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Happy Valley Adventure Bureau, Centre County Commissioners announce 2020-21 Tourism Grant recipients

STATE COLLEGE, PA, June 25, 2020 – The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB) and Centre County Commissioners this afternoon announced the first round of 2020-21 Tourism Grant recipients at a news conference at the Centre County Visitor Center.

This year, the HVAB received 61 requests from 56 organizations totaling more than \$1.4 million.

HVAB President and CEO Fritz Smith said that due to the impact of COVID-19 on lodging tax receipts, the HVAB, Commissioners and the Tourism Grant Committee made the decision to award grants in two phases. The first allocation totals \$387,300. Most applicants seeking funding for 2021 events will have their requests considered and announced later this fall.

“It goes without saying that this has been an across-the-board challenging year for the HVAB and its members,” Smith acknowledged. “The shutdown, combined with the cancelation of major events and the still uncertain future of others has significantly impacted our lodging industry and with it, vital tourism promotion revenue streams.

“The Tourism Grant Committee faced a difficult task in light of historic funding requests. I applaud members for the thoughtful discussion that went into determining how funds would best be allocated this year, and for a strong commitment to keeping our establishments, events and attractions strong for local residents, and prepared for the eventual return of visitors to Happy Valley.”

Centre County Commissioners also acknowledged the challenges confronting this year’s grant program.

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“The Centre County Board of Commissioners thank the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau for their dedication to our community during this challenging and difficult time,” said Chairman Michael Pipe on behalf of himself and Commissioners Mark Higgins and Steve Dershem. “These grants will go to great use to help organizations continue to build partnerships and relationships even as we continue to social distance. We applaud all the groups that were awarded grants and wish them much success in the future.”

HVAB Board of Directors Chairman Edward Tubbs, Chief Operating Officer for Hospitality Asset Management Company, said recipients – which include 16 new or returning applicants after a year or more’s absence – represent projects of all sizes and scopes from all areas of the county.

“This year’s recipients include an interesting array of initiatives and events that collectively speak to the broad appeal of Happy Valley’s assets and attractions,” he said. “I want to thank all grant recipients for their ongoing contributions to a quality of life that resonates with residents and visitors alike.”

Several grant recipients, including two first-time awardees, were highlighted at the news conference. Those organizations included State College Borough/MLK Jr. Plaza; Centre County Farmland Trust; Moshannon Valley Veteran’s Memorial; and The Crooked House.

State College Borough received \$1,000 on behalf of the Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza to establish and market the plaza as a place for multi-cultural and other events, starting with a virtual tour in light of the ongoing pandemic.

“Since the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza opened in 2017 in downtown State College, it has been the host to many community events that have inspired and educated our community on diversity, equity and inclusion,” said State College Borough Assistant to the Manager Douglas Shontz. “The plaza has truly lived up to its mission in keeping Dr. King’s legacy alive in State College. The State College Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Plaza is excited to receive this grant to help spread the word about the plaza and become an educational space online.”

Shontz said the borough plans to utilize the funds to create a 360 interactive digital tour to highlight all the unique features of the plaza and allow those, especially now, a chance to visit it from the comfort of their home.

“On behalf of the MLK, Jr., Plaza, we extend our appreciation and gratitude for the awarding of the HVAB Tourism grant. The Borough’s vision in creating the MLK, Jr. Plaza has provided a place and space for the community to remember, reflect, renew and reach out, while offering opportunities for healing and growth among our diverse population,” said Barbara W. Farmer, Chairperson, Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza Committee. “Thanks to the generosity of your grant, the Plaza committee will be able to enhance its outreach into the local and surrounding communities through various mediums and increase a wider community footprint and availability of the plaza’s space.”

The Centre County Farmland Trust will use its grant to help create mini-tours to showcase Happy Valley’s farms and agritourism-related sites.

“The Centre County Farmland Trust is excited to be partnering with the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau to put a new spin on our annual Centre County Farm Tour, where folks can get to know the hands and lands that feed us,” said Jennifer Shuey, President of the CCFT Board of Directors. “We will be highlighting several self-guided and drivable farm routes around the county to showcase just some of our beautiful and productive farms, delicious farm-to-table eateries, bountiful farmers markets, and more.”

Funding for the Moshannon Valley Veteran’s Memorial will be used to help purchase five highway signs from the PA Tourism Signing Trust to raise awareness about the memorial to visitors and those traveling through Phillipsburg.

HVAB grant funding will help The Crooked House in Milesburg complete and market a public sculpture that will create a new focal point for visitors to Homecoming Park in the center of the historic community.

“We are very grateful for this recognition and assistance from the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau,” said Crooked House Creative Director Benjamin Fehl. “The Crooked House is one of many culturally valuable local arts organizations that constitute an important part of life in Centre County. This grant award acknowledges the importance of the arts in drawing many visitors to our region.”

The following organizations received phase 1 funding:

Bellefonte Art Museum -- \$20,000

State Theatre -- \$25,000

Moshannon Valley Veteran’s Memorial - \$1,000

Centre County Farmland Trust -- \$5,000

Centre Bike -- \$7,000

PA Chamber Orchestra -- \$3,000

Clearwater Conservancy -- \$10,000

PSU – Centre Stage -- \$7,500

PSU – Centre for the Performing Arts -- \$4,000

The Crooked House -- \$5,000

State College Borough (MLK Plaza) - \$1,000

Howard Volunteer Fire Department - \$2,000

Bellefonte Inter-Valley Chamber -- \$1,000

Friends of the PA Military Museum -- \$6,500

People’s Choice Festival -- \$3,500

Nittany Lion Aquatic Club -- \$12,000

Bryce Jordan Center -- \$7,500

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Nittany Mountain Biking Association (Harvest Fields Trail) - \$15,000

Rowland Theatre – \$10,000

Centre Region Parks & Recreation -- \$5,000
Nittany Valley Symphony -- \$7,000
PA Parks & Forest (Friends of Rothrock) -- \$12,000
Aaronsburg Civic Club (Dutch Fall Festival) -- \$3,000
First Night State College -- \$5,500
Pine Grove Farmers Market -- \$1,800
PSU – Arboretum -- \$10,000
Centre County Library & Historical Museum -- \$12,000
Lemont Village Association -- \$2,500
Discovery Space -- \$10,000
PSU – Palmer Museum of Art -- \$10,000
Central PA Festival of the Arts -- \$5,000
Grange Encampment & Fair -- \$20,000
Downtown Bellefonte, Inc. -- \$6,000
Mountaintop Swimming Pool -- \$5,000
Gold Basket -- \$1,500
Centre County Historical Society -- \$7,000
Centre County Historical Society -- \$6,000
Central PA 4th Fest -- \$25,000
Downtown State College Improvement District -- \$25,000
The Rivet at Discovery Space -- \$2,500
Rhoneymeade -- \$5,000
PSU – Centre Film Festival -- \$7,000
Historic Bellefonte, Inc. -- \$40,000

An additional 10 Tourism Grant applications will be considered for funding in November.

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About the Tourism Grant program

Grant recipients are selected by the Tourism Grant Review Committee based on an application process, and are required to use the funding to support projects and advertising designed to attract more visitors to Centre County and enhance the tourism experience. The Tourism Grant program was initiated in 2002, and to date, has provided more than \$5.5 million to nonprofit groups and private sector entities. The funding for the grant program is generated by the Centre County Lodging Tax.