

# Annual Work Plan 2008

## Who and How:

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is the state-designated tourism planning and development agency for the cities of Central Falls, Pawtucket, Woonsocket, and the towns of Cumberland, Lincoln, North Smithfield, Smithfield, Burrillville and Glocester, Rhode Island.

The Tourism Council is a not-for-profit Rhode Island and United States registered organization incorporated in 1985. It produces Program-Driven-Marketing-Capability to the tourism development requirements for the Blackstone Valley.

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council serves Rhode Island and the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor communities with resilient, sustainable Geotourism based, whole place-making tourism development programs and policies that integrate with resident needs, and enhance and protect the character, environment, culture, heritage, aesthetics and businesses of the Blackstone River Valley.

## General Programs and Projects

### Ongoing

- Operate M/V Blackstone Valley Explorer in Central Falls and Woonsocket
- Provide handicapped accessibility to "Waterfire" on the M/V Spirit of the Blackstone Valley river boat
- Continue working with St. Ann's Arts and Cultural Center's Board of Directors on their initiative to develop the Center
- Continue to develop plans for a Blackstone River Science and Exploration Center in the City of Central Falls as funding becomes available
- Operate the Samuel Slater Canal Boat as a Bed and Breakfast; also, offering tea tours and private river tours
- Manage the Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament at Crystal Lake Golf Course in Burrillville
- Operate Blackstone Valley Scenic Railway Fall Foliage Excursion to Putnam Connecticut on the Providence and Worcester Railroad Train departing from Ann and Hope in Cumberland. Work to implement a Spring trip.
- Operate 12 Blackstone Valley Polar Express rail excursions in November from Ann and Hope in Cumberland
- Coordinate the Blackstone Valley Annual Dinner Reception and Auction
- Participate in the Blackstone Partnership
- Continue to work with Smithfield on their "Plan to Plan" initiative
- Work with the Pawtucket Foundation on their initiatives to limit the delays and public-relations impact of the Pawtucket River Bridge reconstruction
- Celebrate United Nations World Tourism Day in September
- Manage the final year of the "Footsteps in History" event utilizing ACHP Preserve America resources
- Continue building the Blackstone Valley Tourism Network with the tourism sector in the Blackstone Valley.
- Develop the American Heritage River Guide Program
- Manage and grow the Rhode Island Chinese Dragon Boat and Taiwan Day Festivals in Pawtucket
- Assist production of the Colombian Independence Day Festival in Pawtucket

- Manage the Rhode Island Rivers Day celebration and RiverSing on the Blackstone River with the Mixed Magic Theater
- Continue to offer paid advertising opportunities in the back-lit displays at the Visitor Center in Pawtucket
- Continue to work with colleges and universities educating students in tourism planning and development
- Present and grow the 19 annual "Travel Experiences" Trade Show
- Continue to develop additional itineraries for the Blackstone Valley Elderhostel program
- Promote the Blackstone Valley Canoe and Bicycle Trail programs
- Work to reformat the Water Cruises of Rhode Island financial responsibilities
- Support tourism development programs for all the Blackstone Valley communities
- Continue to develop promotional public relations programs for the Blackstone Valley communities
- Work with the Rhode Island Committee on Agricultural Promotion and Education to further the efforts of Blackstone Valley agricultural sites
- Chair the Tour Rhode Island "There's No Place Like Home" event
- Collaborate with federal, state, local, non-profit or for-profit agencies for the benefit of tourism programs in the communities in the Blackstone Valley
- Participate in conferences and educational opportunities that benefit the mission of the Tourism Council and educate the staff to better serve the Blackstone Valley
- Present at the "Business Enterprises for Sustainable Tourism Educational Network Think Tank
- Continue to develop additional interpretive educational programs for the Blackstone Valley Explorer boat in Central Falls and Woonsocket
- Continue to work with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission with required Non-Governmental-Organization assisted projects
- Work with City of Central Falls to complete the Central Falls Landing Project
- Work with City of Central Falls to finalize repair of the Landing Docks to bring them to full accessibility
- Continue to work with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation and local communities in the design and construction of the Manville, Lincoln, Pawtucket, North Smithfield and Woonsocket Landings to complete the Blackstone River and Canal Navigation and Transportation System
- Continue to work with Providence Piers Company in decreasing the balance on the M/V Hope
- Continue working with the VISTA program to develop the Keep the Blackstone Valley Beautiful as part of the "Keep America Beautiful" program
- Promote the "VolunTourism" program for the Blackstone Valley
- Continue development of Eventblackstone.com web site
- Continue to work with the City of Woonsocket on their Commuter Rail study
- Work with the Preservation Society of Smithfield on the restoration of the Smithfield Bank building
- Continue working with the Woonsocket Main Street Riverfront Initiative
- Develop further the Blackstone Valley Advertising Collaborative
- Develop further the Blackstone Valley Visitor Information Distribution Services
- Continue the "Events of the Week" program for the Blackstone Valley of Rhode Island
- Implement recommendations of the Sbest United Nations World Tourism Organization Certification
- Grow further the Blackstone Valley Visitor Information Distribution System
- Work to insure that the proposed privately operated construction and debris facilities proposed for Pawtucket and Cumberland find more suitable locations for their operations
- Execute at least one down-river cruise from Pawtucket on board the Bay Queen
- Increase the amount of schools involved in the "Return the Warmth" campaign for the Blackstone Valley

- Expand volunteer support at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Lincoln
- Continue to manage the Blackstone River State Park Visitor Services Center
- Develop the Blackstone Alert program along the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor
- Continue to support the Blackstone Valley Celtic Festival produced by Pendragon of Cumberland
- Develop the program and marketing plan for the Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory
- Promote the International Restaurant Brochure in conjunction with the Rhode Island Foundation, DiningQuest, the Small Business Administration, Bryant College, Sovereign Bank and Verizon Communications containing ethnic authentic markets, bakeries and restaurants
- Enhance the Tour of the Week program for Group Tour Operators interested in visiting the Blackstone Valley
- Work with the Providence and Worcester Railroad to insure wheelchair accessibility aboard the Blackstone Valley Scenic Railroad tours
- Work with the Town of Cumberland to market their publication: "Cumberland by the Blackstone"
- Work, in conjunction with the State of Rhode Island and the regional tourism district managers, to promote Rhode Island as a tourism destination
- Work, in conjunction with the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor and the Blackstone Valley Chamber Visitor Bureau, to promote the Blackstone Valley as a destination
- Attend the National Tour Association and American Bus Association Trade Exchanges and other appropriate organized Group Travel Exchanges
- Work with the Valley Breeze newspaper to produce the Official Blackstone Valley Visitor Guide
- Work with Navigator Magazine to produce the Official Blackstone Valley Map
- Enrich the Blackstonevalleytourismcouncil.org website
- Analyze the Tourblackstone.com website
- Work in concert with the RIEDC Tourism Division to develop a Satellite Tourism Accounting System for Rhode Island
- Promote winning the Ulysses Prize

## New

- Launch the Blackstone Valley on-line shop
- Launch PictureBlackstone.com the digital photo archive of and for the Blackstone Valley
- Seek a new method of operating the three Blackstone Valley riverboats that will be in the best financial interest of the Tourism Council and the Blackstone Valley
- Implement the Civic Tourism Laboratory in January
- Implement the Resilient Tourism Laboratory in May
- Implement the Civic Tourism II Conference in October
- Launch Creativeblackstone.com
- Partner with Town of Cumberland and Cumberland Office of Children as an educational support partner as they develop a new educational program.
- Work with the Cities of Central Falls, Pawtucket and the Town of Cumberland on the Broad Street Regeneration program funded by Preserve America
- Work as one of the Resilient Partners defining and developing Resilient Tourism
- Develop a Manufacturers' Tour of the Blackstone Valley in collaboration with the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation and the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce
- Launch Blackstone Valley "Carbon Footprint Campaign" for visitors, businesses and residents to make the Blackstone Valley more environmentally conscious

- Launch the Blackstone Valley Green Guide
- Work with the State of Rhode Island Department of Education in providing Professional Development for teachers with the RIDE Summer Institute.
- Support legislation "No Child Left Inside" sponsored by Senator Reed for Environmental Education Programming.
- Work with the Town of Cumberland to develop their first Riverfront Development Plan
- Develop Sam Patch Day in Pawtucket
- Certify the 9 Blackstone Valley communities into the "Keep America Beautiful" program
- Develop the tour "How to Discover the Blackstone River Valley"
- Purchase the Nexgen Informational Kiosks for the Blackstone Valley of Rhode Island in the Blackstone Valley Visitor Centers
- Continue to research the viability of the Blackstone Valley Cajun Music Festival
- Work to create a Blackstone Valley Recreation/Environmental/Historic/Cultural and Artist Network
- Develop second conference to understand the flood situations along the Blackstone River so as to mitigate future damage
- Work with MBA students to create a printed history of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Develop a long-term debt-reduction program
- Dispose of surplus property
- Pilot and develop the Dunn Foundation "View Finders Visual Pollution" Program to area school teachers
- Develop a Blackstone Valley Eco-lab Discovery Program and other educational programs to include the vital river ecosystem and river history
- Work with partners, such as the Rhode Island Audubon Society, to develop interpretive programs to engage and educate the general public to the historic, natural and cultural resources in the Valley and to develop new and innovative experiences aboard the Blackstone Valley Explorer

## **International**

- Continue international development of tourism partnerships with England, Brazil, Taiwan, China and Canada
- Participate in promotion of the Blackstone Valley internationally with the Discover New England program, and the Official New England Information Center in Quebec
- Work closely with the United Nations World Tourism Organization on their sustainable tourism initiatives
- Work with George Washington University on their "S.A.V.E." initiative

## **Front-line Visitor Service**

- Continue management of the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket
- Continue to coordinate the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Visitor Services at the Blackstone River Visitor Center on the northbound side of Interstate Route 295
- Implement hospitality training to all personnel and volunteers

## **Geotourism Planning**

- Complete development plan for Central Falls Riverfront revitalization
- Update 1992 Blackstone Valley Comprehensive Regional Tourism Plan
- Develop the Rhode Island Sustainable Tourism Planning Project
- Develop a Blackstone River Science and Exploration Center

- Work with George Washington University's S.A.V.E concept, based on the Geotourism principles, developed by the National Geographic Society: Scientific, Academic, Experiential and Educational tourism markets to create wealth while conserving natural resources and stimulating culture in the Blackstone Valley, as they build upon the Council's Elderhostel and RiverClassroom programs
- Continue investigating, with the National Geographic Society, ways to develop a MapGuide to highlight the natural, historic and cultural assets of the Valley
- Continue to develop the World Tourism Organization's VolunTourism concept to create agricultural tourism location opportunities
- Promote the earned Sbest Certification earned from the United Nations World Tourism Organization's "Best Certification for Excellence in Destination Management "

### **Legislative Actions**

- Collaborate with Rhode Island tourism districts to maintain current or better form of tourism district management that supports local community input in decision-making
- Using private funds contract a government affairs agent to assist in matters relating to state legislative affairs

### **Headquarters Operations**

- Continue to upgrade office technology