

Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation Annual Report for 2011

PREFACE

Section 2.2-2736 of the Code of Virginia requires the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation to submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly. Each year, beginning in 2012, the Foundation is to submit the report for publication according to the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems and posting on the General Assembly's website. The following information covers the Foundation's activities during calendar year 2011.



The General Assembly established the Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission by Chapters 654 and 659 of the 2008 Acts of Assembly. The provisions of the Code of Virginia establishing the Commission expired on July 1, 2011. However, the 2011 General Assembly through Chapters 521 and 548 established the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation (the Foundation) to serve as successor to the Commission. The purposes of the Foundation are similar to those of the Commission. The Foundation encompasses the same 19-county and three-city area of southwestern Virginia. The 22 members of the board of trustees represent state, local and regional governments; state and local tourism, educational, cultural and music organizations and the Virginia General Assembly.

The Foundation is a body politic and corporate. Its purpose is to encourage economic development within the region by expending cultural heritage ventures and initiatives related to tourism and other asset-based enterprises. By working with existing ventures such as The Crooked Road Music Heritage Trail and Round the Mountain Artisan Network, the Foundation promotes new entrepreneurial and employment opportunities that draw on the region's rich and distinctive cultural heritage. The recently-opened Heartwood Artisan Gateway in Abingdon has become the focal point for the Foundation's efforts to draw state, regional and national attention to the music, culture and artisanal products of this portion of the state.



The opening of the Heartwood Gateway coincided with the transition from the Heritage Commission to the new Foundation. The law establishing the Foundation took effect on July 1, 2011; construction on Heartwood was completed in June 2011. Governor McDonnell formally opened the facility on July 21, 2011, an event timed in conjunction with a number of exhibitions from all localities within the region. In the months since its opening, ten localities have had special days at during which they

exhibited their music, crafts and food using Heartwood as a showcase. These community showcases will continue in the future.

Foundation Activities During CY 2011

The primary activities of the new Foundation during 2011 revolved around the completion and startup of the Heartwood Artisan Center. During its first year of operations, the Foundation made significant progress in the following areas:

Operations and Marketing

- Guest Services, Inc., the national hospitality management firm based in Virginia, is now managing all food and retail operations at Heartwood. The company has hired thirty employees from southwest Virginia to meet the needs of visitors to the new facility
- Virginia-based Charles R. Ryan and Associates (CRA) continues to serve as the marketing consultant assisting in the implementation of the marketing plan. The overall marketing plan for the Heartwood facility was developed in cooperation with the Virginia Tourism Corporation, which has continued to provide its assistance to the facility.
- Alisa Bailey, President and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation, the state entity responsible for developing and implementing programs benefitting travel-related businesses and consumers, chairs the marketing committee for the Foundation and is coordinating marketing efforts.
- Public awareness of the Artisan Center and The Crooked Road was greatly enhanced during the summer thanks to the appearance of extensive articles in the *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Smithsonian* magazine. *USA Today* recently named Heartwood among “10 great places to shop at crafts galleries”. Other earned media includes several placements in the *Washington Post* as well as press coverage in numerous regional and international publications.

Products

- The Artisan Center continues to use a juried approach to select the crafts and products displayed or offered for sale, assuring that they accurately represent the distinctive regional culture and resources of Southwest Virginia. In addition, all providers of goods and services associated with Heartwood are encouraged to draw on local resources that promote the regional economy and employment. The following items are a result of this approach:
 - Six craft jury sessions have resulted in the approval of the work of 253 artisans for product placement in Heartwood.

- Products from one cidery, ten wineries and four coffee roasters have been juried in and have product available on site and in retail.
- More than 50 book titles from Southwest Virginia authors have been approved and are on sale.
- Performances from 85 Southwest Virginia musicians and bands are available on 130 CDs available at Heartwood.
- Instruments made by 12 Southwest Virginia luthiers are available.
- A Lee County apparel-manufacturing firm is providing apparel.
- Overall, Southwest Virginia artisans and musicians have received \$576,000 because of the Heartwood venture.

Music and Music Education

- The Foundation was instrumental in planning and promoting a regional music tour of “Roots of American Music” (ROAM) in historical theatres through the region. This established a precedent to continue providing theatrical and music tours throughout Southwest Virginia by utilizing this network of venues.
- “The Crooked Road Sampler”, an anthology of music rooted in Southwest Virginia, has been completed and offered for sale at Heartwood. As with other aspects of product selection at Heartwood, the groups and individual musicians selected for inclusion on this recording were identified through a juried approach. Over 1000 copies of this CD have been sold at Heartwood.
- The Crooked Road’s Heartwood Music Series has provided a showcase for traditional music venues and youth music from communities throughout the region. These events have introduced new audiences at Heartwood to array of music offerings available in the region and given guests a sample of what they could experience within their home locations. By featuring different youth music groups, guests may also experience some of the tremendous young talent in the region.
- The Foundation, in conjunction with The Crooked Road, has established a youth music education program to preserve and promote the traditional music of the Southwest Virginia culture in both K-12 and community college settings, incorporating the Standards of Learning as well as after school programs.

Other Ventures

Although completion and startup of the Heartwood Artisan Gateway was the major task before the Foundation, it has been or is currently engaged in a number of other related activities promoting regional economic and community development.

- The Foundation has facilitated meetings to develop economic development initiatives along the Clinch River corridor in Southwest Virginia. These sessions have attracted broad-based participation from an array of individuals, businesses and organizations that could benefit from such an initiative. These have included private outfitters and guides, environmental groups, local government representatives, tourism and economic development officials, and state government representatives.
- Filming continues for the community videography program in which 15 localities will be the subject of videos on the Southwest Virginia website; the City of Bristol's community video is complete.
- The Foundation has been active in promoting and providing technical assistance in the revitalization of downtowns throughout the region, transforming downtown Southwest Virginia into a showplace of the creative economy aimed at attracting high tech entrepreneurs and businesses. During 2011, Wytheville, Saint Paul, Haysi and Glade Spring have been active in planning for their downtown revitalizations.

Recognizing the Foundation's Role in Regional Economic Development

- Virginia First Lady Maureen McDonnell recently awarded Heartwood with the First Lady's Opportunity Hall of Fame award for economic development. The program, which Mrs. McDonnell launched in 2010, recognizes programs, activities, organizations and individuals embodying the ideal of creating a Commonwealth of Opportunity in their communities.
- Heartwood also received the Regional Impact Award from the Blue Ridge Travel Association.

Looking Ahead--Foundation Activities for CY 2012

With the launch of Heartwood behind it, the Foundation has set its sights on future activities intended to affirm its continued presence as a catalyst for economic and community development within the region. Toward this end, some thirty-six localities have made an annual investment of financial support. Looking ahead, the Foundation has joined in inaugurating "Friends of Southwest Virginia" as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that will manage revenues, gifts, and grants to Heartwood and distribute financial support to Heartwood, 'Round the Mountain, The Crooked Road and, potentially, other cultural heritage entities.