chilhowie, Marion, and Saltville, and Chairman of the Smyth County Board of Supervisors, or their designees. The fifth member of the board is a tourism-related business owner.

The Smyth County Tourism Association staff operates the H.L. Bonham Regional Development & Tourism Center located off Interstate 81 at exit 35, in the Town of Chilhowie and performs the work of the tourism association. Please stop in for a tour and to pick up information on travel in Smyth County, our Virginia Mountains region, and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### Get a Free Listing on [Virginia.org](http://Virginia.org) and [www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com](http://www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com)

Submit your information to us for a web page on

[www.Virginia.org](http://www.Virginia.org).

The state's travel web site, [www.Virginia.org](http://www.Virginia.org), is used by more than 400,000 users per month all with an interest in Virginia travel.

Make it easier for shoppers, travelers, travel agents, and group tours to find you!

Free listings include:

- Accommodations
- Special Events
- Attractions
- Shops
- Restaurants

In addition to having your business information available to tourists on the state's tourism web site, your information will also be available on our local tourism web site at

[www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com](http://www.VisitVirginiaMountains.com).

For your free web page listing, please contact the H.L. Bonham Development and Tourism Center or visit the state site directly online.

Travelers won't find you on these sites, if your information is not there. Tell the world you're ready for business!



Sample [www.Virginia.org](http://www.Virginia.org) listing for the Collins House Inn Bed & Breakfast in Marion.

