



# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

# INTRODUCTION



Tucked in the ancient Appalachian Mountains of Southwest Virginia is a vibrant culture of tradition, food, music and craft. It's a region of spectacular views, abundant outdoor recreation, and rich natural resources. Rooted deep in history, this culture is authentic... distinctive... alive.

Together with the 19 counties, four cities and 54 towns of the region, we're building a sustainable creative economy that preserves, protects and interprets our rich heritage and natural resources, creates jobs, and welcomes both visitors and new businesses to our region every single day.

But that's just the start...

Heartwood, a 29,000-square-foot artisan gateway near the state border just off Interstate 81, introduces Southwest Virginia (SWVA) to the world and serves as a visitor center, retail center for local crafts, music venue and community space, and a restaurant focused on regional flare and flavors.

We are enhancing opportunities for outdoor recreation in our mountains, forests, rivers and lakes – and for appreciation of the incredible diversity of plants and animals that make SWVA home. The region has over \$6 million of outdoor recreation projects planned or in operation.

We are revitalizing our downtowns with artisan studios, coffee shops, community centers, gift, specialty and antique shops and more. There are cultural centers where people can hear live music, find one-of-a-kind treasures, talk to interesting folks and get a home-cooked meal.

For a long time, Southwest Virginia had gone without an identity. Through an extremely detailed branding process, the region is undergoing a regional refresh to help Southwest Virginians love their own land while sharing this brand with the world.

A partner organization, the 'Round the Mountain artisan network helps crafts people build their businesses, learn new skills and share their inspiration. The network publishes 15 artisan trail maps guiding visitors to studios, craft shops, farms, wineries and more throughout the region and maintains a directory of artisans, craft venues and artisanal agriculture and winemaking.

Another partner group, The Crooked Road: Virginia's Music Heritage Trail connects eight major sites where our region's unique music can be heard. Music jams – informal chances to get together and play – happen almost every night of the week across the region. There are festivals, concerts and competitions every weekend in the spring, summer and autumn to celebrate the birth of American music in these mountains.

Southwest Virginia. We're authentic. Distinctive. Alive. And a great place to visit for a week's vacation – or to make a home for a lifetime with a new business.

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# ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

Southwest Virginia includes 19 counties and four independent cities located on the southern and western border of Virginia.

Its 8,600 square miles – more than a fifth of Virginia's total – is located along mountain ridges and in fertile valleys, with two national parks, nine state parks and over a thousand square miles of national and state forests.

It's where you'll find a culture of music and craft that is authentic, distinctive and alive. A natural landscape that is breathtaking in its magnitude and scope. A place where the pace of life is slower and people are friendly. A premiere place for recreation of all kinds.

By capitalizing on the unique qualities of our region, Southwest Virginia utilizes its cultural and natural assets to build a comprehensive, long-term, sustainable economy through initiatives like Heartwood: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Gateway, The Crooked Road, 'Round The Mountain and related cultural heritage organizations and venues that promote entrepreneurial and employment opportunities.

The Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission, established in 2008 by the Virginia General Assembly, works as the lead in developing a creative economy in Southwest Virginia. In 2011, the Commission became the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation. Through a supporting non-profit, the Friends of Southwest Virginia, businesses and individuals help artists, craftspeople, localities, nonprofits and entrepreneurs mobilize and succeed.

The creative economy movement is defined by innovative business development techniques finding success based on novel imaginative qualities that no longer rely on the limited resources of land, labor and capital. From the arts and music of the region to cultural goods and services capitalized through tourism to research and development, the joint work of the Foundation and the non-profit is revolutionizing the rural economic development system of Southwest Virginia and providing thousands of new jobs to the people of this region.

A multifaceted plan identifies the cultural and natural assets of the region; coordinates initiatives, organizations and venues engaged in cultural and natural heritage toward more efficient operations for all partner organizations; and develops a comprehensive strategy and capital improvements plan to maximize the impact of state investments in this significant restructuring effort.

Key initiatives include:

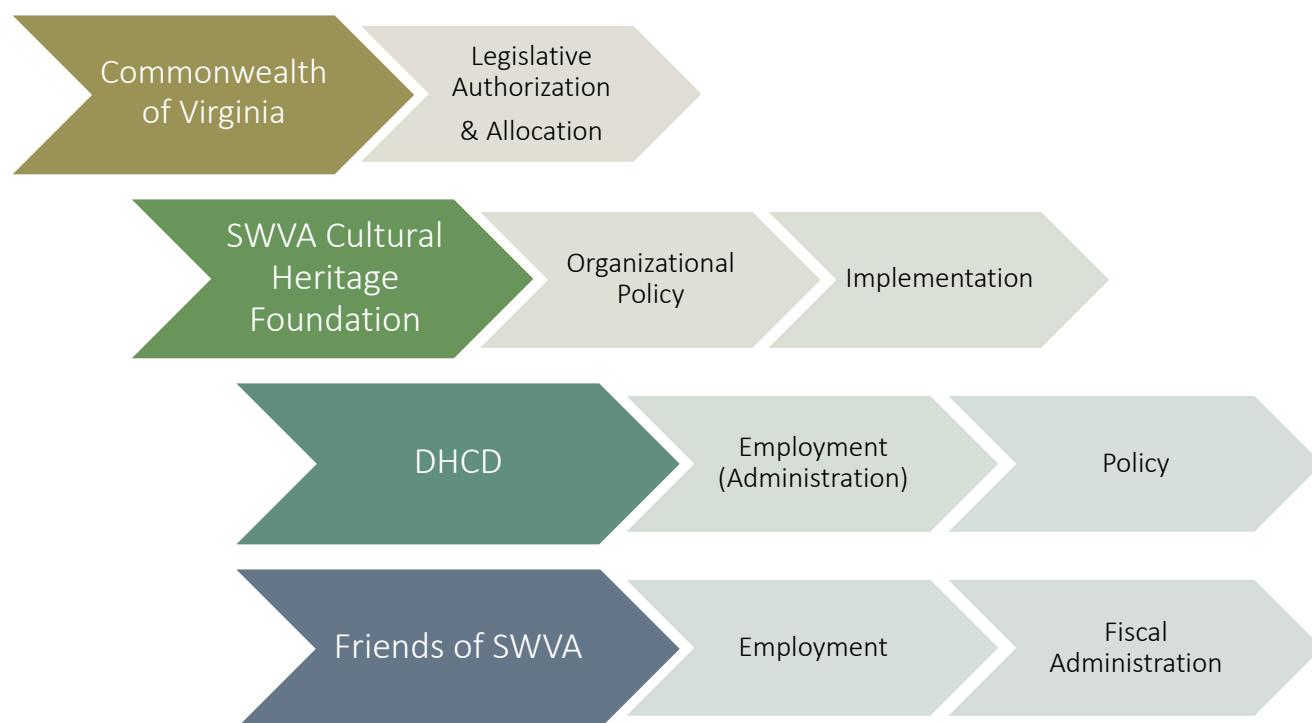
- Branding and marketing Southwest Virginia to the world as a distinct culture and destination
- Developing and sustaining Heartwood: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Gateway
- Expanding outdoor recreation development initiatives and marketing throughout the region
- Planning and implementation of downtown revitalization throughout the region to instill a high quality of life within our communities and promote them to the world for a broad spectrum of economic development opportunities

The Friends of Southwest Virginia is supported through a regional partnership program of the 19 counties, four cities and 54 towns of Southwest Virginia; while funding from the many communities varies, support across the region for a single front in economic redevelopment is unified.

Partners include the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Tourism Corporation and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Funding partners include the Commonwealth of Virginia, Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, Appalachian Regional Commission, U.S. Economic Development Administration, and several private foundations.

# ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW



With the decline of the traditional industries of Southwest Virginia – agricultural tobacco, extractive coal mining, and labor-based manufacturing – the Commonwealth of Virginia recognized the need for an organization to lead the redevelopment of the region through a new system based on the creative economy.

The Department of Housing and Community Development serves as the administrator for the Foundation and employs the key leadership of both organizations, provides fiscal oversight of state funds and provides additional resources for organizational success. The Foundation operates with a full Board of Trustees made up of elected and lay leadership from throughout the 19 counties and four cities of the region.

To further the organization's work, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization was established to operate along-side the foundation and serve as a fiscal, fundraising, and operational body. The two organizations work in tandem under the leadership of a single Executive Director reporting to two separate boards that oversee their individual authorizations. The complex nature of this model of public / private partnership is reflective of the complex economic issues the organization tackles on a daily basis.

# SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CULTURAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION MISSION & BOARD

The purpose of the Foundation is to encourage the economic development of Southwest Virginia through the expansion of cultural and natural heritage ventures and initiatives related to tourism and other asset-based enterprises, include the Heartwood: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Center, The Crooked Road, 'Round the Mountain, and other related cultural and natural heritage organizations and venues that promote entrepreneurial and employment opportunities.

SALUTATION	NAME	SERVING AS	COMMUNITY
Senator	Charles Carrico, Sr.	Trustee, Senate	Galax
Senator	Ben Chafin	Trustee, Senate	Lebanon
Delegate	Terry Kilgore	Trustee, House of Delegates	Gate City
Delegate	Charles Poindexter	Trustee, House of Delegates	Glade Hill
Delegate	Joseph Yost	Trustee, House of Delegates	Pearisburg
Mr.	William Smith	Citizen	Wytheville
Mr.	Dean Chiapetto	Citizen	Floyd
Mr.	Kevin Byrd	Trustee, Planning District	Radford
Mr.	Duane Miller	Trustee, Planning District	Duffield
Ms.	Cathy Lowe	Trustee, Abingdon	Abingdon
Ms.	Robyn Raines	Trustee, Washington County	Abingdon
Ms.	Ellen Reynolds	Trustee, Round the Mountain	Wytheville
Ms.	Lou Ann Jesse-Wallace	Trustee, Round the Mountain	St. Paul
Mr.	David Rotenizer	Trustee, Round the Mountain	Rocky Mount
Ms.	Amanda Parris	Trustee, Round the Mountain	Hillsville
Ms.	Lisa Alderman	Trustee, Commission for the Arts	Wytheville
Mr.	Gene Couch	Ex officio, President - VHCC	Abingdon
Mr.	Larry Yates	Ex Officio, Chair - The Crooked Road	Haysi
Mr.	Austin Bradley	Ex Officio, Chair - Round the Mountain	Breaks
Mr.	Bill Shelton	Ex Officio, Director - DHCD	Richmond
Ms.	Rita McClenny	Ex, Officio, Director - VTC	Richmond
Mr.	David Matlock	Ex Officio, ED - SWVAHEC	Abingdon

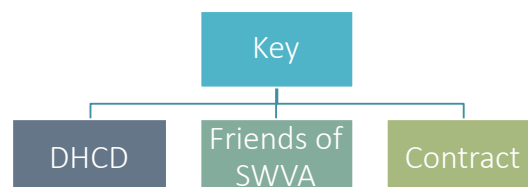
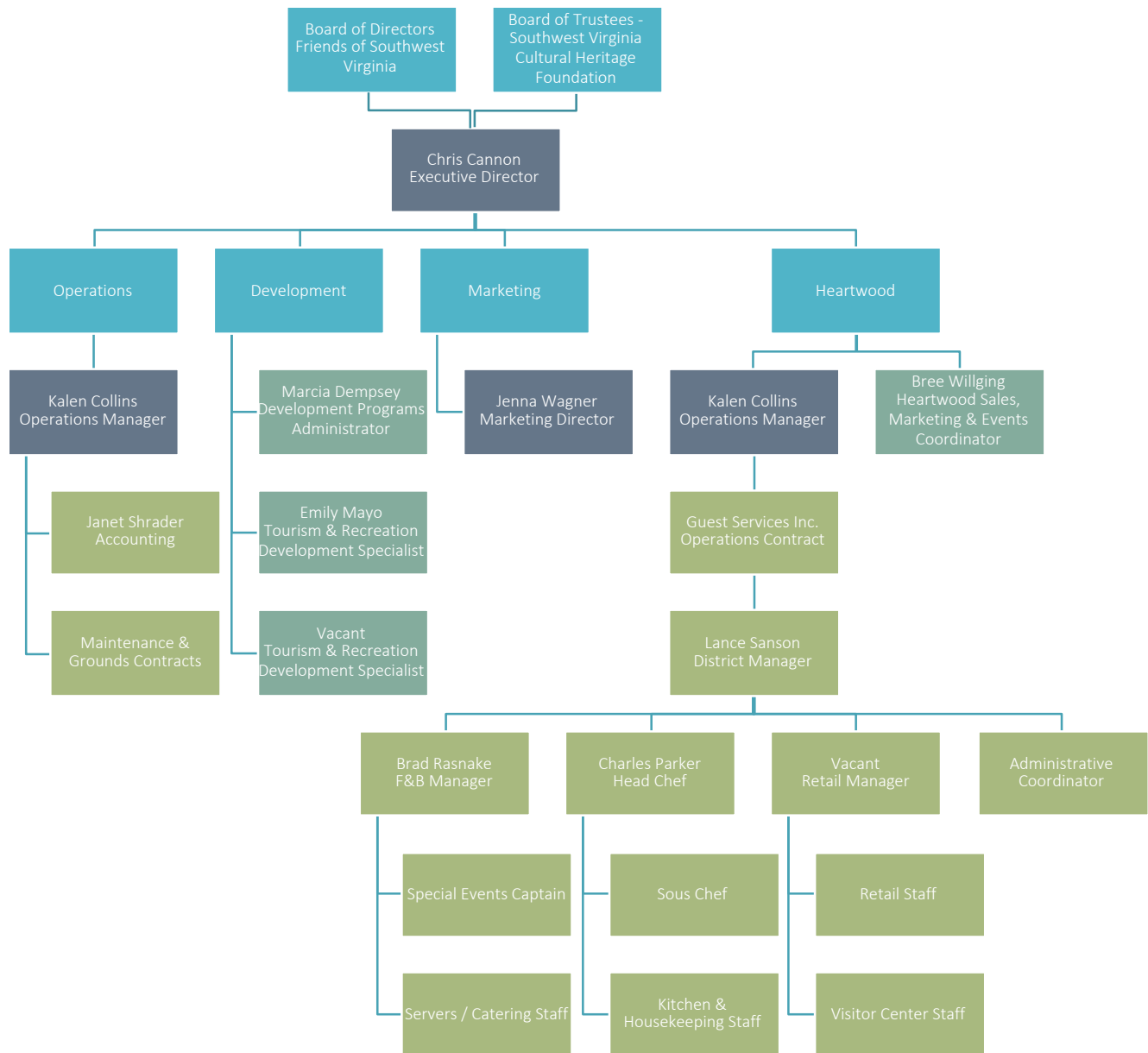
# FRIENDS OF SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA MISSION & BOARD

The mission of Friends of Southwest Virginia is:

- To preserve, promote and present the cultural and natural assets of Southwest Virginia;
- To work in partnership in the region to generate economic development through these efforts;
- To provide educational and cultural opportunities for the general public and students of the region;
- To showcase the cultural assets of SWVA at Heartwood: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Gateway.

SALUTATION	NAME	BOARD POSITION	TITLE, AGENCY / ORGANIZATION
Mr.	James A. Baldwin	Director	Executive Director, Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission
Ms.	Betsy K. White	Director	Executive Director, William King Museum
Mr.	John Kilgore, Jr.	Director	Executive Director, Scott County Economic Development Authority
Mr.	Ron Thomason	Director	Director of Tourism, Smyth County
Mr.	Chuck Lacy	Director	Attorney
Ms.	Elizabeth Adair Obenshain	Director	Community Volunteer
Mr.	H. Ronnie Montgomery	Director	Community Volunteer
Mr.	Lewis I. Jeffries "Bud"	Director	Community Volunteer
Ms.	Linda DiYorio	Director	Community Volunteer
Mr.	Bill Shelton	Ex Officio with Voting Rights, Director - DHCD	Director, VA Department of Housing & Community Development
Delegate	Terry Kilgore	Ex Officio with Voting Rights, Chair - SWVA CHF	Elected Member for 1st District, Virginia House of Delegates
Ms.	Rita McClenny	Ex Officio with Voting Rights, President - VTC	President, Virginia Tourism Corporation
Mr.	Austin Bradley	Ex Officio, Chair - Round the Mountain	Breaks
Mr.	Bill Shelton	Ex Officio, Director - DHCD	Richmond
Ms.	Rita McClenny	Ex, Officio, Director - VTC	Richmond
Mr.	David Matlock	Ex Officio, ED, SWVAHEC	Abingdon

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



# CONTACT LIST

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# REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

## Executive Summary

In response to rapidly declining employment in Southwest Virginia's historically prominent industries of farming, mining, and manufacturing, stakeholders around the region began to invest in developing the creative economy. Since the start of creative economy development in 2004, travel expenditures in the region have increased from \$648.9 million to \$1011.81 in 2016. Additionally, local tax revenues have increased by 46.51% and state tax revenues by 41.06% in the same time period. The upward trend in these travel related tax revenues has an impact at the local level through increasing meals and lodging tax revenues in the region's towns.

### CREATIVE ECONOMY IMPACTS

#### KEY FACTS



- Travel expenditures increased by 56% from 2004 To 2016.
- Southwest Virginia counties and cities collected almost \$26 million in local travel related tax revenue in 2016.
- Even through overall employment in SWVA is slightly down compared to a decade ago, employment in leisure and hospitality has grown by 14%.

Overall employment in SWVA has dropped by 2.3% since 2001, but employment in the leisure and hospitality industry sector has increased by 14%.<sup>1</sup>

Overall, the data suggests that the creative economy related outcomes are on a positive trend in Southwest Virginia, though the overall economy still faces challenges.

# REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

## *History & Trends*

Between 1990 and 2016, farm employment has decreased by 26%, mining employment has decreased by 69%, and manufacturing had decreased by 46%. Specific downturns in these industries have played a large role in the overall trends.

Beginning in the early 2000s, Southwest Virginia began developing a new response to these economic changes by looking at its unique assets for economic development. A strategy for a creative economy based off of the region's authentic, distinctive, and alive assets of traditional music, art and craft, local food and drink, and outdoor beauty and recreation was put into motion. The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail and 'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network were developed, branded, and marketed. The entire region also began community development efforts and a branding/marketing campaign under the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation. In 2012, Friends of Southwest Virginia undertook its newest initiative focused on outdoor recreation development in the region and promoting SWVA.

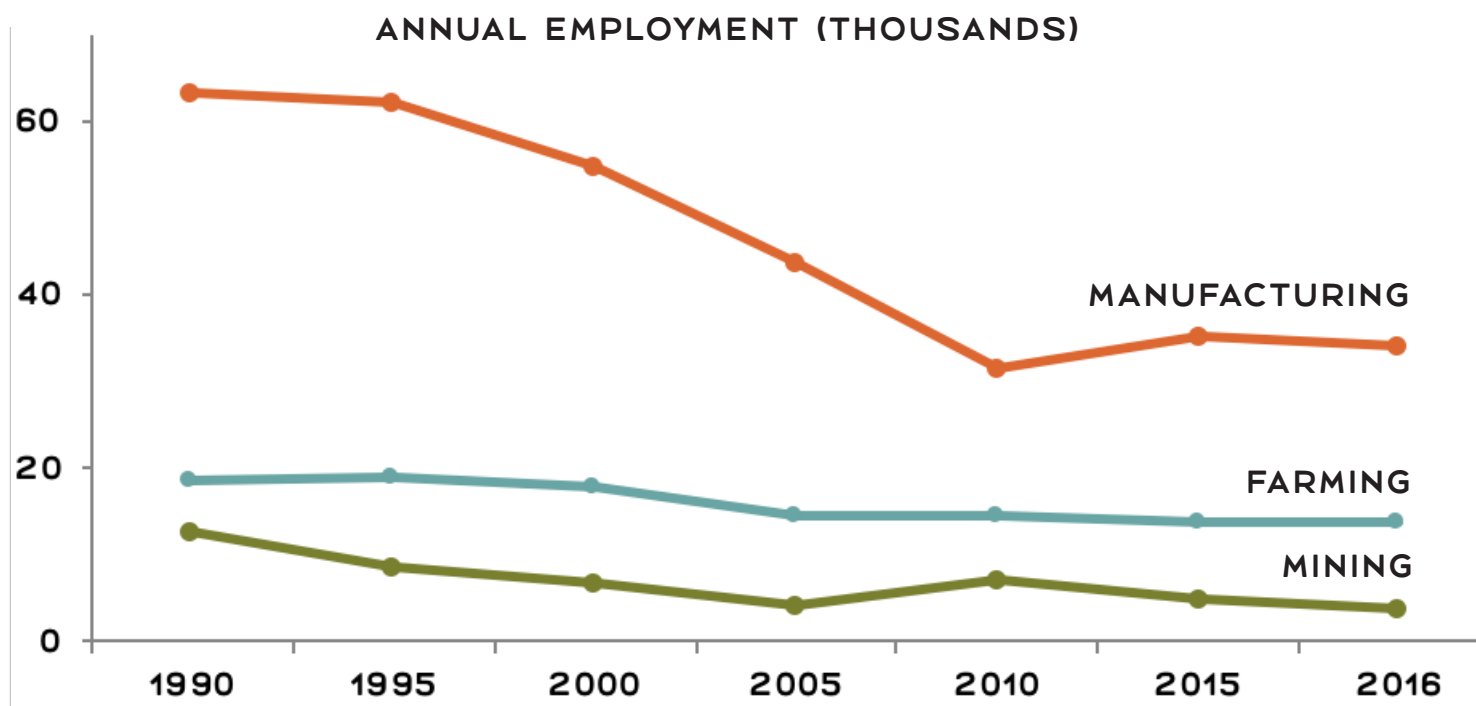
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<sup>1</sup> Data from Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

# REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

## History & Trends

Like much of America, especially rural Appalachia, Southwest Virginia has seen strong downward trends in the traditional economic sectors of manufacturing, farming and mining over the last 26 years.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Average annual private employment in the given industry taken from Bureau of Economic Analysis

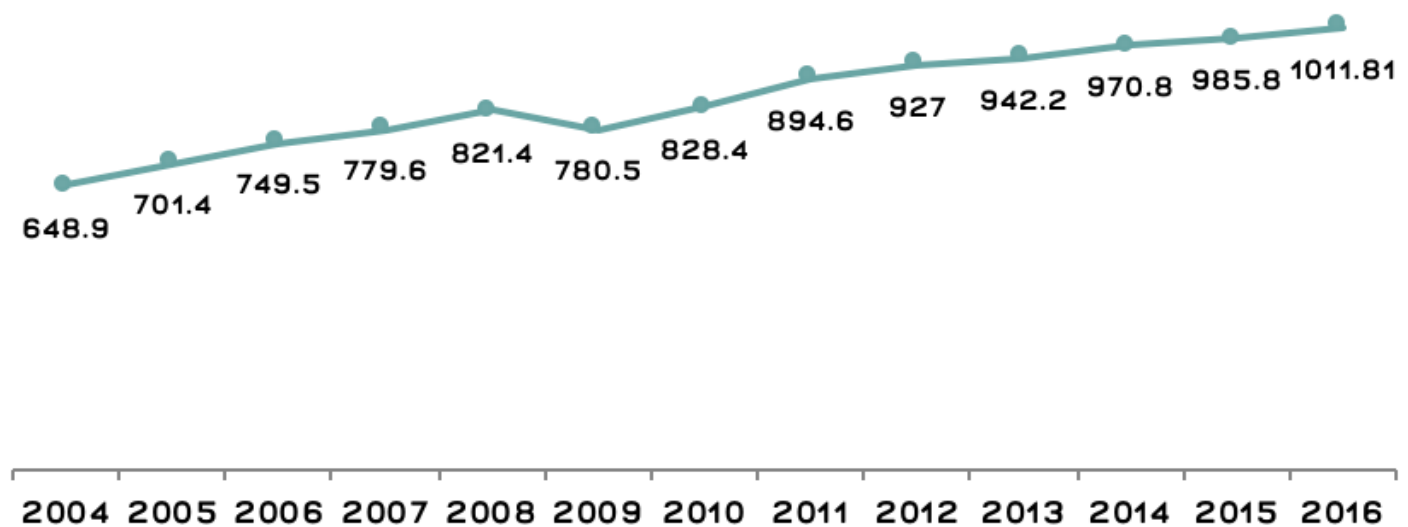
# REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

## Tourism

The development of the creative economy in Southwest Virginia is tied directly to tourism and travel. Creative economy businesses and attractions draw in tourists, which has a large economic impact on the region. With a population density of only 75 persons per square mile, bringing in outside dollars to support the economy is essential for growth.

From 2004 to 2016, travel expenditures in Southwest Virginia grew by almost \$363 million, with travelers spending a total of \$1,011.81 million in 2016. In this twelve year period, travel expenditures have increased by 56%, and by 22% in the six years from 2011 to 2016.<sup>3</sup>

TRAVEL EXPENDITURES IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA (MILLIONS)



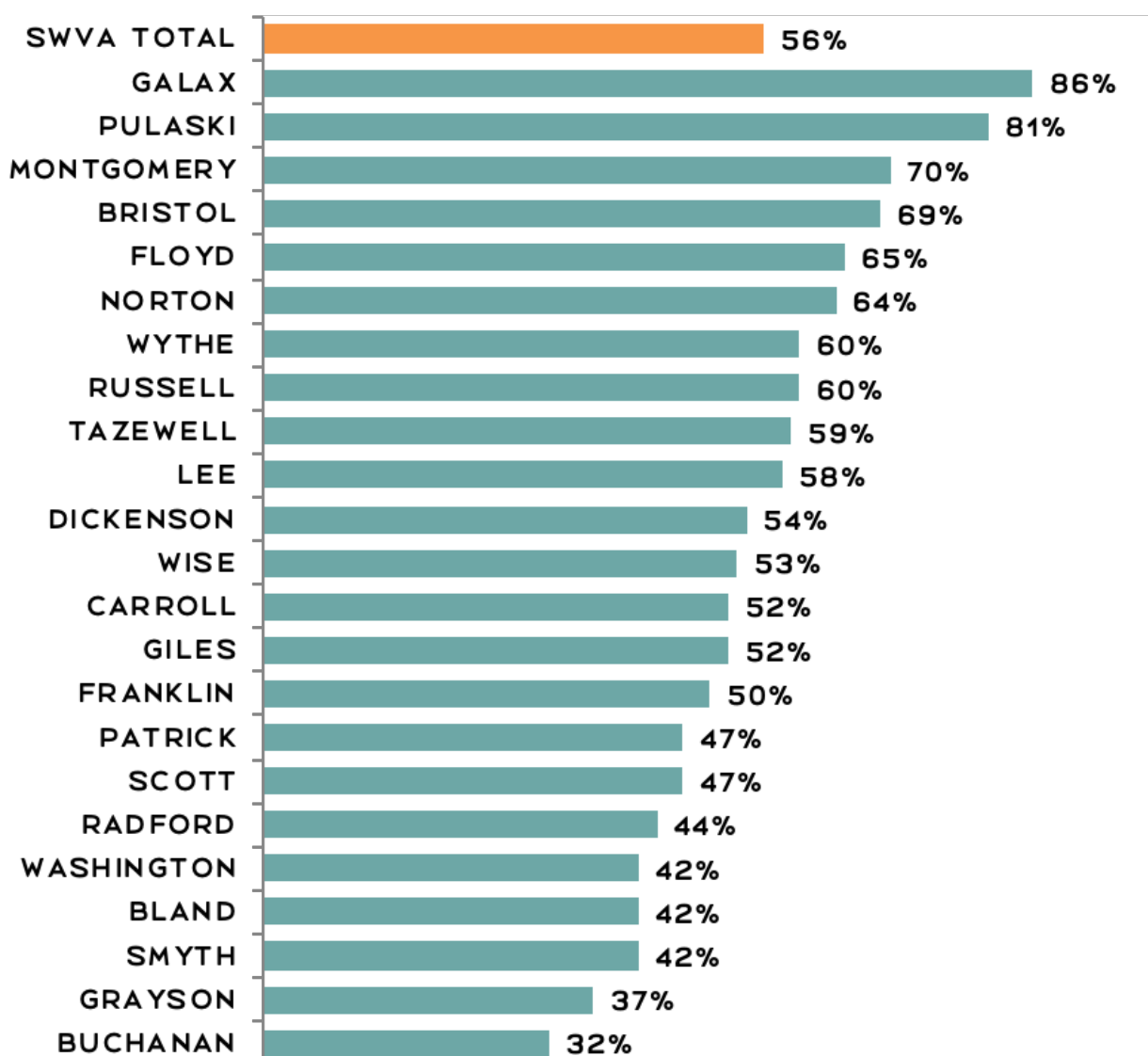
<sup>3</sup> Annual travel related tax receipt estimates taken from the Virginia Tourism Corporation Economic Impact of Domestic Travel in Virginia report

# REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

## Tourism

Southwest Virginia counties with the highest travel expenditures in 2016 are Montgomery, Wythe, Franklin, and Washington, all with annual travel expenditures over \$100 million. Those localities that had the highest travel expenditures in 2016, and in past years, tend to be located along major interstates or near larger cities and towns. However, when we look at how travel expenditures have changed since 2004, rural counties have also shown large increases in travel expenditures due to the rigorous creative economy development in these communities.

PERCENT CHANGE IN TRAVEL EXPENDITURES 2004-2016

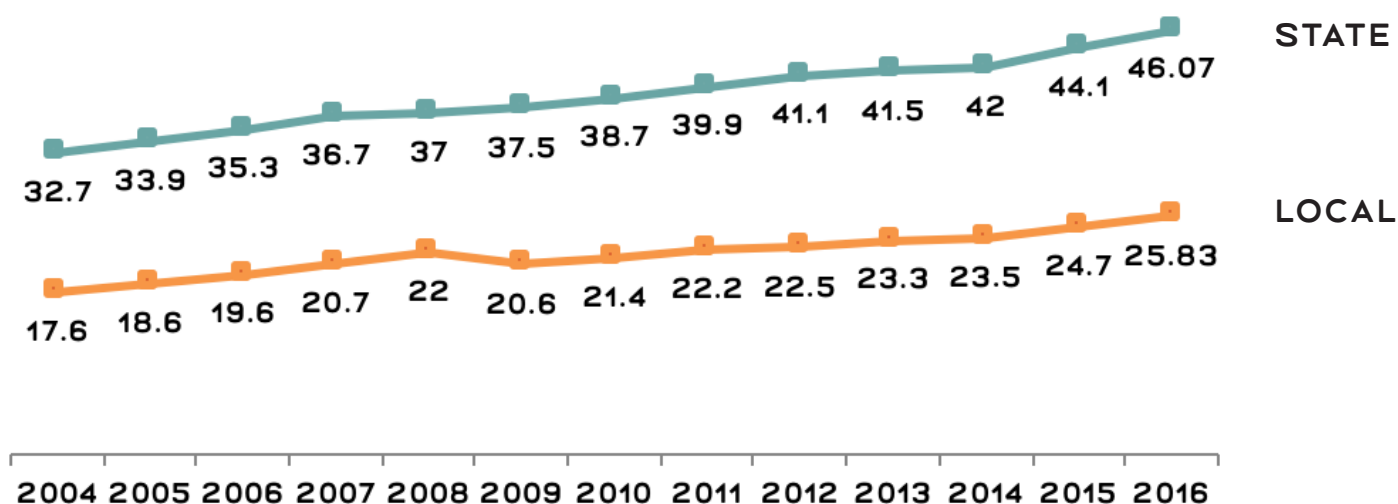


# REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

## Tourism

Travel spending in the region also supports individual localities and the state. Local travel related tax revenue in 2016 was nearly \$26 million and state revenue was over \$46 million. These both reflect a steady trend of increased tax revenues from travel.<sup>4</sup>

TRAVEL RELATED TAX REVENUES (MILLIONS)



The increase in travel related local and state tax receipts mirrors the upward trend in travel expenditures. These increases in local tax receipts are influenced by the increase in local tax collection through food service, admissions, and lodging taxes. The increase in tax receipts at state, county, and local levels of government show the return on invest for communities that grow their creative economy.

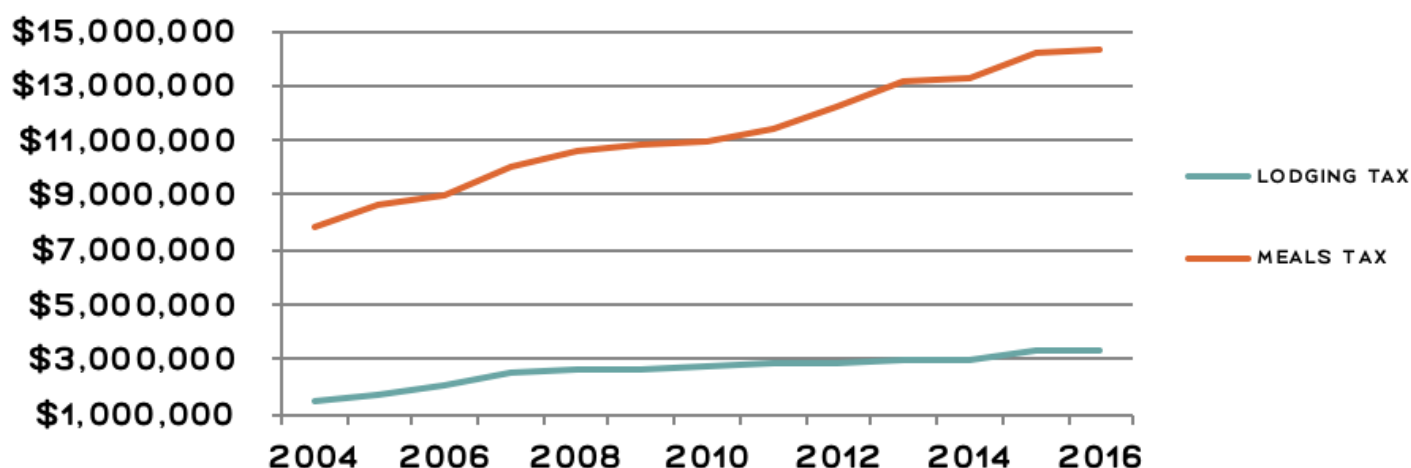
<sup>4</sup> Annual travel related tax receipt estimates taken from the Virginia Tourism Corporation Economic Impact of Domestic Travel in Virginia report

# REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

## Tourism

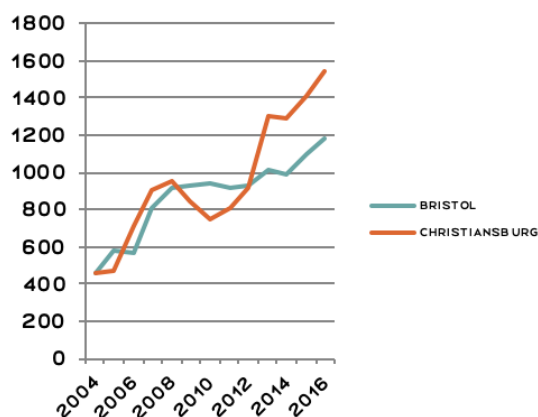
We can see the details of the trend by looking at the increase in lodging and meals taxes. The graph below shows the increase in meals and lodging tax revenues at the locality level.<sup>5</sup>

COUNTY/CITY LEVEL TAX REVENUES

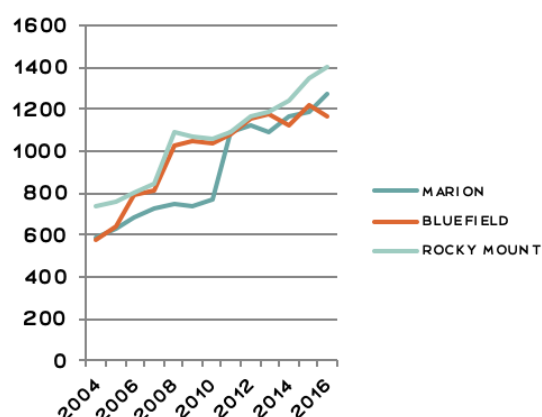


Though these revenue increases are impressive, they do not fully show the revenues collected as many areas in the region only have meals or lodging taxes at the town level. The additional graphs below show the increases in meals and lodging taxes for a sample of Southwest Virginia towns. The towns shown below had an even greater percentage increase than SWVA counties.<sup>6</sup>

LODGING TAX (THOUSANDS)



MEALS TAX (THOUSANDS)



<sup>5</sup> Lodging and meals tax data taken from the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts Local Government Comparative Reports. Does not include revenues at the town level.

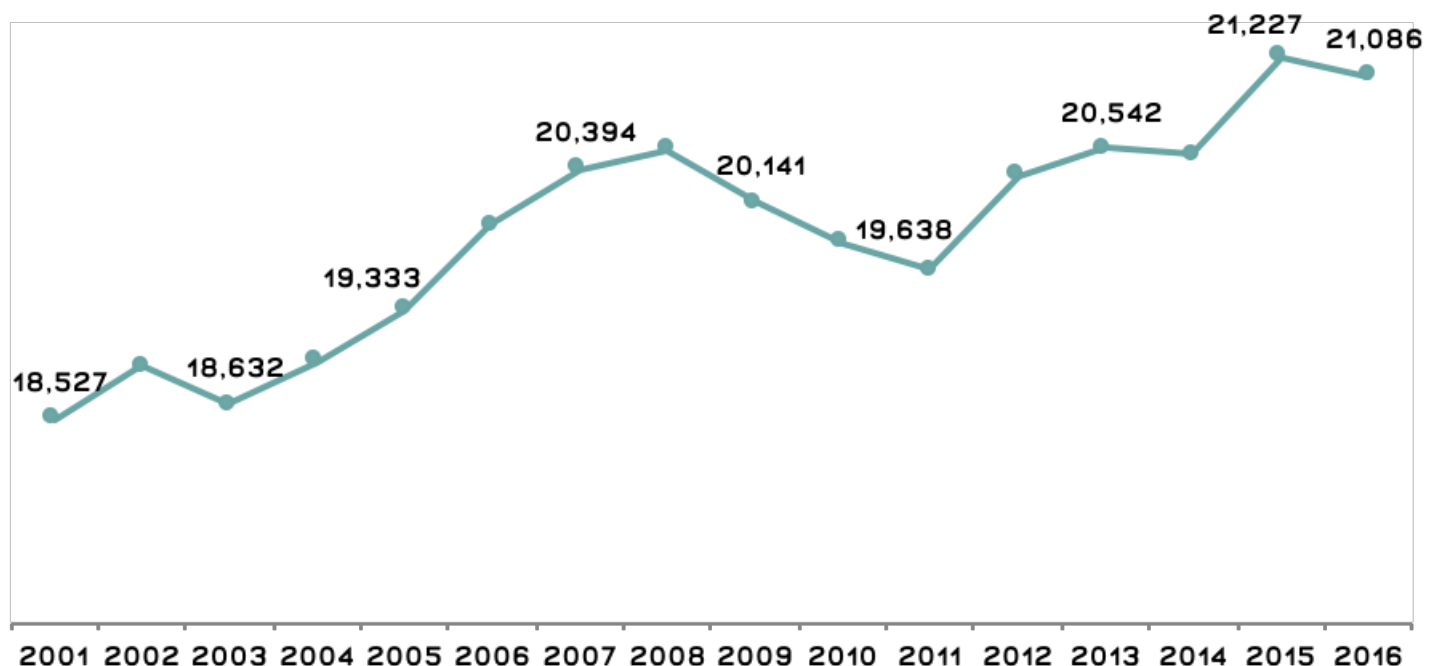
<sup>6</sup> Percent increase from 2004-2015 Meals Taxes: Marion (114%), Bluefield (102%), Rocky Mount (90%); Lodging Taxes: Bristol (155%), Christiansburg (232%).

# REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

## Tourism

In addition to direct travel spending through food, lodging, recreation, and shopping which supports local businesses, travel spending also supports job growth in the region. According to the Virginia Tourism Corporation, 10,145 full time equivalent jobs existed in SWVA thanks to travel in 2016. This is up 955 jobs since 2004. Overall employment in the leisure and hospitality industry sector is up 14% from 2001 to 2016. While overall employment has failed to rebound to pre-recession levels, leisure and hospitality employment is growing.

LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT



# REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

## *Travel Expenditures by Locality*

Data Source: Virginia Tourism Corporation, Economic Impact of Domestic Travel in Virginia annual reports. Available at <http://www.vatc.org/research/economicimpact/>.

County/City	2004 (millions)	2016 (millions)	04-16 % Change
Bland	9.56	13.6	42%
Bristol	30.16	54.5	81%
Buchanan	14.68	19.4	32%
Carroll	44.88	69	54%
Dickenson	4.87	7.43	53%
Floyd	14.43	23.72	64%
Franklin	73.3	107.84	47%
Galax	9.2	17.13	86%
Giles	18.09	26.54	47%
Grayson	11.05	15.14	37%
Lee	7.68	12.18	59%
Montgomery	85.04	143.83	69%
Norton	11.9	19.61	65%
Patrick	18.46	27.7	50%
Pulaski	33.49	56.9	70%
Radford	10.88	15.5	42%
Russell	7.67	12.3	60%
Scott	11.96	17.24	44%
Smyth	17.48	26.65	52%
Tazewell	31.87	50.9	60%
Washington	73.25	103.8	42%
Wise	22.01	33.4	52%
Wythe	86.99	137.5	58%
SWVA Total	648.9	1011.81	56%
Virginia	15,041.5	23,699.80	58%

# REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

## *Travel Related Tax Receipts by Locality*

Data Source: Virginia Tourism Corporation, Economic Impact of Domestic Travel in Virginia annual reports. Available at <http://www.vatc.org/research/economicimpact/>.

County/City	Local			State		
	2004 (millions)	2016 (millions)	04-16% Change	2004 (millions)	2016 (millions)	04-16% Change
Bland	.3	.4	33.33%	.43	0.52	20.93%
Bristol	.95	1.45	68.42%	1.56	2.6	66.67%
Buchanan	.18	0.22	22.22%	.53	0.58	9.43%
Carroll	1.42	2.1	47.89%	2.31	3.3	42.86%
Dickenson	.12	0.17	41.67%	.3	0.42	40.00%
Floyd	.46	0.71	54.35%	.7	1.1	57%
Franklin	2.31	3.2	38.53%	3.1	4.3	38.71%
Galax	.24	0.42	75.00%	.5	0.81	62.00%
Giles	.6	0.83	38%	.97	1.3	34.02%
Grayson	.35	0.45	28.57%	.5	0.65	30.00%
Lee	.2	0.3	50.00%	.42	0.60	42.86%
Montgomery	1.63	2.6	59.51%	4.16	6.4	53.85%
Norton	.55	0.86	56.36%	.61	0.94	54.10%
Patrick	.58	0.82	41%	1.16	1.6	37.93%
Pulaski	1.06	1.7	60.38%	1.62	2.5	54.32%
Radford	.33	0.44	33.33%	.56	0.71	26.79%
Russell	.13	0.19	46.15%	.43	0.61	41.86%
Scott	.32	0.42	31.25%	.64	0.83	29.69%
Smyth	.38	0.51	34%	1.17	1.5	28.21%
Tazewell	.47	0.71	51.06%	1.53	2.2	43.79%
Washington	1.91	2.6	36.13%	3.65	4.8	31.51%
Wise	.34	0.48	41.18%	1.11	1.5	35.14%
Wythe	2.8	4.1	46.43%	4.7	6.3	34.04%
<b>SWVA Total</b>	<b>17.63</b>	<b>25.83</b>	<b>46.51%</b>	<b>32.66</b>	<b>46.07</b>	<b>41.06%</b>
<b>Virginia</b>	<b>443.0</b>	<b>663.4</b>	<b>49.75%</b>	<b>640.7</b>	<b>1014.40</b>	<b>58.33%</b>

# REGIONAL ECONOMIC, COMMUNITY AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

## *Projects Completed: Outdoor Recreation - Phase 1*

Phase 1 of Southwest Virginia Outdoor Recreation Development [Formerly known as Appalachian Spring] was funded by federal POWER funds (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization) in 2015.

### 1. Clinch River Feasibility Study :

a. Scale Inc. completed the Clinch River Feasibility Study in June, 2017. This study outlined opportunities to utilize the Clinch River as a classroom and connect the biodiversity of the river to the Town of St. Paul and the surrounding communities within the Clinch River Watershed; by improving the connectivity and developing partnerships, developing a business plan, and outlining capital improvements needed. The study focused on utilizing the existing Oxbow Center (owned by UVA-Wise) as a focal point for environmental education, business incubators, and tourism opportunities. The Clinch River Valley Initiative is working to identify funding opportunities with the help of Upper Tennessee River Round Table, UVA-Wise and Friends of Southwest Virginia.

Clinch River Valley Initiative  
Virginia's Hidden River



### Clinch River Ecological Campus Presentation

- Date: June 26th, 2017
- Location: St. Paul Town Hall
- Time: 6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.

Please join us Monday June 26th, 2017 from 6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m. for the presentation of the proposed Clinch River Ecological Campus. The proposed Clinch River Ecological Campus will serve as a gateway to the Clinch watershed for environmental education, recreation, and economic development. Scale Inc. will be presenting the feasibility study of the proposed plan accompanied by Peyton Boyd Architect PC and Quinn Craughwell Landscape Architects PLLC. The presentation will be held in St. Paul at the Town Hall.



### 2. New River Feasibility Study:

a. In partnership with Friends of Southwest Virginia, the New River Valley Regional Commission and Giles County completed the New River Feasibility Study in September 2017. This study included: opportunities to utilize the New River as an economic engine for Giles County and a list of capital improvements needed. The study and results also began the process of recruiting Community Development Block Grants for economic redevelopment in the communities of Narrows, Pembroke, Rich Creek, Glen Lyn and Pearisburg. The study also proved the need for a new gateway visitor / destination center, additional lodging, and increased accessibility to the river for economic development.

### 3. Recruitment Tool Development – Website Population

a. In October 2016 the outdoor recreation website [www.myswva.org/outdoors](http://www.myswva.org/outdoors) was launched. Friends of Southwest Virginia sought out proposals from leading consultants to develop lasting relationships with stakeholders, recruit contributors to the outdoor website and produce outdoor recreation content. The contract was completed in July, 2017 by Blue Ridge Discovery Center of Konnarck, Virginia.

# REGIONAL ECONOMIC, COMMUNITY AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

## *Projects Underway: Outdoor Recreation - Phase 2*

Phase 2 of Southwest Virginia Outdoor Recreation Development [Formerly known as Appalachian Spring] was funded by federal POWER funds (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization) in 2016.

### 1. High Knob Destination Center:

a. The High Knob Region of Southwest Virginia includes the communities in Wise County, Scott County, Lee County and the City of Norton. This 27 mile long land mass is the hub for outdoor adventures in the Western corner of Southwest Virginia and includes opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, bouldering, fishing, camping, backpacking, cultural heritage attractions and endless sightseeing. The destination center will be located on The City of Norton's property at the base of High Knob, located off of US 23, and will connect visitors to High Knob and surrounding Communities.

**Estimated Project Completion Date: December 2019**

### 2. High Knob Lake:

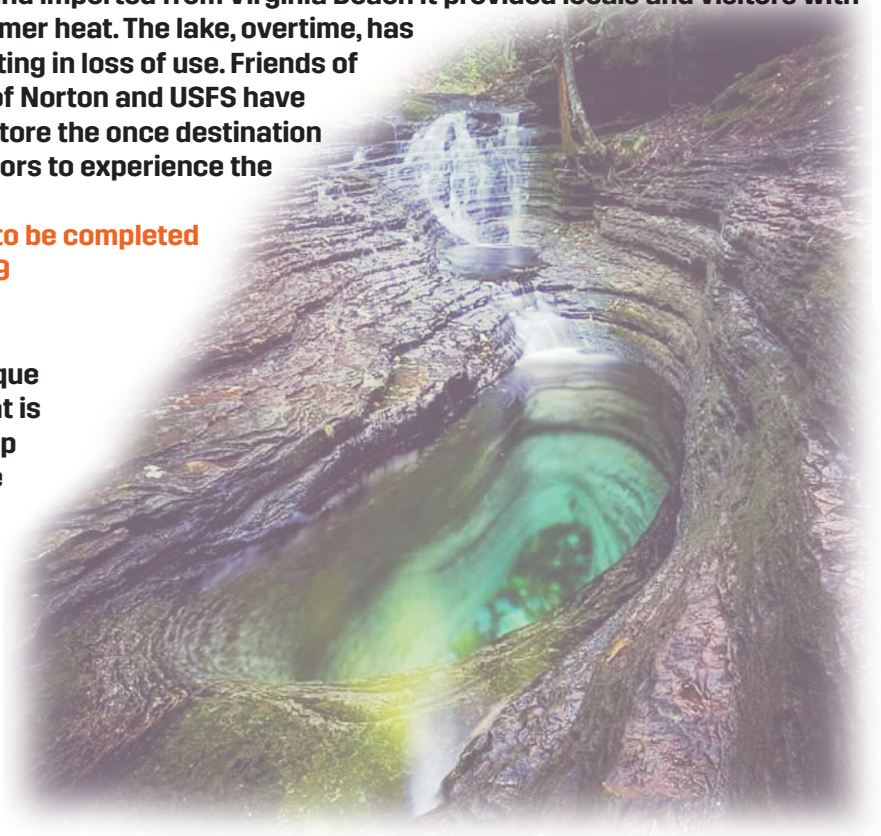
a. The High Knob Recreation Lake located on USFS property was once the hub for swimming in the High Knob region; with sand imported from Virginia Beach it provided locals and visitors with a spot to escape the summer heat. The lake, overtime, has become overgrown resulting in loss of use. Friends of Southwest Virginia, City of Norton and USFS have sought out funding to restore the once destination providing a place for visitors to experience the outdoors.

**Restorations are to be completed  
by December 2019**

### 3. Devils Bathtub Parking:

a. Devil's Bathtub is a unique rock/water formation that is along the Devil's Fork Loop Trail on US Forest Service property. This spot has become increasingly popular with both locals and tourists in recent years, but a lack of adequate parking and convenience facilities make it difficult to market to and welcome these visitors.

**Estimated Project Completion Date: December 2019**



# REGIONAL ECONOMIC, COMMUNITY AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

## *Projects Underway: Outdoor Recreation - Phase 2*

### 4. High Knob Master Planning:

a. The High Knob Region of Southwest Virginia includes the communities in Wise County, Scott County, Lee County and the City of Norton. This 27 mile long land mass is the hub for outdoor adventures in the Western corner of Southwest Virginia and includes opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, bouldering, fishing, camping, backpacking cultural heritage and endless sightseeing. A steering committee of 25+ people are working with Hill Studio and Arnett Muldrow consulting firms to develop a strategic plan for the High Knob Region. The plan will include opportunities to connect communities and businesses to the natural assets to drive the outdoor economy and increase the quality of life, marketing components and brand identity, capital improvements needed and partnerships to be developed.

**Estimated Project Completion Date: June 2019**

### 5. Haysi to Breaks Trail developed by Spearhead Trail:

a. Breaks Interstate Park located in the Northwestern corner of Southwest Virginia is one of two interstate parks in the United States, connecting Virginia and Kentucky. Haysi, VA is the Virginia gateway to the park and is nestled on the banks of the Russell Fork River. A multi-use trail will connect the community of Haysi with Breaks Interstate Park, connecting the outdoor recreation asset to the core of the Haysi community.

**Estimated Project Completion Date: December 2019**

### 6. Haysi Boardwalk:

a. The idea of the Haysi boardwalk emerged from a Community Development Block Grant in 2010. The Town of Haysi has been working on additional riverfront improvements including a boardwalk area. This riverfront area will tie directly into the Breaks to Haysi trail project.

**Estimated Project Completion Date: December 2019**

### 7. Construction of New River Boat Launches:

a. The need for river access emerged from the POWER 15 – Phase 1 outdoor recreation planning. Giles County, VA offers 37 miles of river, but lacked accessibility. The Army Corps Engineers, Giles County Administration and Friends of Southwest Virginia are working to construct four public boat launches in the Giles County section of New River.

**Estimated Project Completion Date: December 2019**

# REGIONAL ECONOMIC, COMMUNITY AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

## *Projects Underway: Outdoor Recreation - Phase 2*

### **8. Appalachian Trail Center:**

a. In 2015, the Town of Damascus was awarded funding for a downtown revitalization through a Community Development Block Grant. Additionally, in 2016, the town was awarded an Appalachian Regional Commission grant for the development of a downtown “river walk” including public facilities and amenities. The Appalachian Trail Center, a POWER-funded project, is a destination center at the heart of these other two projects. It will serve as an orientation point for visitors drawn to the town. It will provide a destination to give visitors direction and ideas for the many recreational activities and hospitality offerings available to them during their stay. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy will be responsible for programming and staffing the center once constructed.

**Estimated Project Completion Date: December 2019**

### **9. Spearhead Trails – 3 Trail Technicians:**

a. Funding was allocated to support the employment of three Trail Technicians for two years with Spearhead Trails. This funding provides additional support to the Haysi to Breaks Trail project. These trail technicians will be working directly on the construction of the proposed trail and then on its maintenance once complete. They are currently working on the development and upkeep of other hiking and biking trails in Southwest Virginia.

**Project Completion Date: December 2018**



# COMMUNITY & REGIONAL SUPPORT

## *Clinch River Valley Initiative*

Friends of Southwest Virginia serves as the fiscal agent and organizational coordinator for the 30+ steering committee. This includes managing funds, seeking and preparing grants, and assisting with implementation of funding. Currently, the ever evolving steering committee has 5 action groups including: Access points, Downtown Revitalization, State Park, Environmental Education, and Water Quality.

**Project Start Date: September 2010**

## *Adventure Tourism Workshops*

Friends of SWVA in partnership with Virginia Community Capital, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Spearhead Trails and local community leadership will host an Adventure Tourism Workshop for anyone interested in starting an adventure tourism business. Southwest Virginia's outdoor recreation initiatives are opening doors for one of the largest industries worldwide and this workshop outlines the regional initiatives, opportunities, best practices, resources, expert advice and steps required to start a successful adventure tourism business. Hear from local entrepreneurs and professionals providing an update on tourism initiatives in the region, along with resources for starting, marketing and financing a business. Guest speakers include local entrepreneurs and professionals providing an update on tourism initiatives in the region, along with resources for starting, marketing and financing a business.

**Project Start Date: October 2017**

## *Lee and Wise County Outdoor Recreation Access*

Through partnerships with Wise and Lee County officials, Spearhead Trails, The Nature Conservancy, Game and Inland Fisheries and VDOT, Friends of Southwest Virginia and Spearhead Trails have applied for \$500,000 to develop 6 access point along the Powell River in Lee county, 2 Access Points along the Pound River in Wise County, and the construction of a bike park in Big Stone Gap and Pound. This recreation development will be constructed and maintained by Spearhead Trails and provide access to the natural resources to drive economic development in both Lee and Wise county.

**Project Underway: Applied October 2017 – awaiting announcement**

# COMMUNITY & REGIONAL SUPPORT

## *Outdoor Recreation & Tourism Business Gap Assessments*

Beginning January 2018 Friends of SWVA will be conducting Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Business Gap Assessments throughout the 19 county region. These assessments will produce an evaluation report of the current outdoor recreation industry and supporting businesses; the report will compare primary outdoor recreation assets, primary outdoor recreation destination, businesses, secondary non-destination tourism/ hospitality support businesses and tertiary non-tourism/ hospitality support businesses.

**Project Start Date: January 2018**

## *Anchor Area Updates*

Friends of Southwest Virginia is conducting eight anchor area updates. These updates are open to the public and provide a space for community members to hear about the ongoing and recently completed work throughout the region. As of January 2017, two events have been held: S'mores and More in High Knob and Brews and News in Damascus.

**Project Start Date: October 2017**



# COMMUNITY & REGIONAL SUPPORT

## *Community Development Block Grants*

### 1. Giles County Block Grants

a. The planning process for Giles County Block Grants emerged from the POWER 15 New River Action Plan. Hill Studio has completed preliminary studies and designs for 5 towns within Giles County - Narrows, Pembroke, Pearisburg, Rich Creek and Glen Lyn. These plans are intended to connect the communities to the New River and its natural assets, ultimately pairing community development with tourism product development to drive economic development.

**Project Start Date: January 2016**

### 2. Town of Damascus CDBG

a. The Town of Damascus is undergoing its downtown revitalization and development of the Appalachian Trail Center. By layering the revitalization and outdoor recreation development the town will become a stronger mecca for outdoor recreationist and businesses. The revitalization will include the creation of a spur trail connecting the Virginia Creeper Trail to Laurel Creek, development of a waterfront trail and bank restorations of Laurel Creek, creation of a Town Green next to Damascus Old Mill Inn which will include a stage and the façade upgrades to multiple businesses on Laurel Ave. In addition to the downtown revitalization the town will soon be the location of the Appalachian Trail Center. The center will be located on Laurel Street and will include information on the natural assets surrounding Damascus and throughout Southwest Virginia, public restrooms, offices and meeting spaces to further the goal of connecting the natural assets to the public.

**Project Start Date: June 2016**

### 3. Town of Cleveland

a. The Town of Cleveland is located on the banks of the Clinch River in Russell County, Virginia. The town has taken this opportunity to connect itself to the natural asset and provide opportunity for tourism development. The revitalization includes the removal of blighted buildings, creation of a campground with RV hookups, a connector bridge across the Clinch River and enhanced parking and amenities to the Towns waterfall (Tank Hollow Falls). In addition the Town of Cleveland has begun its revolving loan fund through DHCD and is providing incentives for tourism based businesses.

**Project Completion Date: June 2018**

### 4. City of Norton CDBG

a. In October 2017, The City of Norton was awarded \$411,219 to complete their 7 block CDBG project. This project is layered with the development of High Knob Master Plan, High Knob Destination Center and restorations to the High Knob Recreation Area. In addition to blight removal the project will include the development of share lanes connecting the downtown to Flag Rock Recreation Area.

**Project Start Date: October 2017**

# COMMUNITY & REGIONAL SUPPORT

## *Community Events & Initiatives*

### 1. SWVA Rocks

a. Many communities in the US have engaged citizens in “Rock Hunts,” which is a community wide scavenger hunt. Community members of all ages are involved with painting, hunting and re-hiding the rocks in their communities. This trend emerged from Kindness Rocks initiative, an activity of painting words of encouragement on rocks and placing in spots for other to enjoy. The trend took off on social media and the once random act of kindness movement has now emerged into a cross country scavenger hunt! Many communities in SWVA have become involved in the SWVA Rocks initiative and are using it as an opportunity to provide community wide engagement. SWVA works to help promote the other outdoor initiatives of the region by recognizing these groups and working to promote activities in other communities.

**Project Start Date: July 2017**

### 2. SWVA Outdoor Expo

a. April 22nd, 2017 marked Southwest Virginia's 3rd Outdoor Expo held at Bisset Park in Radford, VA . The Expo highlights Southwest Virginia's natural assets and outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the 19 counties. Outdoor recreation enthusiasts gather to learn about the opportunities and experience the outdoors. This year's expo included a zipline and gear swap for outdoor recreationists to enjoy.

**Project Completion Date: April 2017**

### 3. SWVA Race Series

a. Coming soon in 2018, Southwest Virginia will host a race series. The race will not only focus on existing unique races in the region, but will also bring new opportunities for athletes to enjoy. The races will vary from 5k to ultra marathons and participants who complete all will be rewarded.

**Estimated Project Start Date: 2018**



SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA  
**OUTDOORS**

# REGIONAL MARKETING & BRANDING

## 2017 Projects

**1. Build and grow database -** In order to effectively market to consumers, residents and potential visitors, we needed the ability to gather user email addresses and information. In 2016, we had a small database of users, this project was intended to grow the database further.

- **Project Status:** Ongoing implementation
- **Projected Impact:** SWVA region-wide impact
- **Project Completion Date:** Ongoing development in 2018

**2. Update and organize usage of SWVA branding.** Increase familiarity and recognition of SWVA brand across region and surrounding states - With the launch of the SWVA branding in October of 2016, we needed to begin to organize the usage of all logos and implementation: further developing marketing campaigns.

- **Project Status:** Ongoing organization and implementation
- **Project Impact:** SWVA region-wide impact
- **Project Completion Date:** Ongoing development in 2018

**3. Create consistent message, voice across all outlets and platform -** Develop a voice for Southwest Virginia with consistent messaging and tone.

- **Project Status:** Complete
- **Project Impact:** SWVA region-wide impact
- **Project Completion Date:** December 2017

**4. Build out a content strategy and calendar -** Consistent content strategy and calendar across all platforms in order to maintain consistent voice and messaging.

- **Project Status:** Ongoing development in 2018
- **Project Impact:** SWVA region-wide impact
- **Project Completion Date:** Ongoing development in 2018

**5. Create suite of assets for region under SWVA brand -** Ongoing logo development under Southwest Virginia branding for partners across 19 counties

- **Project Status:** Ongoing development in 2018
- **Project Impact:** SWVA region-wide impact
- **Project Completion Date:** Ongoing development in 2018

# REGIONAL MARKETING & BRANDING

## 2017 Projects

**6. Establish baseline metrics - With the development of a brand new marketing program in 2016, as an organization, it was necessary to establish several baseline metrics for our efforts.**

- **Project Status: Complete**
- **Project Impact: SWVA region-wide impact**
- **Project Completion Date: January 2017**

**7. Create ongoing campaigns to lead SWVA to be top of mind in tourism and community development. Promote assets, quality of life in Southwest Virginia.**

- **Project Status: Ongoing development in 2018**
- **Project Impact: SWVA region-wide impact**
- **Project Completion Date: Ongoing development in 2018**

**8. Digital and social focused campaigns - Implement digital and social focused campaigns, representative of all 19 counties and four cities, as well as core assets of Southwest Virginia.**

- **Project Status: Ongoing development in 2018**
- **Project Impact: SWVA region-wide impact**
- **Project Completion Date: Ongoing development in 2018**



# REGIONAL MARKETING & BRANDING

## Future Projects

- 1. Redesign & development of two websites (VisitSWVA.com and FriendsofSWVA.org) - The website creation and redesign is a key piece of the SWVA marketing efforts in 2018. Both of these websites are needed in creation and overhaul to appropriately reflect Southwest Virginia and it's unique assets.**
  - Project Status: Pending
  - Project Impact: SWVA region-wide impact
  - Project Completion Date: June 2018
- 2. Develop ongoing content generation plan and calendar - Continue to create and build out a consistent content strategy and calendar across all platforms in order to maintain consistent voice and messaging.**
  - Project Status: Ongoing development in 2018
  - Project Impact: SWVA region-wide impact
  - Project Completion Date: December 2018
- 3. Build and grow database - In order to effectively market to consumers, residents and potential visitors, our organization needs to continue to gather user email addresses and information. This information can be utilized for our email program, as well as mailer potential.**
  - Project Status: Pending
  - Project Impact: SWVA region-wide impact
  - Project Completion Date: December 2018
- 4. Create and implement social strategy reflective of content and database program - The organization needs to create an all-encompassing social strategy reflective of our content calendar for 2018.**
  - Project Status: Pending
  - Project Impact: SWVA region-wide impact
  - Project Completion Date: December 2018
- 5. Develop merchandise program for consumer and partners - The Friends of SWVA has selected an official merchandise provider to handle all fulfillment of merchandise inquiry for the Southwest Virginia branding.**
  - Project Status: Contract negotiations
  - Project Impact: SWVA region-wide impact
  - Project Completion Date: December 2018

# REGIONAL MARKETING & BRANDING

## *Future Projects*

**6. Ongoing maintenance of Southwest Virginia Mountain Brew Trail - The SWVA Mountain Brew Trail was launched in August of 2017. This initiative networks 24+ breweries together across all 19 counties in Southwest Virginia. This trail will need maintenance and relationship marketing in 2018 to further develop the trail and market the breweries appropriately.**

- **Project Status:** Launched
- **Project Impact:** SWVA region-wide impact
- **Project Completion Date:** Ongoing development in 2018

**7. Launch Southwest Virginia Wine Trail - Our organization received a grant to launch a SWVA Wine Trail in 2018. This project will be similar to the beer trail with promotional materials, website and incentive program.**

- **Project Status:** Pending
- **Project Impact:** SWVA region-wide impact
- **Project Completion Date:** July 2018

**8. Create internal and external public relations strategy for Southwest Virginia and Friends of SWVA - Create a program to begin actively pitching Southwest Virginia and its unique assets to national and local media.**

- **Project Status:** Pending
- **Project Impact:** SWVA region-wide impact
- **Project Completion Date:** December 2018

**9. Events & sponsorships - Ongoing promotion of our organization and the Southwest Virginia regional brand through events and sponsorships in Southwest Virginia and surround states.**

- **Project Status:** Pending content calendar
- **Project Impact:** SWVA region-wide impact
- **Project Completion Date:** December 2018



# HEARTWOOD: GATEWAY TO SWVA

## *Heartwood Overview*

### Retail

Heartwood is a unique, convenient retail space for Southwest Virginia artisans to showcase their work. There are a total of 225 juried artisan members in Heartwood. Our members have a variety of skillsets including wood working, glass blowing, quilting, painting, photography and more. Our artisans provide quality work for those of all ages to enjoy. Artisans are also encouraged to participate in artisan demonstration days throughout the year to give our visitors a hands-on experience while also showcasing their work.

### Food & Beverage

Chef Charles Parker continues to put Heartwood on the map with unique Appalachian cuisine. Daily dishes feature locally sourced meats, cheese and grains. The menu accommodates to all dietary needs while also creating a tasteful experience. We also offer caterings of any special events. For each event Head Chef, Food and Beverage Manager and Heartwood Marketing, Sales, and Event Coordinator meet with each client to provide them with a menu that meets all their needs.

### Regional Outreach

Heartwood is a gateway for the Southwest Virginia region. Visitors begin a trip to Southwest Virginia at Heartwood so they can experience a taste of all that SWVA has to offer. The facility is committed to the mission of ushering visitors into the region to experience our downtowns, outdoors, local foods and small businesses. Heartwood provides our partners with opportunities to promote their localities assets through demo days and providing a space free of charge for marketing materials such as rack cards and flyers.



# HEARTWOOD: GATEWAY TO SWVA

## Enhancements

### Landscaping

Located on a 8-acre tract, Heartwood has enhanced the landscape by contracting with Universal Lawn and planting new attractive plants. Pine straw has been added to the flower beds and the grounds are being maintained.

### LOVEwork & SWVA Letters

In partnership with Virginia Tourism Corporation, Heartwood has added a set of LOVE and SWVA letters to the front of the building. These letter were built out of local, reclaimed barn wood and scrap metal by local artisan Hunter Dannhardt of Appalachian Reclaimed. While a unique photo opportunity, the piece heralds the history and heritage of SWVA.

### SWVA Mountain Brew Bar

Formerly known as the Coffee & Wine Bar, the new Mountain Brew Bar area has undergone a complete transformation. The Brew Bar name emerged from the newly established Southwest Virginia Mountain Brew Trail. This trail is a mobile application, which allows craft beer lovers to check-in and get the full taste of Southwest Virginia craft beer. Dining tables have been removed, adding couches and lounge chairs to give this area a brew bar vibe. This provides a warm and welcoming environment for visitors to grab coffee, try a local wine or beer, and take advantage of the free Wi-Fi.



# HEARTWOOD: GATEWAY TO SWVA

## Annual Events

### 1. Thanksgiving Day Buffet

- **Project Description:** Thanksgiving Day Buffet has been an annual event held since the opening of Heartwood in 2011. This event has continued to grow and become popular amongst both visitors and locals alike. Thanksgiving Day Buffet at Heartwood allows you to enjoy the feast without the cleanup!
- **Project Status:** Definite, Ongoing
- **Project Impact:** In 2017, attendance was at an all-time high at 340 with food and beverage sales at \$9,247.55.

### 2. Breakfast with Santa

- **Project Description:** Breakfast with Santa is a classic, annual event that is in demand with Southwest Virginia locals. Breakfast with Santa includes pancakes, sausage, and orange juice for only \$5. Not only do you get to enjoy a tasty breakfast, but children get to meet Santa and get their photo with him free of charge!
- **Project Status:** Definite, Ongoing
- **Project Impact:** This event has become so popular that we have added an additional day of Breakfast with Santa in 2017. Breakfast with Santa was held on December 2nd and 16th having a total of 503 attendees with food and beverage sales at \$2,826.70. Breakfast with Santa will be held on December 1st and 15th of 2018.

### 3. Heartwood Happy Hour

- **Project Description:** Heartwood Happy Hour began in September 2017. A variety of local craft beers and wines are offered at great prices for all of those of age to enjoy. Heartwood Happy Hour helps to connect visitors to the Southwest Virginia Brew Trail by offering a variety of local craft beers which can be found along the trail.
- **Project Status:** Definite, Ongoing
- **Project Impact:** Heartwood Happy Hour offers discounted prices for both locals and visitors to enjoy a local craft beer or wine from Southwest Virginia. This encourages our visitors to visit other local, small businesses throughout the region.

# HEARTWOOD: GATEWAY TO SWVA

## Annual Events

### 4. First Friday Fish Fry

- **Project Description:** First Friday Fish Fry was launched in March 2017. Chef Charles Parker whipped up his signature batter to create a crispy, tasteful catfish fry. This event provides a tasteful, southern cuisine for all to enjoy.
- **Project Status:** Definite, Ongoing
- **Project Impact:** First Friday Fish fry is a hit with the locals, and Heartwood will continue to offer this delicious meal. Food and beverage sales average at \$1,186 during the First Friday Fish Fry dinners.

### 5. Additional Special Events

- **Project Description -** In 2017, two local proms were held at Heartwood, as well as seven weddings. With the hire of a new Heartwood Sales, Marketing, and Events Coordinator we anticipate that special event rentals, including weddings, receptions, anniversary parties, corporate meetings, reunion, etc. will increase considerably in 2018.
- **Project Status:** Definite, Ongoing
- **Project Impact:** Having weddings and proms at Heartwood provides an intimate environment with a touch of local flare. Heartwood offers an affordable and accommodating venue space for a variety of special events.

## Heartwood Visitation - 2017

**Total guests: 37,007**

**6% increase over 2016**

**Best day of week: Thursdays, with an average attendance of 176 (which had a 19.1% increase over 2016)**

**Saturdays saw a 9.9% increase over 2016**

After a steady decline since opening, Heartwood visitation has risen consistently throughout the final months of the year. Since the changes in the programming and business operations of Heartwood began in July 2017, visitation has exceeded 2016 numbers for four of the six months, with the remaining two months falling within 5% of the previous year's visitation. As spring of 2018 approaches and additional changes are made to programming and operations, the visitation is expected to continue on an upward trend.

## Visitor Satisfaction

In a survey conducted in October – December of 2017, the overall impression of Heartwood by visitors is very positive 95% of the time with no negative reactions. The mission of the facility was found to be successful with 60% of respondents stating that they were inspired to visit more of Southwest Virginia as a result of Heartwood.

# HEARTWOOD: GATEWAY TO SWVA

## Future Projects

### 1. \$5 Burger & Bingo Night

- **Project Description:** \$5 Burger and Free Bingo Night
- **Project Status:** Definite
- **Projected Impact:** Attracting a different type of audience to Heartwood, such as millennials and families.
- **Projected Completion Date:** Every Monday Night in 2018

### 2. Taco Tuesday

- **Project Description:** Taco Specials on Tuesday Nights. Heartwood will also be hosting local groups on this night. The group will be purchasing meals per person.
- **Project Status:** Menu – Definite, Groups - Tentative
- **Projected Impact:** Attracting a different type of audience to Heartwood, such as millennials and groups.
- **Projected Completion Date:** Every Tuesday Night in 2018

### 3. Craft Nights

- **Project Description:** Craft classes taught by local artisans or local businesses. Some future craft workshops include: Wreaths, Pamper Kits and Oil Flavoring. Sip and Paint will be hosted by a local artisan, you will be able to come in and paint a preselected image and enjoy wine specials. Sip and Tie will be hosted by a local business owner where you will be able to learn how to tie flies for Fly Fishing and enjoy beer specials.
- **Project Status:**
  - Sip and Paint – Tentative
  - Sip and Tie – Tentative
  - Baths/Wreaths - Definite
- **Projected Impact:** Attracting a number of different types of markets to Heartwood while showcasing our local artisans and business owners.
- **Projected Completion Date:** Every Week, One Night a Week in 2018

### 4. Wedding Expos

- **Project Description:** Staff will be attending 6 expos in and around the SWVA area to showcase all that Heartwood has to offer for soon-to-be Brides.
- **Project Status:** Definite
- **Projected Impact:** Showcase all that Heartwood has to offer for soon-to-be Brides.
- **Projected Completion Date:** December 2018

# HEARTWOOD: GATEWAY TO SWVA

## *Future Projects*

### 5. Susan G. Komen Virginia Blue Ridge Walk

- **Project Description:** A 15 mile Komen walk will take place in Abingdon at the end of October 2018. The packet pickup for this race will be at Heartwood as well as a brunch (that will be included in race fees for run/walkers) on the Sunday following the event. Throughout the month of October Heartwood will “go pink” in support of the Komen walk. All proceeds from the walk and Heartwood will stay in SWVA.
- **Project Status:** Definite
- **Projected Impact:** Increases exposure of Heartwood through a partnership with the largest and best-funded breast cancer organization in the United States
- **Projected Completion Date:** October 2018

### 6. SWVA Race Series

- **Project Description:** Packet pickup location at Heartwood. This is a chance to promote Heartwood, SWVA Outdoors, communities in SWVA and a couple preexisting races in the area. When a runner completes a checkpoint they will get a specialty medal; checkpoints are at race number 3, 5, 8 and 10. After the race series is over, there will be a reception at Heartwood for those that have ran 10 or more races; tickets will be available for purchase for supporters.
- **Project Status:** Bring communities together through running.
- **Projected Impact:** Increases regional exposure by having races all across the region.
- **Projected Completion Date:** Every year moving forward. Medal/shirt design will change year to year.

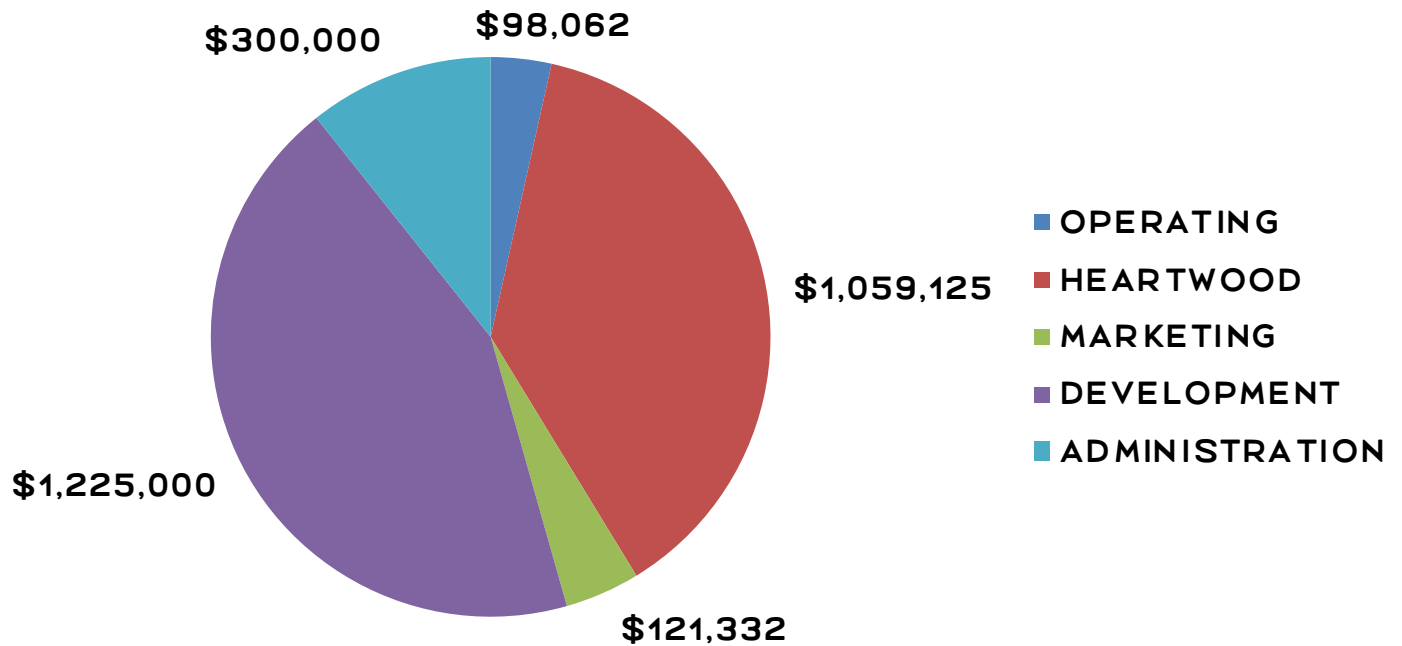
### 7. SWVA Mountain Brew Bash

- **Project Description:** The SWVA Mountain Brew Bash will be held on June 16, 2018 on the Heartwood Amphitheatre. This will showcase local food, wine, craft beer and music throughout SWVA. This will provide an opportunity for visitors and locals to experience a true taste of our wonderful region.
- **Project Status:** Definite
- **Project Impact:** This event will help to showcase and promote our regions local food, wine, craft beer and music. Will provide a unique experience for our visitors. Small business owners will have the opportunity to market and promote their business to hundreds of people while also providing a personable experience.

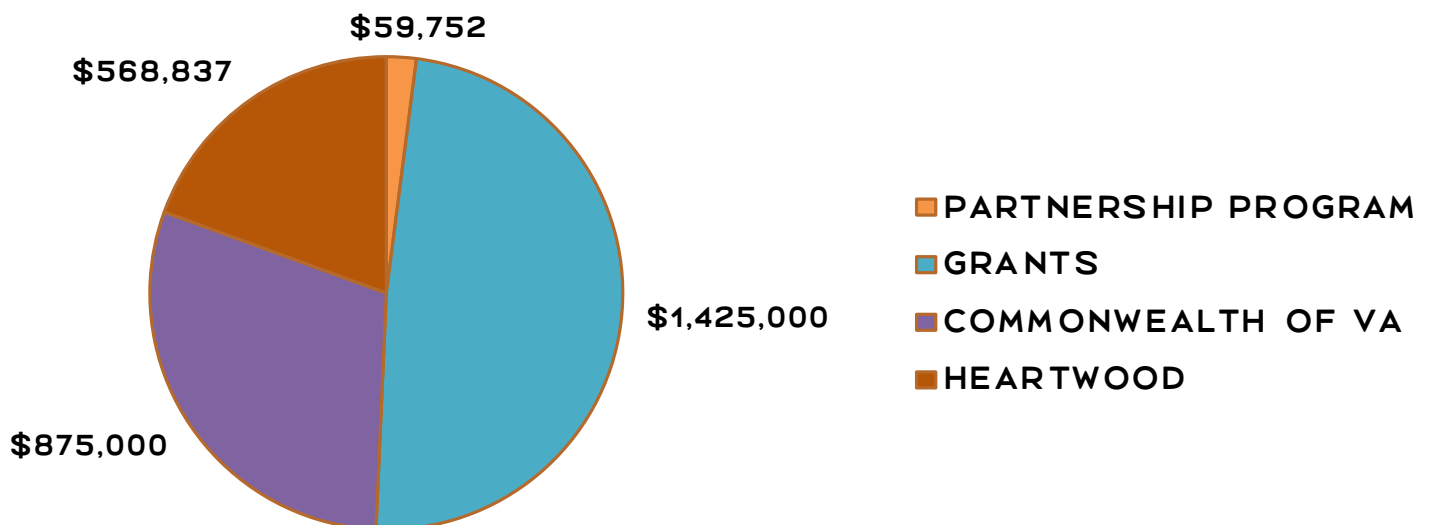
# FINANCIALS

FY 2016-2017

## EXPENSES



## REVENUES





*A different side of Virginia*

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ABINGDON, VA 24210  
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