

PRESS RELEASES

Smyth County Wins Second ARC and NEA Grant in Gateway Communities Competition

WASHINGTON, D.C., August 2008—The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) selected the winners in August of the 2008 grants competition to promote natural and cultural heritage tourism development in Appalachia’s “gateway communities” —communities that border national and state parks and forests.

“We’re very fortunate to receive this grant award,” said Director of Tourism Barbara DeBord. “One of the most pressing challenges in carrying out the work of the Smyth County Tourism Association and operating the state-certified H.L. Bonham Regional Development & Tourism Center is having the human capital to keep it thriving and moving forward,” DeBord continued. “There’s an opportunity here for any Smyth County citizen who wants to get involved in his or her community, to help make a real, positive difference. There’s a lot of good work still to be done and this grant will help us to do it.”

The competition, called the Appalachian Gateway Initiative: Natural and Cultural Heritage Tourism Development, is part of ARC’s effort to promote asset-based economic development in Appalachia and include the arts in tourism development projects. ARC contributed \$100,000 and the NEA contributed \$30,000 to the competition.

Thirty-five proposals requesting \$450,000 in grant funds were submitted by communities and organizations located in nine Appalachian states. The following were selected to receive grants:

- **Smyth County, Virginia, for a proposal to develop a volunteer recruitment, training, and retention program.**
- The Chestnut Creek School of the Arts in Galax, Virginia, for a plan to increase tourism and preserve the region’s cultural heritage by offering art, crafts, and nature classes.
- Calhoun County, Alabama, a gateway to the Talledega National Forest, for training and technical support to complete a tourism assessment.
- Lincoln Memorial University for technical assistance to coordinate a three-county tourism assessment for Claiborne County, Tennessee, Bell County, Kentucky, and Lee County, Virginia, all of which are gateways to the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park.
- Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission's Appalachian Adventure Trail for a proposal to install directional signage to showcase recreational and heritage assets in Pike, Jackson, Vinton, Athens, and Meigs Counties in Ohio.
- Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation for training and technical support to coordinate a planning workshop for the western highlands region of Virginia.
- The Alliance for the Cumberlands for a plan to develop a Web site and trip itineraries for the Nature Viewing Trail, a self-guided driving tour of natural and historic sites in 21 Tennessee counties in the Cumberland Plateau.

- The Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association for a plan to document the foodway traditions of McMinn, Monroe, and Polk Counties and support small businesses by showcasing products for purchase.
- The Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council for its Quilt Trail, which winds through six counties in northeast Tennessee and features 70 hand-painted murals of traditional quilt patterns on barns and other structures.

Training and technical assistance for the winning applicants will be provided by the Conservation Fund and the National Trust for Historic Preservation Heritage Tourism Program.

For additional information on how you can participate in the Smyth County Tourism Association's new *Volunteer Recruitment, Training, and Retention Program*, please contact the H.L. Bonham Regional Development & Tourism Center at (276) 646-3306 or info@visitvirginiamountains.com today.