

**Southwest Virginia
Cultural Heritage Foundation
Annual Report for 2014**

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 2014.

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 created the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation (the Foundation) to operate as successor to the Commission. The Foundation encompasses the same 19-county and three-city area of southwestern Virginia as did the former Commission. Similarly, the Foundation is pursuing the same purpose as its predecessor organization: that is, the encouragement of economic development of Southwest Virginia through the expansion of cultural and natural heritage ventures promoting entrepreneurial and employment opportunities across the region. 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 legislature created the Foundation as a body politic and corporate to serve as the state's catalyst for regional economic development, drawing upon and enhancing the impact of resources available through a variety of state and regional governmental and private organizations. It continues to advance its purposes by working with existing ventures such as The Crooked Road Music Heritage Trail and Round the Mountain Artisan Network in collaborative efforts that promote new entrepreneurial and employment opportunities drawing from the region's rich and distinctive cultural heritage. From its prominent location in Abingdon adjacent Exit 14 on Interstate 81, the Heartwood Artisan Gateway, which has been in operation for nearly four years, 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 Southwest Virginia.



Foundation Activities during CY 2014

The primary activities the Foundation undertook during 2014 involved the expanding role and profitability of the Heartwood Artisan Center, the development of downtowns, cultural and natural assets, and the advancement of other initiatives intended to enhance the Southwest Virginia identity and promote regional economic and community development. The Foundation has played a primary role in the Appalachian Spring initiative. The Foundation was active in the following areas:

Operations and Marketing

To fulfill its mission with respect to the promotion of economic development within Southwest Virginia, the Foundation has pursued a number of strategies intended to increase awareness of Southwest Virginia and Heartwood and associated ventures throughout the region, state and nation. The Foundation has identified the need for a more robust and cohesive effort at marketing and branding the region's cultural and natural heritage assets. It is now following up with actions intended to implement new marketing initiatives.

Marketing

- The Foundation established a broad-based marketing committee to represent and market Southwest Virginia as a coherent and distinctive tourism destination showcasing the region's world class cultural and natural assets. Richard Rose, the director of the Barter Theatre in Abingdon, and Rosa Lee Jude, Tourism Director for the Wytheville Visitor and Convention Bureau chair the committee. The twenty five members of the committee include representatives from state agencies, local and regional governments, tourism professionals, hospitality venues and other private sector parties.
- The Committee approved a regional marketing plan which includes three components: 1) Brand development, 2) Internal (within the region) marketing/consensus building, 3) External marketing and building national/international awareness of Southwest Virginia a distinct, compelling and hospitable destination.
- The Foundation's recent marketing activities include the development and distribution of a bi monthly newsletter, presentations to Boards of Supervisors, Chambers of Commerce, tourism professionals and town representatives in all 19 counties and four cities in the region.

Operations

A 360 degree analysis of all aspects of Heartwood including physical, operational and marketing was conducted during the fall. This involved the creation of an ad hoc committee and completion of an operational analysis conducted by Peter Miller Associates. Outcomes of the 360 analysis include:

- Reformulation of the operational management of Heartwood to install on site management composed of an Operational Manager representing Friends of Southwest Virginia, a Food and Beverage Manager with executive chef credentials, and a Retail Manager.
- The hiring of a dedicated Sales/Marketing representative to increase local area

- awareness of Heartwoods offerings and to generate increase rental and event business, particularly weddings and entertainment.
 - The funding, design and development of a “festival park” on the front lawn of Heartwood.
 - Menu upgrades to utilize local food offerings as close to 100% as possible.
 - Budget Request to the General Assembly to provide annual support to Heartwood operations.
- Guest Services, Inc., of Fairfax, continues to provide overall management support for food and retail operations of Heartwood. The company employs twenty-nine (29) staff members from Southwest Virginia.

Products

Heartwood continues to use a juried approach to select the crafts and products to be displayed or offered for sale, assuring that they accurately represent the distinctive regional culture and resources of Southwest Virginia. In addition, 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:

- Two craft jury sessions were held in 2014 bringing the total number of juried ‘Round the Mountain members to 365. Those members have the opportunity to have their work considered for sale at Heartwood.
- More than \$300,000 has been spent on products in Heartwood from Southwest Virginia artisans and musicians.
- Approximately 218 book titles from Southwest Virginia authors have been approved for sale and are now available.
- A total of 196 CDs featuring Southwest Virginia musicians and bands are available for sale. 676 copies of a special compilation CD featuring 50 of these artists were sold throughout the year.
- Seven Southwest Virginia luthiers have made instruments made available for purchase.
- Logoed apparel from an apparel-manufacturing firm in Lee County is offered for sale.

Music

Music has long been one of the most significant and distinctive components of Southwest Virginia’s cultural heritage. The Foundation has emphasized both music performance and music education, assuring that that the music is not only heard today but also that its enduring legacy is conveyed to future generations.

Music Performance

- The Crooked Road’s Heartwood Music Series showcased communities within the region through their traditional music venues and youth music. By introducing new audiences to “Jams” at Heartwood, guests receive a sampling of what they could experience in venues near their home locations. The series has also provided an opportunity to highlight a variety of different youth music groups and give guests examples of the tremendous young talent in the region.
- Programs in 2014 included:
 - 11 venue showcases which featured 165 musicians attended by 1,320 guests(a 60% increase from 2012)
 - 1 Crooked Road Music Fest featuring 75 musicians and presenters attended by 460 guests(a 53% increase from 2012)
 - 1 Youth Music Festival at Heartwood featuring 191 musicians and presenters attended by 791 guests
 - 12 Sunday Gospel Brunch performances occurred at Heartwood during 2014, which saw a combined attendance of 1,523
 - Folk Soul Revival concert in April to a capacity crowd of apprx. 600 people

Music Education

The Foundation, in conjunction with The Crooked Road, has supported a vigorous program of youth music education, which preserves and promotes the traditional music of the Southwest Virginia culture. It is actively involved at the K-12 level and in higher education through the community colleges; this approach would include incorporation in the Standards of Learning as well as after school programs. Traditional Music Education Programs (TMEP) and activities in 2014 included:

- Publication of *Traditional Music in the Classroom – A Teacher’s Guide*, which is designed to encourage bringing traditional music into the classroom through existing curricula in K-12 through college levels and beyond. 310 of these were distributed throughout the region.
- After-school programs Added 1 new program in Scott County, in addition to *FloydJAMS*, *WiseJAMS – Coeburn/St. Paul*, *WiseJAMS – Big Stone Gap/Appalachia*, and *Dickenson County JAMS*. Total of 350 students served.
- *Teaching on The Crooked Road*, a teacher re-certification course established at Virginia Highlands Community College to provide professional K-12 teachers throughout the region with skills in bringing traditional music into the classroom. 10 teachers trained and recertified in 2014.
- *Youth Music Performance Series* at Heartwood where monthly performances provide a

platform for interaction among young musicians, a professional setting for these musicians to gain valuable performing experience in front of a live audience. 211 youth musicians performed a total of 11 concerts at Heartwood, which were attended by a total of 1,190 people.

- *School Assembly Programs* presented at five schools for over 3,200 students, teachers, and administrators
- The *Youth Music Festival* at Heartwood, which featured 191 musicians in performances and workshops for over 750 attendees. Recent grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), Foundation for Bluegrass Music and D'Addario Foundation have helped support these activities.

Mountains of Music Homecoming

In addition to the regular music performances put on by The Crooked Road at Heartwood, significant planning has been done by TCR and Foundation staff (as well as officials from throughout the region) for a 9-day, region-wide celebration of music and culture: Mountains of Music Homecoming. This event will be in June 2015, but an event of this scale takes significant planning. A marketing firm out of Asheville, NC—Market Connections--has been hired to help develop marketing materials and promote the event. All told, the festival plans to feature around 100 concerts, over 200 musicians, and hundreds of community events and cultural experiences hosted by our towns and cities.

Artisan Outreach

Besides working with the music community of Southwest Virginia, the Foundation actively encourages the participation of the region's artisans in activities that benefit them and broaden community awareness of their skills and products. During the year:

- 389 individuals were actively engaged 'Round the Mountain's educational and outreach activities
- 70 educational and outreach activities were presented throughout the 23 jurisdictions in Southwest Virginia
- A resource guide: *Creative Culture: Ideas for In School Activities and Field Trips in SWVA* was created and distributed to public and private K-12 in Southwest Virginia. The guide provides school administrators with ideas to bring the arts and crafts of the region into the classroom, as well as field trip opportunities focusing on the craft and culture of the region.
- Business resource guides were developed for both artisans and agritourism businesses. These guides provide information about local, regional, and national business and professional development resources available to the artisan community.

- Marketing materials were developed and shared with the artisan community to strengthen and build the `Round the Mountain and Artisan Trails of Southwest Virginia brand.
- A partnership was developed between `Round the Mountain, the Artisan Center of Virginia and Virginia Tourism Corporation to actively promote craft during the national American Craft Week campaign in October

Community Development

The Foundation has actively supported initiatives that aggregate community and other available resources to promote tourism and investment in the region as a whole. By coordinating with the Virginia Tourism Corporation and locally based tourism and economic development entities, the Foundation anticipates promoting the Southwest Virginia brand as an umbrella for all tourism marketing efforts within the region.

- **Appalachian Spring Initiative:** Friends of Southwest Virginia, the nonprofit arm of the Foundation, received \$1,055,000 in grants from three federal agencies through the national Rural Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge project and, via a match, the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission, to plan and implement a sector based, outdoor recreation economic development strategy for Southwest Virginia that consists of:
 - Identifying and connecting 8 major anchor assets: Blue Ridge Parkway, Appalachian Trail, New River, Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area, Clinch River Valley, Breaks Interstate Park, High Knob Recreation Area, and Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail.
 - Promoting the entire Southwest Virginia region as an international destination for outdoor recreation and natural assets.
 - Developing a capital improvement plan for outdoor recreation improvements that will lead to economic development.
 - Connecting the downtowns of communities with outdoor recreation and natural assets in their surrounding area.
 - Develop a true outdoor recreation industry in Southwest Virginia.

Appalachian Spring made significant progress toward meeting the abovementioned goals and objectives in 2014. Two large strategic planning meetings were held at Heartwood in the spring—one focused on marketing, while the other on capital improvements. These were attended by, respectively, 37 and 83 professionals in recreation, tourism, or economic development related fields from all across the region. Appalachian Spring staff have taken leadership roles in downtown and community

development projects in SWVA towns seeking to develop as outdoor recreation gateways and basecamps (See later section). Appalachian Spring staff also assisted 24 businesses in FY13-14, while training (directly and indirectly) 83 entrepreneurs. All told, Appalachian Spring had a role in helping entrepreneurs secure nearly \$900,000 in loan, grant, and award funds. Significant time was spent in 2014 planning—and then hosting—the first annual Southwest Virginia Outdoor Expo. This event was held at Heartwood in September and helped highlight and promote all things related to outdoor recreation in the region. The event featured almost 1,000 visitors and 68 vendors. Late 2014, Appalachian Spring began to seek consultants for both a website and branding campaign. These contracts will begin in 2015.

- **Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI):** The Foundation has increased the Clinch River Valley Initiative and added five working groups: water quality, state park development, access points along the river, downtown revitalization and development of an environmental education center to attract colleges and other students throughout the region and across the country. Foundation and Friends of Southwest Virginia staff has been actively involved in the leadership of these 5 work groups. CRVI's mission also coincides with Appalachian Spring, as the Clinch River is one of the 8 major anchor and project areas for this initiative. Some of the major accomplishments of CRVI during 2014 include: the production and circulation of The Clinch map/brochure which highlights communities and access points up-and-down the Clinch River; continued access point development in Cleveland, Old Castlewood, and Dungannon; signage and informational kiosks installed at access points up-and-down the Clinch River; support of various new businesses catering to the users of the Clinch River.
- **New River Valley Initiative:** The Foundation is a lead participant in the New River Initiative, trying to find ways to access the entire New River for recreational uses including ways to allow access around dams. As part of this initiative, the work group will be doing community development initiatives with small communities along the New River.
- **Community Videography:** Filming and editing is wrapping up for the community videography program in which 19 localities are the subject of videos on the Southwest Virginia website and YouTube channel. The towns of Abingdon, Appalachia, Big Stone Gap, Coeburn, Floyd, Glade Spring, Haysi, Honaker, Marion, Pound, Pulaski, St. Paul, Stuart, Wise, and Wytheville and cities of Bristol, Galax, Norton, and Radford are the communities with completed videos. This project will not only allow the Foundation to highlight our authentic, distinctive, and alive communities, but also give high-quality videos to these communities for their own marketing and use.
- **Downtown Revitalization:** 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. In 2014, the Foundation (in conjunction with Appalachian Spring) have been actively involved in downtown construction projects in the towns of Cleveland and St. Paul, in addition to downtown development planning projects in the towns of Damascus and Dungannon.

Financial Sustainability

The 2011 legislation that created the Foundation as successor to the former Commission, included among the powers of the Foundation the ability to establish a corporation eligible for exemption from income taxation under § 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code to assist in carrying out the purposes of the Foundation.

- Friends of Southwest Virginia, a 501(c)(3) entity, continues to 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. To enhance its effectiveness of the partnership between Friends and the Foundation, legislation has been requested that would increase the membership of the board of trustees of the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation from 22 to 23 by adding the Chairman of the Friends of Southwest Virginia

Locality Financial Support

- 29 Southwest Virginia localities, including towns as well as counties and cities, have demonstrated their commitment to the efforts of the Foundation through annual investments of financial support. During FY 13-14, they contributed approximately \$186,150 to the work of the Foundation.