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HVAB, Commissioners announce 2022-23 Tourism Grant recipients

State College, PA, June 23, 2022 – The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB), in conjunction with the Centre County Board of Commissioners, today announced the recipients of 2022-23 Tourism Grants at a news conference at Philipsburg’s historic Rowland Theatre.

The HVAB received a record number of 75 applications for a total funding ask of more than \$2.97 million. In the main funding round, 60 projects from 56 applicants were awarded \$636,900 in grant funding, with six applications tabled for consideration this fall. Those applications are for events taking place in spring 2023. The total grant pool is \$670,000.

“Traditional events are back, new ones are returning, and activity is picking up, as the grant program itself continues to rebound. That is certainly reflected in this year’s requests for funding,” said HVAB President and CEO Fritz Smith. “While this undoubtedly put some added pressure on the Tourism Grant Review Committee in making its funding decisions, it is wonderful to see not only a return to normal, but growth in our tourism product.”

Centre County Commissioner Higgins acknowledged that both nonprofits and the tourism industry in Centre County have experienced difficult times.

“These tourism grants are helping local nonprofits and other organizations enhance our tourism offerings, which in turn improves the quality of life in Centre County,” he said.

Higgins congratulated the tourism grant recipients, and thanked the board and staff of the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau for their hard work in the process.

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Smith said the program saw 15 **first-time applicants, and a handful of applicants applying for the first time in a few years. New projects that received funding include plans to bring a Comic Con event to Happy Valley in February 2023; support for Art in the Orchard at Way Fruit Farm during a robust weekend of events in Happy Valley; and the restoration/preservation of historical assets in the county.

“The Tourism Grant program has a long history of assisting event organizers, performing arts groups and other entities to the benefit visitors and those who live here,” said Commissioner Steve Dershem. “Now more than ever, the program is providing necessary funding boosts to help these groups move beyond the challenges of the last few years and face a brighter future.”

Nine projects that were not awarded grants are either being considered for funding by other sources, notably the Happy Valley Sports and Entertainment Commission, or did not meet the intent of the Tourism Grant program.

Three successful grant applicants spoke about their projects at the news conference.

A \$25,000 grant will help fund the replacement of the roof over the auditorium at Rowland Theatre in Philipsburg. In addition to being a historical gem in the county, the theatre is home to the growing Centre Film Festival, now in its fourth year.

“We always have a list of building projects ranked in order of importance, and when we complete the one at the top of the list, the next one jumps up,” said Rowland Theatre Board member Rebecca Inlow, who noted that replacement of a leaking roof over our auditorium, which will cost approximately \$78,000, was not on the list.

“We received the bad news late last year about the necessity of the replacement and had to put this project at the top of the list,” she said. “As we move through our second century, we are very grateful to the HVAB for helping to ensure that we can complete this very necessary work and keep our story going.”

The Nittany Mountain Bike Association was awarded \$16,000 for phase 2 of the Harvest Fields Community Trails project, which includes the development of a skills park.

“The Nittany Mountain Biking Association, in partnership with dozens of local businesses, organizations, and individuals, is excited to begin construction of the Harvest Fields Community Trails Bike Park,” said Josh Stapleton, a NMBA Board member. “Once complete, the HFCT bike park will be a unique-to-the-region destination providing progressive and fun experiences for riders of all skill levels.”

Stapleton said the HFCT is an outdoor community space that brings people together to enjoy the natural beauty of central Pennsylvania, improve fitness and overall well-being, and provide unique mountain biking experiences.

“NMBA is grateful to be a recipient of a 2022 HVAB Tourism Grant,” he said. “The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau has been a key supporter of the HFCT project, and completion of the bike park will provide yet another compelling reason to visit Happy Valley!”

The Roland Curtin Foundation received \$19,500 for Tourist Oriented Directional (TOD) signage on Route 150, wayfinding signs on local roads, and interpretative signage on the grounds of Eagle Iron Works and Curtin Village.

Sue Hannegan, President of the Roland Curtin Foundation Board, said the Foundation is “extremely appreciative” of the grant funding for efforts to preserve and interpret the historic site near Milesburg.

“In the coming year, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission will divest itself of this historic site, creating both challenges and opportunities for the Foundation as it works to transition the property back to their ownership,” she said. “This grant award allows history to be told, preserved and exhibited. It supports our objectives to keep the site open to the public, and enhance the cultural opportunities and economic vitality of the last and most complete charcoal-fired, iron smelting operation in the Commonwealth for the benefit of all populations.”

Smith applauded the work of the independent TRGC Review Committee, which makes the grant funding recommendations to the HVAB Board of Directors for approval.

“It’s a daunting task,” he said. “We appreciate the thoughtful consideration that goes into reviewing the applications each year, and the collective desire of the HVAB, commissioners and the committee to fund as many worthwhile projects as possible.”

Since 2003-04, the Tourism Grant program has awarded nearly \$6.6 million to projects, events and initiatives that grow and enhancement Happy Valley’s tourism product.

Centre County Commissioner Chair Michael Pipe said the impactful partnership between the Centre County Commissioners and the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau continues to benefit the many groups that shape our vibrant tourism economy.

“This year, hundreds of thousands of dollars will be invested towards encouraging and inspiring folks to visit and enjoy Centre County,” he said.

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2022-23 Tourism Grant Recipients (first round):

- ****Spring Township, \$6,000** for engineering costs and creation of a master site plan for baseball fields, basketball courts, walking paths and a playground
- **Centre County Library & Historical Museum, \$10,000** for physical improvements to the Miles Potter-Humes House, where historical research is performed

- **Bellefonte Art Museum, \$9,000** to market the museum and its exhibits
- **Bellefonte Art Museum, \$15,000** to help fund an interactive education component of the Underground Railroad exhibit
- ****David Boal Tavern, \$2,500** to restore the historic tavern, with a goal of ultimately combining visits to the Boalsburg Heritage Museum
- **Discovery Space, \$14,000** to market events and general programming
- **Happy Valley Women's Cycling, \$15,000** to market the Seasons of Rothrock race series, formerly the Rothrock Grit Gravel Grinder
- **State College Borough, \$2,500** to help market events at the MLK Jr. Plaza in downtown State College
- **State College Borough, \$7,000** to help replace the tables in MLK Jr. Plaza, which will increase seating capacity
- ****The Makery, \$2,500** to market facility and offerings
- **PA Chamber Orchestra, \$3,000** in support of marketing PCO performances
- **Snow Shoe Rails to Trails Association, \$7,000** for printing and distribution of a trail map
- ****Bellefonte Cemetery Association, \$4,000** to begin a five-year plan to develop digital maps, brochures, audio tours and guided tours at the historical Union Cemetery
- **Mountaintop Swimming Pool Association, \$12,000** to help refurbish the baby pool, main pool and construct a concessions shed
- **Wildlife for Everyone Foundation, \$5,500** to help support the Great Outdoor Picnic
- **Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts, \$35,000** to help market the event
- **Moshannon Valley EMS (Philipsburg Heritage Days), \$12,000** to market the festival
- **The Crooked House, \$10,000** to help finish the Crooked House public art project in Milesburg

- **Nittany Mountain Bike Association, \$16,000** to help complete Phase 2 of the Harvest Fields Community Trails project, which includes construction of a skills park
- **Nittany Performing Arts Center, \$10,000** to support the architectural design of the building
- ****Snow Shoe Park Corporation, \$6,000** for metal door replacement on the grounds of the Snow Shoe Carnival
- **Howard Volunteer Fire Company, \$3,000** to market the annual Punkin' Chunkin' Festival
- **Columbus Chapel & Boal Mansion Museum, \$15,000** to help complete the restoration of the Boal Barn Theatre
- ****Happy Valley Comic Convention LLC, \$5,000** to market a new "comic con" event that will be held at Nittany Valley Sports Centre in February 2023
- **Central Pennsylvania 4th Fest, \$20,000** to help market the event
- **The Arboretum at Penn State, \$7,500** to help promote the facility, programs and events, including the Pumpkin Festival
- **Roland Curtin Foundation, \$19,500** for TODS, way-finding and interpretive signage at Eagle Iron Works and Curtin Village
- **First Night State College, \$5,000** to market the New Year's Eve event
- **Downtown Bellefonte Inc., \$20,000** to help market signature events, including Bellefonte Under the Lights, the Winter Market and Friday in the Fonte
- **Penn State Center for the Performing Arts, \$10,000** to help market the center
- **Penn State Center for the Performing Arts, \$7,000** for a website enhancement/analytics project
- **Route 45 Getaways, \$10,000** to help promote the Route 45 Corridor event, July 29 to Aug. 7
- **Palmer Museum of Art, \$10,000** to help market the museum as it celebrates its Golden Anniversary
- ****Krislund, \$7,000** to help market the facility, which serves as a summer camp, year-round retreat with conference facilities

- **Millheim Borough, \$10,000** to support the Millheim Walkfest of Art & Music, June 24-26
- **Centre Region Parks and Recreation, \$5,000** for educational displays at the Donald Hamer Visitor Center at Millbrook Marsh Nature Center
- **Rowland Theatre, \$25,000** to replace the auditorium roof at the historic theatre
- **People's Choice Festival, \$10,000** to market the event, July 14-17 at Grange Park
- **Penn's Woods Music Fest, \$2,800** to market four classical music concerts and two jazz concerts
- **Centre County Grange Fair and Encampment, \$25,000** to market Grange Fair
- **Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation, \$3,000** to support Education Programs at Black Moshannon State Park
- ****Centre Model Railroaders, \$5,000** to support the creation of a public, interactive teaching model railroad layout at Discovery Space
- **Rooted Farmstead, \$3,000** for visitor enhancements to the cut flower farm, including outdoor lounge seating, and a natural windbreak and hedgerow
- **Central PA Tasting Trail, \$5,000** to help market the trail, including the printing of passports and brochures
- **Central PA Tasting Trail, \$10,000** to help market four events: Arts Fest, Summer Craft Beverage Expo, a fall event in Boalsburg and a Scavenger Hunt
- ****Nittany Valley Symphony, \$3,600** to market performances
- **Historic Bellefonte Inc., \$40,000** to help support signature events
- **Centre County Historical Society, \$11,000** to reprint the Centre County Explorers passports and driving maps
- **Tempest Productions, \$12,000** to help support a new initiative – *Sundays in the Park with Tempest*
- ****Way Fruit Farm, \$7,000** to help market Art in the Orchard, July 14-16
 - **State Theatre, \$30,000** to help market events, and redevelop the attic as event space

- **Penn State Centre Stage, \$10,000** to help promote the 2022-23 season
- **CentreBike, \$2,000** to renew the license with Ride with GPS and add bike routes to the app
- **Philipsburg Revitalization Corporation, \$7,000** to help market events and brand Philipsburg as “The Wilderness City”
- **MTB50, Inc., \$6,000** to promote the Tussey Mountainback 50 Mile Relay and Ultramarathon
- **Potter Township, \$6,000** for improvements to the baseball fields off of Route 322
- **Centre Film Festival, \$18,000** to support the Fourth Annual Centre Film Festival
- **Lucky Dog Management, \$20,000** to promote the Happy Valley Music Festival
- **Bryce Jordan Center, \$7,500** to provide incentives to event promoters
- **Bryce Jordan Center, \$10,000** to market events