

Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation | Friends of SWVA
'Round the Mountain | The Crooked Road



2020

REGIONAL IMPACT
ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION



Tucked in the ancient Appalachian Mountains of Southwest Virginia (SWVA) 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 53 towns of the region, Friends of Southwest Virginia [501(c)(3)] and the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation (State Foundation) are 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.

CULTURAL HERITAGE: From the route of westward expansion along The Great Road to becoming the cradle of America's tobacco and coal industries, the region has a vibrant and rich place in American history.

NATURAL RESOURCES: We are enhancing opportunities for outdoor recreation in our mountains, forests, rivers, and lakes, and for the incredible diversity of plants and animals that make SWVA home.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT: 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.

ARTS AND CRAFTS: An integrated organization, the 'Round the Mountain artisan network, helps craftspeople build their businesses, learn new skills, and share their inspirations. The network promotes and markets artisans, studios, craft shops, farms, wineries, and more throughout the region.

MUSIC: Another key partner and separate 501(c)(3) organization, The Crooked Road: Virginia's Music Heritage Trail, connects nine major sites and dozens of affiliate venues where the region's unique music can be heard.

STORYTELLING: For a long time, Southwest Virginia had gone without a unified brand. Through an extremely detailed branding process, the region is sharing the refreshed brand with the world.

As an introduction to it all, the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace (formerly Heartwood), is a 29,000-square-foot regional gateway to the region for the world and serves as a visitor center, retail center for local crafts, music venue, and community space.

Southwest Virginia: A great place to visit for a week's vacation – or to make a home for a lifetime.

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**FRIENDSOFSWVA.ORG
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COVER: CASCADE FALLS, GILES COUNTY
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ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

Southwest Virginia includes 19 counties, four independent cities, and 53 towns located on the southern and western border of Virginia.

Its 8,600 square miles – more than a fifth of Virginia's total and larger than eight US states – are located along mountain ridges and in fertile valleys, with two national parks, 11 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 genuine. A premier place for outdoor 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 a variety of initiatives. The Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace (formerly Heartwood), The Crooked Road and 'Round The Mountain, are a few that promote entrepreneurial and employment opportunities.

With the decline of the traditional industries of Southwest Virginia – agricultural tobacco, coal mining, and manufacturing – the Commonwealth of Virginia recognized the need for an organization to lead one aspect of the redevelopment of the region through a new focus on the creative economy. The General Assembly authorized the Foundation in 2008 to serve as this leader and coordinator of the creative economy.

The **creative economy** movement is defined by innovative business development techniques focused on natural and cultural regional assets. From the arts and music of the region to cultural goods and services capitalized through tourism, the joint work is revolutionizing the rural economic development system of Southwest Virginia and providing new jobs for the region.

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

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 the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace (formerly Heartwood).
- 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.

Friends of Southwest Virginia is supported through a regional partnership program of the 19 counties, four cities, and 53 towns of Southwest Virginia; while funding from the many communities varies, support across the region for a single front in economic redevelopment is unified.

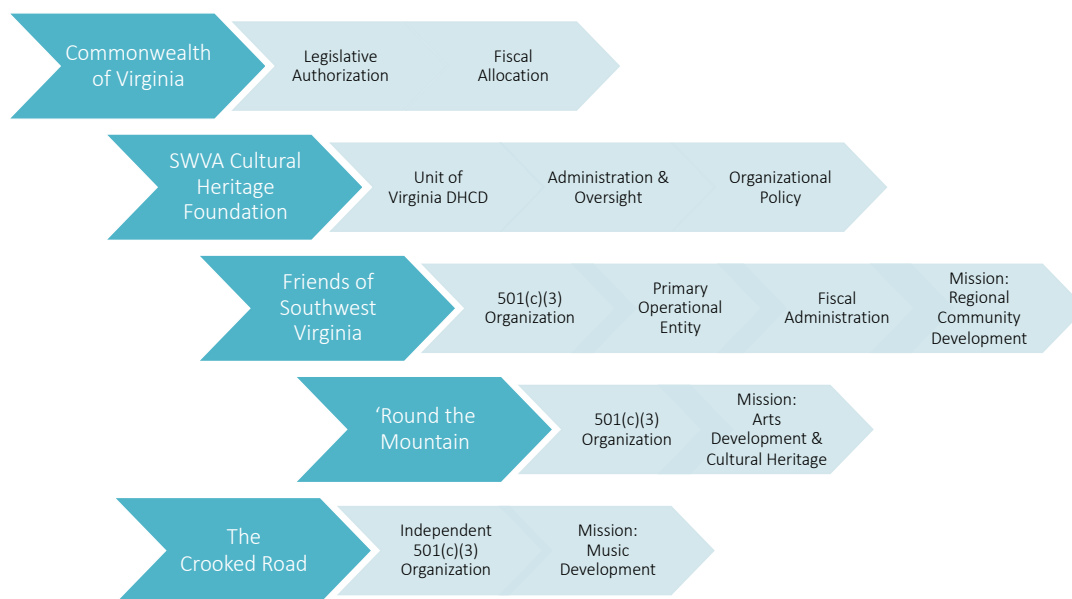


SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA
CULTURAL
HERITAGE
FOUNDATION

Friends of
SOUTHWEST
VIRGINIA



ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW



Four independent but interconnected organizations make up the creative economy of Southwest Virginia.

The **Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation** was established in 2008 to provide the overarching strategy and direction for creative economy development. The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development serves as the administrator for the Foundation, employs the key leadership of both organizations, provides fiscal oversight of state funds, and provides additional support for organizational success. The Foundation operates with a full Board of Trustees made up of Governor-appointed leadership from throughout the 19 counties and four cities of the region.



Friends of Southwest Virginia, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, was established in 2011 to operate alongside the Foundation and serve as the primary fiscal 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 majority of organization employees, grant development programs, and all operations of the SWVA Cultural Center & Marketplace are housed within this non-profit.



'Round the Mountain (RTM) began in the fall of 2004 when former Governor Mark Warner's Virginia Works Initiative designated funds to develop Southwest Virginia as a major cultural and heritage tourism destination and to begin an artisan and craft advocacy organization. The group received non-profit status in March 2006. Previously, RTM operated independently of the other organizations, but to reduce overhead costs and better align programs, Friends now staffs the organization under the leadership of the still independent RTM Board of Directors.



The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 2004 whose mission is to support economic development in Southwest Virginia by promoting the region's rich heritage of traditional music. The organization has an Executive Committee, Executive Board, Board of Directors, and many committees made up of representatives from throughout the 19 counties and four cities of Southwest Virginia.



SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CULTURAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION MISSION & BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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. These include the SWVA Cultural Center & Marketplace (formerly Heartwood), 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, COUNTY	ORGANIZATION
Senator	Todd Pillion	Trustee, Senate	Commonwealth of Virginia	Senate of Virginia
Senator	Ben Chafin	Vice Chair, Trustee, Senate	Commonwealth of Virginia	Senate of Virginia
Delegate	James Will Morefield	Chair, Trustee, House of Delegates	Commonwealth of Virginia	House of Delegates
Delegate	Chris Hurst	Trustee, House of Delegates	Commonwealth of Virginia	House of Delegates
Delegate	Sam Rasoul	Trustee, House of Delegates	Commonwealth of Virginia	House of Delegates
Mr.	William Smith	Treasurer, Citizen	Wytheville, Wythe	Smith Enterprises
Mr.	Dean Chiapetto	Citizen	Floyd	Dean Chiapetto Insurance
Mr.	Kevin Byrd	Trustee, Planning District	City of Radford	NRV Regional Commission
Mr.	Duane Miller	Trustee, Planning District	Duffield, Scott	LENOWISCO Planning District Commission
Mr.	Jimmy Morani	Trustee, Abingdon	Abingdon, Washington	Town of Abingdon
Ms.	Robyn Raines	Trustee, Washington County	Abingdon, Washington	Whitetop Yoga
Ms.	Nancy Brooks	Trustee, 'Round the Mountain	Tazewell	Sleepin' Dog, The Lost Pearl Gallery
Ms.	Pat Sharkey	Trustee, 'Round the Mountain	Floyd	Artisan, Floyd County Tourism
Ms.	Julie Walters Steele	Trustee, 'Round the Mountain	Critz, Patrick	Reynolds Homestead
Ms.	Kathy Shearer	Trustee, 'Round the Mountain	Meadowview, Washington	Holston Mountain Artisans
Ms.	Amanda Pillion	Trustee, Commissioner - VA Commission for the Arts	Abingdon, Washington	Virginia Commission for the Arts
Mr.	Adam C. Hutchison	Ex Officio, President - VHCC	Abingdon, Washington	Virginia Highlands Community College
Mr.	Larry Yates	Ex Officio, Chair - The Crooked Road	Haysi, Dickenson	Town of Haysi
Ms.	Ellen Reynolds	Ex Officio, Chair - 'Round the Mountain	Wytheville, Wythe	Beagle Ridge Herb Farm
Mr.	Erik Johnston	Ex Officio, Director - DHCD	Commonwealth of Virginia	Department of Housing & Community Development
Ms.	Rita McClenny	Ex Officio, Director - VTC	Commonwealth of Virginia	Virginia Tourism Corporation
Mr.	David Matlock	Ex Officio, ED - SWVAHEC	Abingdon, Washington	SWVA Higher Ed Center

FRIENDS OF SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA MISSION & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The mission of Friends of Southwest Virginia is:

- To preserve, promote, and present the cultural and natural assets of Southwest Virginia;
- To work in partnerships 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 the SWVA Cultural Center & Marketplace.

SALUTATION	NAME	SERVING AS	COMMUNITY, COUNTY	ORGANIZATION
Ms.	Linda DiYorio	Chair	Wytheville, Wythe	Community Volunteer
Mr.	John Kilgore, Jr.	Vice Chair	Gate City, Scott	Scott County Economic Development Authority
Mr.	James A. Baldwin	Past Chair	Lebanon, Russell	Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission
Mr.	Fred Ramey	Secretary	City of Norton	City of Norton
Mr.	Aaron Sizemore	Treasurer	Marion, Smyth	Mount Rogers Planning District Commission
Ms.	Amanda Livingston	Director	Abingdon, Washington	Abingdon Convention & Visitors Bureau
Ms.	Amy Atwood	Director	Marion, Smyth	Virginia State Parks
Mr.	Steve Lawson	Director	Big Stone Gap, Wise	Town of Big Stone Gap
Ms.	Sally Truslow	Director	Floyd	Stonewall Bed & Breakfast
Mr.	Todd Wolford	Director	Wytheville, Wythe	Downtown Wytheville
Ms.	Mandy Archer	Director	City of Galax	Blue Ridge Crossroads SBDC
Mr.	Michael Armbrister	Director	City of Martinsville	West Piedmont Planning District Commission
Ms.	Shannon Blevins	Director	Wise	University of Virginia's College at Wise
Mr.	Erik Johnston	Ex Officio with Voting Rights, Director - DHCD	Commonwealth of Virginia	Department of Housing & Community Development
Delegate	Will Morefield	Ex Officio with Voting Rights, Chair - SWVA CHF	Tazewell	Virginia House of Delegates
Ms.	Rita McClenny	Ex Officio with Voting Rights, President - VTC	Commonwealth of Virginia	Virginia Tourism Corporation

'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN MISSION & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The mission of 'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network is to promote sustainable economic development of the region's communities by assisting local artisans with marketing, educational, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

SALUTATION	NAME	BOARD POSITION	COMMUNITY, COUNTY	ORGANIZATION
Ms.	Ellen Reynolds	President	Wytheville, Wythe	Beagle Ridge Herb Farm & Environmental Education Center
Ms.	Nancy Brooks	Vice President	Tazewell	Sleepin' Dog
Ms.	Sandy Ratliff	Secretary / Treasurer	Abingdon, Washington	Virginia Community Capital
Ms.	Martha Biggar	Director	Draper, Pulaski	The Shedio
Mr.	David McLeish	Director	Meadowview, Washington	Dreamland Alpacas
Ms.	Sarah Romeo	Director	Cedar Bluff, Tazewell	Appalachian Arts Center
Ms.	Debbie Yates	Director	Konnarock, Washington	Grim Pottery
Ms.	Debbie Milton	Director	Lebanon, Russell	Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission
Ms.	Nikki Hicks	Director	Abingdon, Washington	William King Museum of Art
Ms.	Pat Sharkey	Director	Floyd	Artisan, Floyd County Tourism
Ms.	Sharon Ewing	Director	Lebanon, Russell	Regional Manager, Virginia State Parks
Ms.	Sarah Gillespie	Director	Marion, Smyth	Smyth County Chamber of Commerce
Ms.	Becky Nave	Ex Officio	City of Bristol	Virginia Tourism Corporation
Ms.	Jenna Wagner	Ex Officio, Deputy Director	Abingdon, Washington	Friends of SWVA, SWVACHF

THE CROOKED ROAD MISSION & EXECUTIVE BOARD

The mission of The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail is to support economic development in Southwest Virginia by promoting this region's rich heritage of traditional music.

SALUTATION	NAME	BOARD POSITION	COMMUNITY, COUNTY	ORGANIZATION
Mr.	Larry D. Yates	President	Haysi, Dickenson	Town of Haysi
Mr.	James A. Baldwin	Vice President	Lebanon, Russell	Cumberland Plateau PDC
Ms.	Lisa Bleakley	Secretary	Blacksburg, Montgomery	Montgomery County VA Regional Tourism
Mr.	David Reemsnyder	Treasurer	Blacksburg, Montgomery	At Large
Mr.	John Kilgore, Jr.	Past President	Gate City, Scott	Scott County Economic Development Authority
Mr.	Jim Archer	Director	City of Salem	At Large
Ms.	Emily Brown	Director	City of Galax	Galax Tourism
Mr.	Richard Emmett	Director	City of Galax	Blue Ridge Music Center
Mr.	Dylan Locke	Director	Floyd, Floyd	The Floyd Country Store
Ms.	AJ Robinson	Director	Tazewell, Tazewell	Tazewell County Tourism
Ms.	Leah Ross	Director	City of Bristol	Birthplace of Country Music
Mr.	David Rotenizer	Director	Rocky Mount, Franklin	Franklin County Economic Development & Tourism
Ms.	Rita Surratt	Director	Clintwood, Dickenson	Dickenson County Tourism
Mr.	David Woodard	Director	St. Paul, Russell / Wise	Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority
Ms.	Jenna Wagner	Ex Officio	Abingdon, Washington	Friends of Southwest Virginia
Mr.	Jackie Christian	Ex Officio	Wise, Wise	VDOT
Ms.	Becky Nave	Ex Officio	Commonwealth of Virginia	Virginia Tourism Corporation
Mr.	Bill Kornrich	Ex Officio	Sneedville, Hancock, TN	At Large
Mr.	Jon Lohman	Ex Officio	City of Charlottesville	Virginia Foundation for the Humanities

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THE VIRGINIA CREEPER TRAIL, ABINGDON
PHOTO BY BILLY BOWLING

CREATIVE ECONOMY IMPACT

Executive Summary

In response to declining employment in Southwest Virginia's historically prominent industries, stakeholders around the region are investing in the development of the creative economy. Since the start of the Crooked Road in 2004, travel expenditures in the region have increased from \$648.9 million in 2004 to \$1.118 billion in 2019. Additionally, local tax revenues have increased by 56% and state tax revenues by 53% 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 in SWVA increased by 72% from 2004 to 2019.
- Southwest Virginia counties and cities collected over \$27 million in local travel related tax revenue in 2019.
- Even though overall employment in SWVA is slightly down compared to a decade ago, employment in leisure and hospitality has grown by 15%.
- Residents of Virginia's 9th Congressional District spend \$1.4 billion on outdoor recreation each year.
- Southwest Virginia is home to at least 14 outdoor recreation companies.

Overall employment in SWVA has dropped since 2001, but employment in the leisure and hospitality industry sector has increased by 15%¹.

The outdoor recreation industry has grown vastly across the United States, with an estimated \$887 billion of annual consumer spending across the nation and 7.6 million jobs. Southwest Virginia's numbers alone are impressive with 14 outdoor companies calling the region home. Furthermore, Southwest Virginians spend an estimated \$1.4 billion on outdoor recreation each year².

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.

¹Data from Bureau of Economic Analysis

²Data from the Outdoor Industry Association

CREATIVE ECONOMY IMPACT

COVID-19 Pandemic Response & Trend

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the world in many ways and it certainly has changed the way we travel. Southwest Virginia's natural and cultural assets have seen increased use, challenging Friends of SWVA to have a more focused approach when implementing and developing programs that leverage the creative economy. Friends has looked at the national trends related to travel and outdoor recreation, as well as the opportunity to leverage SWVA's cultural and natural assets.

According to Virginia Tourism Corporation's Visitor Profile for Southwest Virginia, the number one reason visitors travel to SWVA is to visit family and friends (47%¹). As we all evolve into the new normal in Virginia, traveler trends and patterns will definitely have a direct impact on travel expenditures in SWVA.

The Outdoor Industry Association's research shows that 57% of Virginians participate in outdoor recreation activities, and approximately 29%² of these trips happen close to home (meaning within 30 minutes or less). Friends of SWVA sees these insights as a path forward for recovery. As an organization, we are addressing accessibility, capacity, and promotion of our creative economy assets, including outdoor recreation.

In August 2020, Tourism Economics conducted a second wave of forecast study for Virginia Tourism Corporation regarding the impact of COVID-19 on Virginia travel and tourism industry. The analysis was done both at the state and regional level. This data suggests recovery in the Heart of Appalachia and Blue Ridge Highlands regions of SWVA trending positive by 2022.



¹Virginia Tourism Corporation Travel Data & Profiles

²Data from the Outdoor Industry Association

CREATIVE ECONOMY IMPACT

Virginia Tourism - Drive 2.0

In 2019, the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) completed a long-term strategic plan to help increase tourism visitation and spending across the Commonwealth. This plan is titled “Drive 2.0,” and will build on the existing findings and conclusions from the 2013 Statewide Tourism Plan⁹.

As Friends of SWVA moves into the new year, staff will be working with tourism partners on what’s next for the 19 counties, four cities, and 53 communities of SWVA. You’ll find below why it’s important for Virginia to have a state tourism plan and why it’s important for Friends of SWVA to integrate and align our efforts.

Even though DRIVE 2.0 content was researched and completed prior to the COVID-19 crisis, now more than ever it is imperative that Virginia has a plan that identifies trends impacting the world. If Virginia is going to compete and win, the state needs a strategic plan that will put Virginia ahead of the competition by focusing on creative tourism development. DRIVE 2.0 will position Virginia communities to grow in directions that should provide greater economic opportunities.

Travelers spend \$71 million per day in Virginia. That’s almost \$3 million spent every hour in Virginia by travelers.

When tourism development is increased, the visitor experience, economic impact to communities and marketing competitiveness is enhanced.



⁹Virginia Tourism Corporation Statewide Tourism Plan. More information available at <https://www.vatc.org/drive2/>.

CREATIVE ECONOMY IMPACT

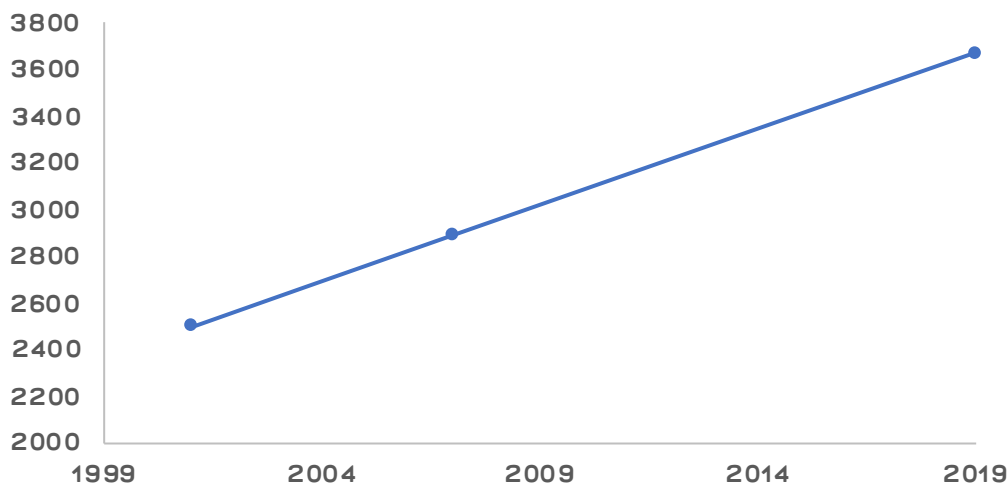
History & Trends

The outdoor recreation industry is booming in Virginia. 57% of residents participate in outdoor recreation each year, with approximately 29% of residents taking outdoor recreation trips within 30 minutes of their homes. Southwest Virginia residents spend an estimated \$1.4 billion on outdoor recreation each year with fishing, off-roading and camping being the most popular outdoor activities. And it's not only Virginians who are taking advantage of the beautiful region. Out-of-state visitors spend \$6.42 billion on outdoor recreation⁴ in Virginia.

Due to regional and state-wide efforts, the Virginia Artisan Trails networks have offered a unique opportunity for visitors to connect with creative artisans, craft venues, vineyards, farms, breweries, local restaurants, and cultural points of interest. These efforts have led to a thriving artisan industry as well. The Virginia Artisan Industry has created nearly 12,000 jobs, attracted 699,320 travelers, and has generated \$15.6 million in state tax revenue while yielding a total economic impact of \$527.2 million⁵.

Due to the increase in the outdoor recreation and artisan industries, Southwest Virginia has seen a slow, upward trend of employment in the creative economy sectors of arts, entertainment, and recreation⁶.

CREATIVE ECONOMY ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT



⁴ Data from the Outdoor Industry Association

⁵ Data from The Economic and Fiscal Impact of the Artisan Industry in Virginia, CHMURA Economics and Analytics

⁶ Analysis Total Full-Time and Part-Time Employment by County Data - Bureau of Economic Analysis.

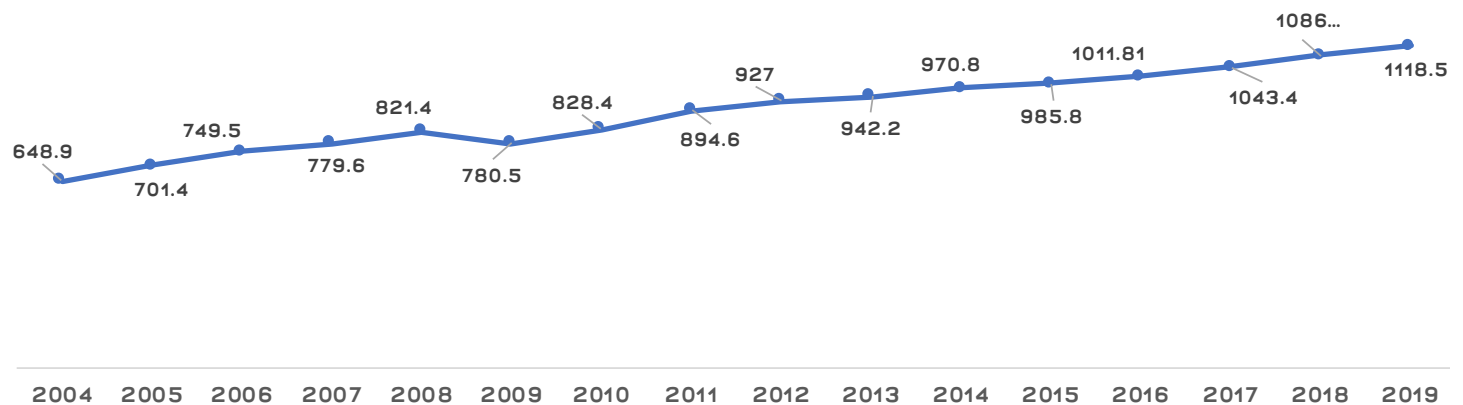
CREATIVE ECONOMY IMPACT

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 2019, travel expenditures in Southwest Virginia grew by \$469 million, with travelers spending a total of \$1.118 billion in 2019. In this fourteen-year period, travel expenditures have increased by 72%⁷.

TRAVEL EXPENDITURES IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA (MILLIONS)



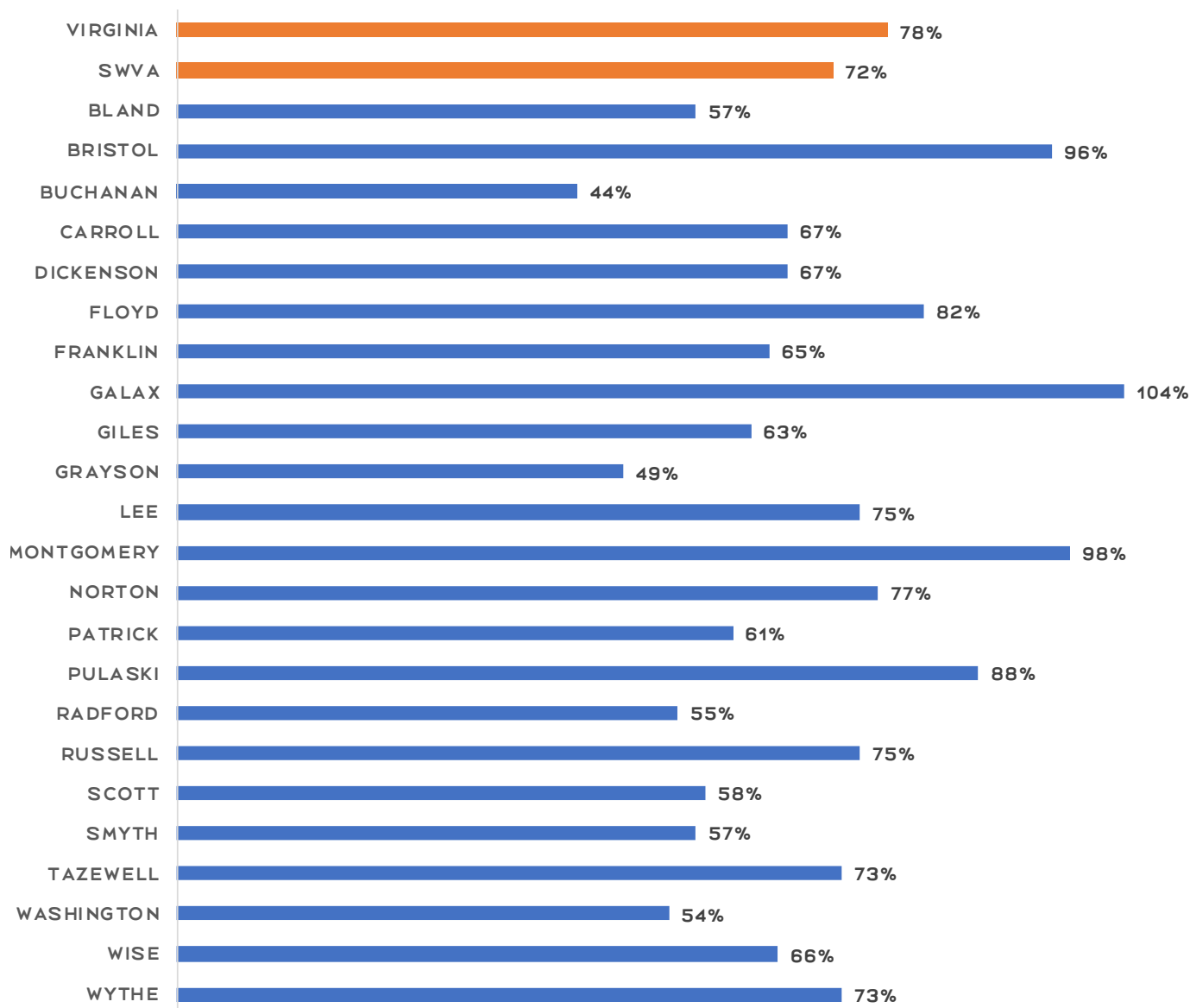
⁷Annual travel related tax receipt estimates taken from the Virginia Tourism Corporation Economic Impact of Domestic Travel in Virginia report - U.S. Travel Association

CREATIVE ECONOMY IMPACT

Tourism

Southwest Virginia counties with the highest travel expenditures in 2019 are Franklin, Montgomery, Washington, and Wythe, all with annual travel expenditures over \$100 million. Those localities that had the highest travel expenditures in 2019, and in past years, tend to be located along major interstates or nearby larger cities and towns. However, when looking at how travel expenditures have changed since 2004, more rural and isolated counties have also shown large increases in travel expenditures.

PERCENT CHANGE IN TRAVEL EXPENDITURES 2004-2019



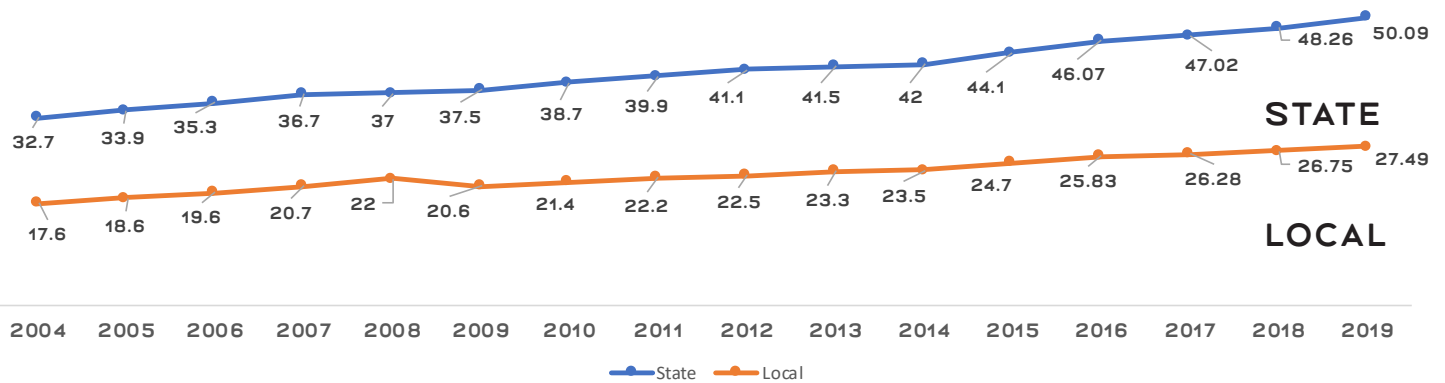
Annual travel related tax receipt estimates taken from the Virginia Tourism Corporation Economic Impact of Domestic Travel in Virginia report - U.S. Travel Association

CREATIVE ECONOMY IMPACT

Tourism

Traveler spending in the region also supports individual localities and the state fiscally. Local travel related tax revenue in 2019 was over \$27 million and state revenue was over \$50 million. These both reflect a steady trend of increased tax revenues from travel⁸.

TRAVEL RELATED TAX REVENUES (MILLIONS)

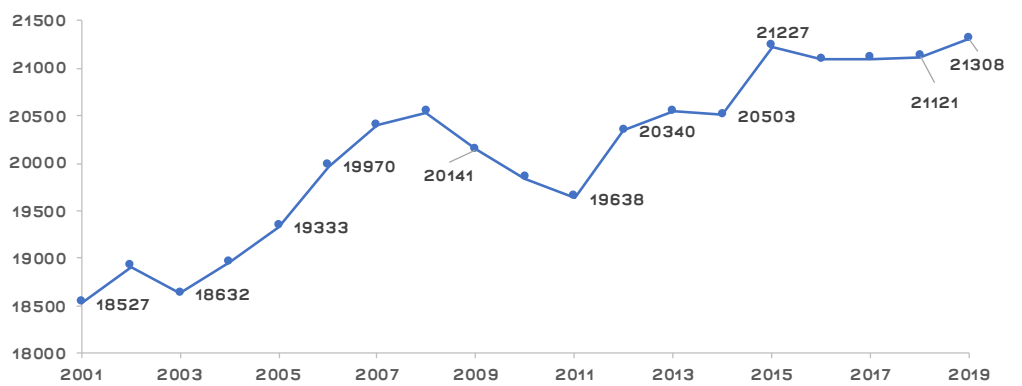


The increase in travel-related local and state tax receipts mirrors the upward trend in travel expenditures. These increases in local tax receipts are influenced by the increase in local tax collection through food service, admissions, and lodging taxes. The increase in tax receipts at state, county,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

In addition to direct traveler spending through food, lodging, recreation, and shopping which supports local businesses, this travel spending also supports job growth in the region. According to the Virginia Tourism Corporation, 10,293 full time equivalent jobs existed in SWVA thanks to travel in 2019. This is up 2,353 jobs since 2004.

Overall employment in the leisure and hospitality industry sector is up 15% from 2001 to 2019. While overall employment has failed to rebound to pre-recession levels, leisure and hospitality employment is at a peak.

LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT



⁸ Annual travel related tax receipt estimates taken from the Virginia Tourism Corporation Economic Impact of Domestic Travel in Virginia report - U.S. Travel Association

CREATIVE ECONOMY IMPACT

Travel Expenditures by Locality

County/City	2004 (millions)	2019 (millions)	2004-2019% Change
Bland	9.56	14.99	57%
Bristol	30.16	59.28	96%
Buchanan	14.68	21.14	44%
Carroll	44.88	74.91	67%
Dickenson	4.87	8.16	67%
Floyd	14.43	26.27	82%
Franklin	73.3	120.91	65%
Galax	9.2	18.76	104%
Giles	18.09	29.53	63%
Grayson	11.05	16.46	49%
Lee	7.68	13.45	75%
Montgomery	85.04	168.67	98%
Norton	11.9	21.12	77%
Patrick	18.46	29.84	61%
Pulaski	33.49	62.88	88%
Radford	10.88	16.84	55%
Russell	7.67	13.44	75%
Scott	11.96	18.93	58%
Smyth	17.48	27.41	57%
Tazewell	31.87	55.18	73%
Washington	73.25	112.92	54%
Wise	22.01	36.50	66%
Wythe	86.99	150.82	73%
SWVA Total	648.9	1118.5	72%
Virginia	15,041.50	26,721.35	78%

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

CREATIVE ECONOMY IMPACT

Travel Related Tax Receipts by Locality

County/City	Local			State		
	2004 (millions)	2019 (millions)	2004-2019% Change	2004 (millions)	2019 (millions)	2004-2019% Change
Bland	.3	.42	40%	.43	.57	32%
Bristol	.95	1.7	79%	1.56	2.79	79%
Buchanan	.18	.23	27%	.53	.62	17%
Carroll	1.42	2.15	51%	2.31	3.48	50%
Dickenson	.12	.18	50%	.3	.45	50%
Floyd	.46	.75	63%	.7	1.18	68%
Franklin	2.31	3.48	50%	3.1	4.77	54%
Galax	.24	.44	83%	.5	.88	76%
Giles	.6	.88	46%	.97	1.41	45%
Grayson	.35	.47	34%	.5	.69	38%
Lee	.2	.31	55%	.42	.65	54%
Montgomery	1.63	2.94	80%	4.16	7.41	78%
Norton	.55	.89	62%	.61	.99	62%
Patrick	.58	.85	46%	1.16	1.64	41%
Pulaski	1.06	1.80	70%	1.62	2.70	66%
Radford	.33	.46	39%	.56	.76	36%
Russell	.13	.2	54%	.43	.65	51%
Scott	.32	.45	40%	.64	.89	39%
Smyth	.38	.54	42%	1.17	1.63	39%
Tazewell	.47	.74	57%	1.53	2.38	55%
Washington	1.91	2.68	40%	3.65	5.12	40%
Wise	.34	.5	47%	1.11	1.6	44%
Wythe	2.8	4.34	55%	4.7	6.78	44%
SWVA Total	17.63	27.49	56%	32.66	50.09	53%
Virginia	443.0	724.46	63%	640.7	1,123.30	75%

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

CREATIVE ECONOMY STRATEGY

The Comprehensive Economy

As the economy in Southwest Virginia began its rapid transition from tobacco, coal, and labor-based manufacturing in the early 2000s, the Commonwealth of Virginia worked to identify each area of economic development capable of advancing the economy. This combined work of multiple organizations forms the comprehensive economy.

A complete economy is balanced between all areas of economic development from agriculture and manufacturing development to small business and tourism development. Friends of Southwest Virginia and the associated organizations focus on developing the creative economy as part of the larger economic development efforts of Southwest Virginia.



Our Focus: The Creative Economy

The Creative Economy is defined as innovative business development techniques finding success based on novel imaginative qualities that no longer rely on the limited resources of land, labor, and capital.

We develop and promote place-based and unique experiences through working in the lenses of community, tourism, and economic development.

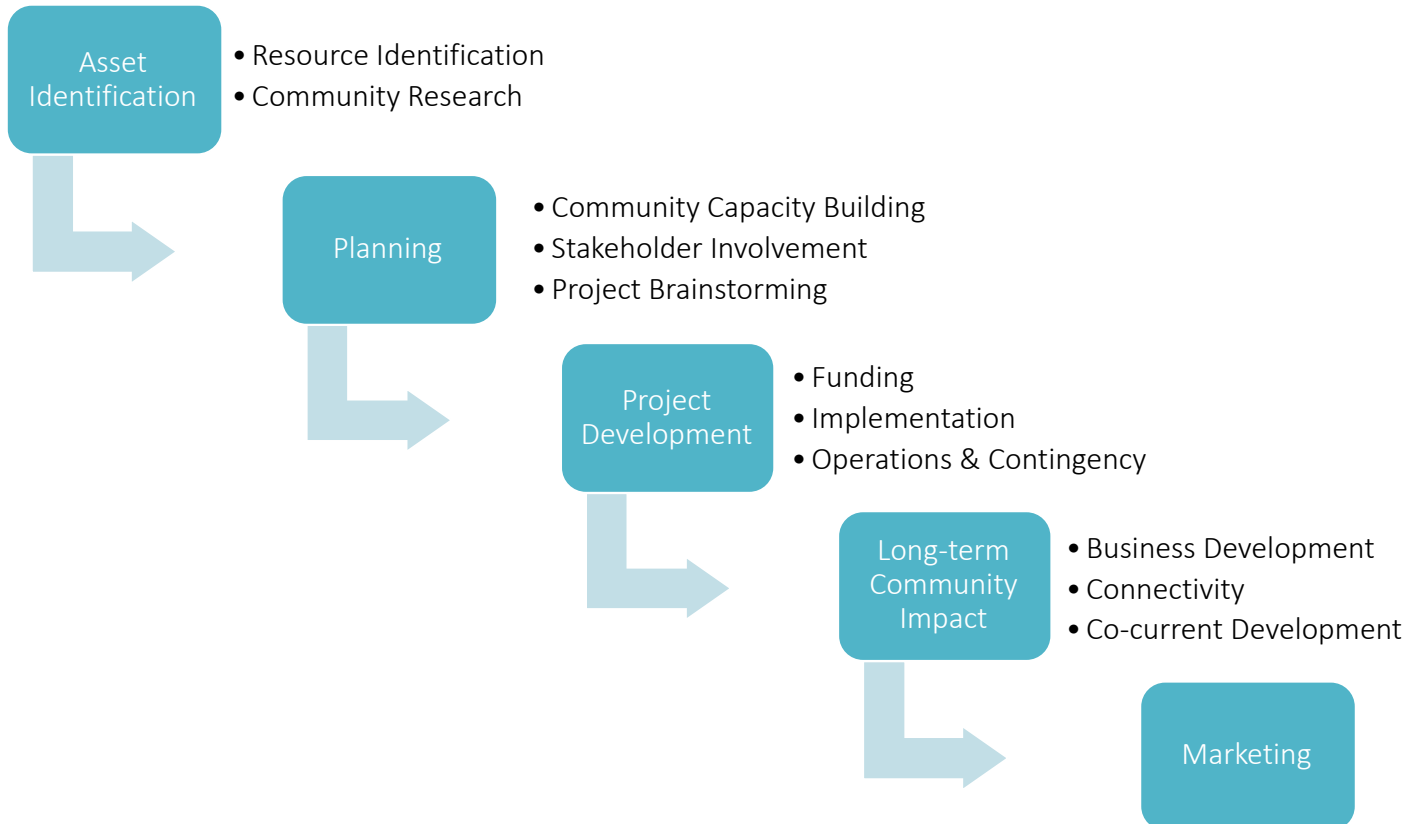
1. **Community Development:**
 - Connect assets to a community's core
 - Facilitation and community capacity building
2. **Economic Development:**
 - New business development connectivity and assistance
3. **Tourism Development:**
 - Product development and planning
 - Market and promotion through SWVA



CREATIVE ECONOMY STRATEGY

How?

The process to develop the creative economy of a community consists of identifying assets, planning, and capacity development, project development, long-term impact development, and marketing.



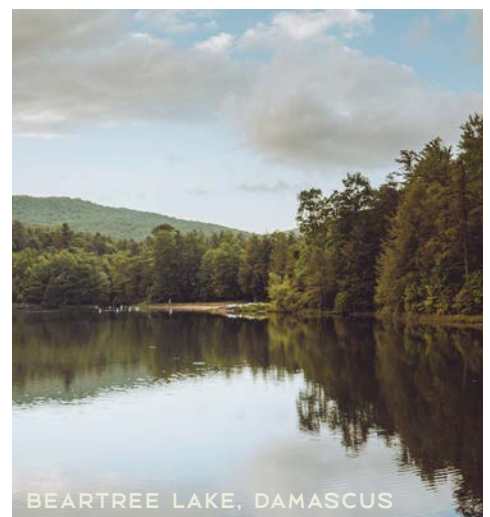
GOAL: BALANCED COMMUNITIES



VA CREEPER TRAIL, ALVARADO



DOWNTOWN DAMASCUS



BEARTREE LAKE, DAMASCUS

CREATIVE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT

Driving Southwest Virginia's creative economy through long-range community and regional planning, capacity building from neighborhood to multi-county level cooperatives, product planning and development, and cooperative regional project development.

Community Capacity Building & Engagement

AIR SHIFT

In January of 2019, Idalina Walker became a trained AIR Shift facilitator. The AIR Shift workshop is a three day program led by trained facilitators to help community members grow as creatives, and work together to design projects that will make their community a better place to live. The participants are divided into small groups, and over two days they identify a project that would make their community a better place. On day three the teams pitch their ideas to the panel who then selects one project to fund. All projects must be \$10,000 or under, and can be implemented within one year. In addition to learning key skills to grow their creative minds, participants will receive one-on-one coaching from trained facilitators to grow their creative and business skills.



Patrick County has been a pilot location for launching the AIR Shift workshop both in person and online. For more information on the AIR Shift program, or to see AIR Shift in action, please visit airpatrickcounty.com or contact the Development Team - development@FriendsofSWVA.org.

LOVERS LEAP, PATRICK COUNTY
PHOTO BY ANNA LESTER

AMERICORPS VISTA

Friends of Southwest Virginia and The University of Virginia's College at Wise have partnered to build and expand on programming through the work of AmeriCorps VISTAs. Southwest Virginia will soon welcome five AmeriCorps VISTAs who will work to develop the creative economy work of Southwest Virginia. These VISTA members will be positioned in the Clinch River, High Knob, and Mount Rogers anchor areas.



CREATIVE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT



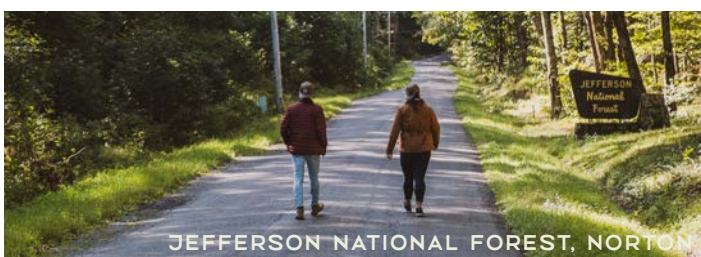
Community Capacity Building & Engagement

HIGH KNOB MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The High Knob Enhancement Corporation has taken an active role in carrying out the High Knob Master Plan identified initiatives. Staff member Idalina Walker attends High Knob Enhancement Corporation meetings and has facilitated conversations with the group to help execute the master plan. One of the outcomes of this collaboration is the formation of the High Knob Think Tank group. This group is engaged and active in the High Knob communities. Participants

include representatives from outdoor recreation clubs at UVA-Wise and Mountain Empire Community College, as well as area outfitters. Representatives are community leaders and have a wide variety of recreation experience. This group has produced a High Knob area informational packet that outlines information for visitors and locals to take advantage of the local resources and destinations, with many promising community engagement strategies to come. Learn more about the High Knob Master Plan at <https://friendsofswva.org/development/anchor-areas/high-knob-recreation-area/>

HIGH KNOB OBSERVATION TOWER



Idalina Walker
Creative Economy Development
Specialist
Friends of SWVA
iwalker@friendsofswva.org
276-492-2400

CREATIVE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT

Community Capacity Building & Engagement

CLINCH RIVER VALLEY INITIATIVE

As the Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI) looks forward to its second decade of service it can lay claim to many signature accomplishments. The Hometowns of the Clinch program increased access to the Clinch River, branding and signage, expanded environmental education programs, and the creation of the new Clinch River State Park are but a few of CRVI's many successes.

Over the last two years, Idalina Walker has facilitated monthly meetings with the CRVI Steering Committee and biannual public meetings with the CRVI Transition Team. These meetings have not only served as a platform for updates on CRVI business, but also as an opportunity for partners to connect and share best practices and successes.

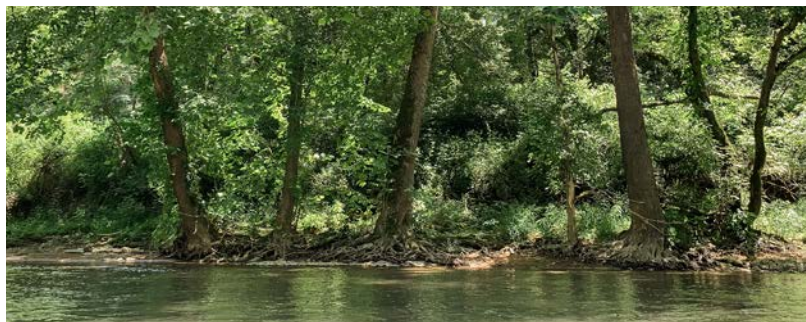
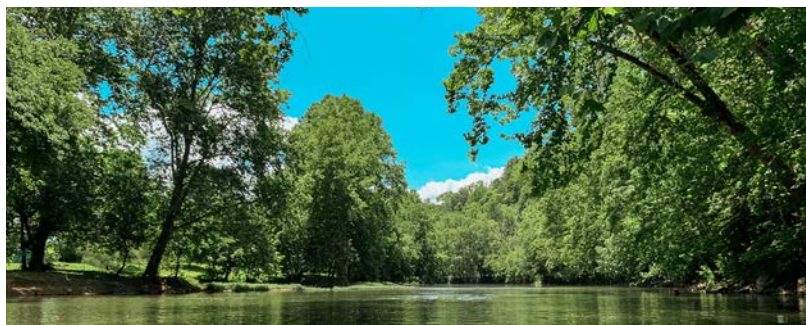
CRVI Transition Team: The Transition team has taken on the responsibility of executing the 2019-2023 CRVI

Strategic plan. Sub-action committees have been created in the areas of finance, development, and communications. These teams have developed a fundraising strategy, drafted by-laws, written job descriptions, researched COVID-19 economic survival strategies, held community conversations, and are in the final stages of incorporation. CRVI looks forward to convening a newly appointed Board of Directors in the Spring of 2021.

OPPORTUNITY SWVA / RALLY

Idalina works monthly with Opportunity SWVA to leverage the Real Action Leadership Learning (Yay), or RALLY, program. RALLY is a community capacity and leadership development program. RALLY held their 7th and 8th rounds in the communities of Pound, Bluefield and Christiansburg. All programs included leadership and community development initiatives.

From April to June of 2020, RALLY convened weekly meeting of all RALLY communities to provide resources, education, grant opportunities, and camaraderie as communities worked to keep up with the evolving challenges of COVID-19.



CREATIVE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT

Community Capacity Building & Engagement

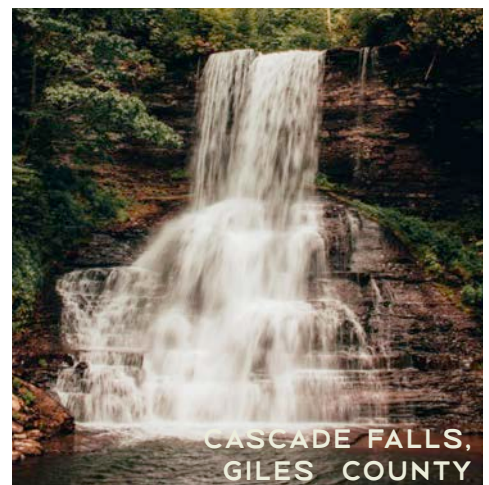
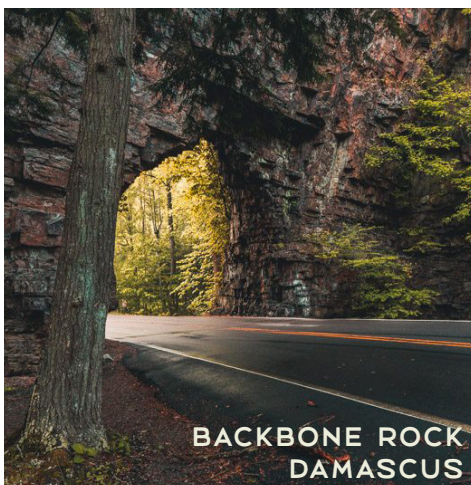
DAMASCUS ACTIVATION

Friends of SWVA staff is working with the Town of Damascus to leverage their Community Development Block Grant projects, currently underway in Damascus. The Town of Damascus is undergoing a revitalization project that will connect outdoor recreation users to the business community by developing a connector trail, farmers market, signage, and a public waterfront park. Friends of Southwest Virginia and the Town are working with the Damascus business group to identify opportunities to support small businesses and utilize these new assets. Friends will provide a series of three 30 minute workshop to the Damascus business group that addresses the needs that the businesses identify. The workshops will focus on navigating COVID-19 resources, marketing and social media best practices, and creative programming, and placemaking. The ultimate goal of this project is to increase revenue and support the businesses in COVID-19 recovery. To find out more or become involved in this project please contact the development team at development@FriendsofSWVA.org

EVOLVE

Friends of SWVA team members became trained Evolve facilitators in 2020. Evolve is the second workshop of the AIR Institute programs. The workshop is a 6 month business planning program to help individuals fully develop their business model, entrepreneur skills, and share their ideas.

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, Patrick County has been selected as a pilot for the Evolve Online business planning program. The program launched in October 2020 and will conclude in March 2021. The online program has opened the door to have members outside of Patrick County to participate. The business group includes members from Patrick County and Martinsville. To learn more about the Evolve program and Evolve Patrick County please contact the development team at development@friendsofswva.org.



CREATIVE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT

Regional Planning & Product Development

Friends of Southwest Virginia continues to serve as a regional collaborative tool for communities to unite individual projects into large-scale regional initiatives. This unification into multi-jurisdiction projects provides strength in seeking federal and state resources for community, economic, and tourism development. The following projects are underway across Southwest Virginia and are administered by Friends of Southwest Virginia as part of large-scale regional collaboratives.



Thank you to the agencies, organizations, and foundations that have provided funding for organizational operations and special projects over the years, including 2020.



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ENDOWMENT for the ARTS
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VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS



APPALACHIAN
REGIONAL
COMMISSION

POWER 16 - BUILDING APPALACHIAN SPRING CONSTRUCTION

Complete

- Haysi to Breaks Trail
- New River Boat Launches
- Stony Creek Park

In Progress

- Appalachian Trail Center: Construction Phase
- Haysi Riverwalk / Boardwalk
- High Knob Destination Center
- High Knob Lake
- New River Center

CREATIVE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT

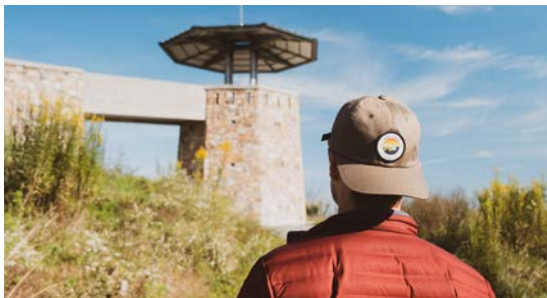
Regional Planning & Product Development



Krystal Mosley
Development Programs Administrator / Operations Manager
Friends of SWVA
kmosley@friendsofswva.org
276-492-2400

AREA DEVELOPMENT TRAIL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MOUNT ROGERS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

- Virginia Creeper Trail Master Plan and Economic Impact Modeling
- Mendota Trail Master Plan and Economic Impact Forecast
- Mount Rogers Regional Connectivity plan



HIGH KNOB TOWER, NORTON

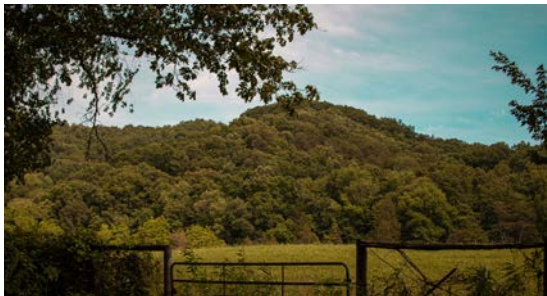
POWER 16 - BUILDING APPALACHIAN SPRING NON-CONSTRUCTION

Complete

- High Knob Master Plan
- Spearhead Trails Salaries

In Progress

- Friends of SWVA Admin & Personnel



VA CREEPER TRAIL, ABINGDON

POWER 18 - BRIDGE BUILDERS INTERSTATE COLLABORATIVE

- Funding Source: ARC POWER 18 \$100,000.00
- Project Status: Pending
- KY, WV, NC, TN - Identify key partners across state lines

2017 AREA DEVELOPMENT LEE & WISE COUNTY OUTDOOR ACCESS

- Developing six access points to the Powell River in Lee County and two access points to the Pound River in Wise County
- Constructing two pump track parks in Big Stone Gap and Pound
- Developing 50 miles of new multi-use trails in Dickenson County. This strategy for development in multiple sites will draw visitors to the region as a whole rather than a specific destination and have a larger economic impact.



GALAX

CREATIVE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT

Regional Planning & Product Development



SOUTHWEST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUILDING APPALACHIAN SPRING

Matching Funds For:

- Appalachian Trail Center
- High Knob Destination Center
- Haysi to Breaks Trail
- Haysi Riverwalk / Boardwalk

SOUTHWEST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECREATION CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT, CONNECTIVITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Virginia Creeper Trail Master Plan and Economic Impact Modeling
- Mendota Trail Master Plan and Economic Impact Forecast
- Mount Rogers Regional Connectivity plan
- Cumberland Plateau Outdoor Industry Master Plan

NEW MARKETS

- In March 2019, 'Round the Mountain launched a new website with the addition of e-commerce. With the new website and ability to sell online, staff was able to produce a wholesale catalog for any juried artisan interested in wholesaling their work.
- Note that the wholesale program and products will be available to retailers and consumers within Southwest Virginia, but also nationwide. Products available for wholesale will be integrated into a separate section of the website and be promoted accordingly.



The Thompson Charitable Foundation

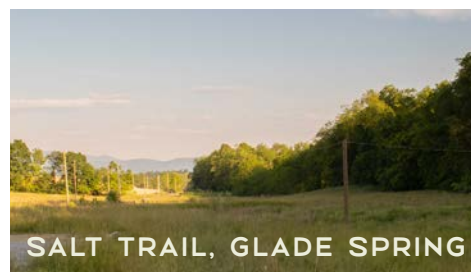
- Richlands Riverwalk Architecture & Engineering
- Trail Development by Outdoor Adventure Center
- Cumberland Plateau Outdoor Industry Master Plan



GRAYSON HIGHLANDS STATE PARK



THE CHANNELS, ROSEDALE



SALT TRAIL, GLADE SPRING

CREATIVE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT

Regional Planning

CUMBERLAND PLATEAU OUTDOOR INDUSTRY MASTER PLAN

Friends of Southwest Virginia received \$75,000 from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission and \$25,000 from the Thompson Charitable foundation. These funds are being used to conduct an Outdoor Economy Asset Analysis and Development Plan and will positively impact the economies of the Counties of Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell and Tazewell, their 13 respective Towns, and the entire region of Southwest Virginia through the development of an asset analysis and development plan. This plan will examine existing assets and their tourism readiness, gaps in the outdoor recreation economy, and potential assets across three levels: primary outdoor assets, supporting tourism attractions, and supporting tourism infrastructure.

MENDOTA TRAIL MASTER DEVELOPMENT & ECONOMIC FORECAST

Friends of Southwest Virginia has received \$118,000 in Master Planning and Economic Forecast funds from the Appalachian Regional Commission and Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission to develop a comprehensive master development plan and economic forecast. The master development plan will assess the existing rail corridor and trestles and provide a strategic approach for completion of the 13 mile trail connecting Bristol to Mendota. The plan will include cost estimates, community engagement, and marketing and communications plan, and project the economic impact of the completed trail. This plan will be a guiding document for the Mendota Trail Conservancy to complete construction and maintain the trail.

MOUNT ROGERS REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Friends of Southwest Virginia is partnering with the communities of Mount Rogers Anchor Area to develop a creative economy master plan. The master plan will look at existing plans and creative economy assets to identify gaps, opportunities for programs, partnerships, and future development needs to better align the creative economy assets in the anchor area. This plan will build upon the work completed by the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission in the 2016 Mount Rogers Outdoor Recreation Economic Development Framework.

VIRGINIA CREEPER TRAIL MASTER PLAN & ECONOMIC IMPACT MODELING

Friends of Southwest Virginia has partnered with the Virginia Creeper Trail Conservancy to complete a Master Plan and Economic Impact Model. The master plan will outline strategies for addressing the organizational structure, maintenance issues, conservation opportunities, GIS collection, and develop a model for collecting and analyzing the economic impact of the trail. This plan will serve as a guiding tool for the Virginia Creeper Trail Conservancy and provide strategy for sustainable operations of the trail.

'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN: ART & CRAFT

'Round the Mountain (RTM) Overview

'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote sustainable economic development of the region's communities through development of the unique regional art and craft as an economy. The organization works to assist local artisans as entrepreneurs with marketing, educational, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

RTM / Friends of SWVA Partnership

On July 1, 2018, Friends of Southwest Virginia formally assumed management of the programs of 'RTM. The staff at Friends of SWVA now oversee development of the artisan trails throughout SWVA, artisan membership sales and member development, marketing of RTM and regional arts initiatives and, most importantly, partnership development among the arts community, individual artisans, other regional co-ops, galleries, and arts stakeholders in this region. Friends of SWVA and 'RTM have worked together for years within the arts community, but this exciting new partnership is taking the relationship between the two organizations to a new level for the benefit of all of SWVA.



'Round the Mountain Statistics

Total Members - 157

- **Artisans - 142**
 - We have seen a major delay in membership renewal due to COVID-19
 - 56 members expired between March 2020-October 2020
- **Businesses & Organizations - 15**

MEMBERS BY MEDIUM	NUMBER
Clay	10
Fiber	31
Glass	6
Jewelry	9
Literary	4
Metal	8
Natural Materials	10
Two-Dimensional	28
Wood	21
Other	15



WORK BY
SUSAN HUFF



CULTURAL CENTER



WORK BY SONDR A BLEVINS

'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN: ART & CRAFT

Community Outreach

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the 'Round the Mountain and Friends of Southwest Virginia staff placed phone calls to all current and former 'Round the Mountain artisans and business members. Team members checked in and showed support, as well as assessed the needs of the creative community. 'Round the Mountain gathered information on how the organization could assist in recovery efforts.

Most artisans expressed that they were taking advantage of the ability to devote more time to their craft.

The 'Round the Mountain / SWVA Cultural Center e-commerce and wholesale opportunities were of great interest to most artisans, as many 2020 craft shows were canceled due to COVID-19.

Membership Promotions

Student Membership - A free membership level available to all high-school and college students living and/or studying in the Southwest Virginia region. Students will be connected with the largest artisan community in the region, as well as have access to all resources and benefits of membership.

90 Day Free Trial Membership - Three-month trial period available at no charge to all new members of 'Round the Mountain. Includes access to 'Round the Mountain resources and website profile.

90 Days Free to Existing Members - When existing members renew in 2020, they will receive a free 3 month extension period.

MEMBERS BY COMMUNITY	NUMBER OF ARTISANS
Bland	0
Bristol	9
Buchanan	2
Carroll	5
Dickenson	1
Floyd	14
Franklin	5
Galax	4
Giles	3
Grayson	4
Lee	2
Montgomery	14
Norton	2
Patrick	4
Pulaski	5
Radford	2
Russell	5
Scott	3
Smyth	10
Tazewell	7
Washington	28
Wise	8
Wythe	13



'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN: ART & CRAFT

Jury

'Round the Mountain holds a jury twice a year. The Spring 2020 Jury was canceled due to COVID-19. Fall Jury, held in October of 2020 had 15 artisans participate.

Members of 'RTM are welcome to submit their work to jury in order to sell in the SWVA Cultural Center & Marketplace, sell on our e-commerce platform, and access wholesale opportunities. Members submit work to be juried by a blind panel of fellow artisans; if accepted, work may be displayed and retailed at the SWVA Cultural Center & Marketplace.

Exhibits

'Round the Mountain began a series of artisan exhibits at the SWVA Cultural Center in 2020 to celebrate regional art and showcase the wide variety of art being produced in the region. Unfortunately, due to the closure of the Cultural Center in March, we had to postpone or cancel several exhibits. Our exhibit programming and displays will continue in 2021.

The Hands that Sewed Southwest Virginia - March 2020

A selection of both, traditional and modern, quilts and wall hangings created by 'Round the Mountain artisans displayed in the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace.

Exhibits Canceled or Postponed Due to COVID-19:

- 2020 Spring Juried Artisans
- Reynolds Homestead / Tobacco Heritage
- Fine Art by Jarata

Art Markets & Events

'Round the Mountain and Friends of SWVA transitioned art markets and events programming in 2020, due to COVID-19.

- Spring Market - Canceled due to COVID-19
- Summer Market - Held virtually on July 25, 2020
Live broadcast sale on Facebook featuring products from 10 'Round the Mountain juried artisans.
- Holiday Market - Held virtually over Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday with special discounts and curbside pickup.
- 2020 Partner Events
 - Bristol in Bloom Art Festival- Canceled due to COVID-19
 - Blacksburg Fork & Cork- Canceled due to COVID-19
 - Holiday Market at the Martha
The 'Round the Mountain tent was available to current members.

'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN: ART & CRAFT

New Markets Wholesale Catalog

In March 2019, 'Round the Mountain launched a new website with the addition of e-commerce. With the new website and ability to sell online, staff members produced a wholesale catalog for any juried artisan interested in wholesaling their work.

See the below requirements in order for artisans to be able to wholesale:

- Open to all current 'Round the Mountain members.
- Works must be accepted through the 'Round the Mountain / SWVA Cultural Center Jury.
- Works should be consistent and able to be mass produced as requested by buyers.
- Must be able to produce approximately 50 pieces of each craft submitted in a 3-6 week time frame (actual minimum orders and production times to be determined for each item)
- Artisans may include up to 3 variants for each item - Such as color, size, or print.
- Works may be purchased outright for wholesale inventory or on request from buyers.



GOAT'S MILK LOTION

\$12.00 [Write a Review](#) (No reviews yet)

* SCENT: ROSEMARY MINT BROWN SUGAR FIG LEMON VANILLA
SCENT FREE

Quantity: < 1 >

ADD TO CART **SAVE TO WISHLIST**

f ✉ 🐦 📌

OVERVIEW REVIEWS

Note that the wholesale program and products will be available to retailers and consumers within Southwest Virginia, but also nationwide. Products available for wholesale will be integrated into a separate section of the website and be promoted accordingly.

E-Commerce

In 2020, 'Round the Mountain and the SWVA Cultural Center & Marketplace launched an online store with full e-commerce capabilities. Since launch, staff has added over 250 juried artisan items and new items are added frequently.

'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN: ART & CRAFT

Artisan of the Week

Each week the 'Round the Mountain staff selects an artisan to be featured on our social media and inside the Cultural Center. This program was on hold during the Summer, due to COVID-19; however, was continued in July of 2020 alongside the reopening of the Cultural Center.

Visions Youth Art Competition

The Visions Youth Art Competition was developed in partnership with the Watauga Elementary School PTA organization to support and encourage the next generation of artisans. The pilot program was scheduled for Spring 2020, but was canceled due to COVID-19. Staff will revisit this programming in 2021, pending COVID-19 status and capacity of the school systems.

Marketplace 2020 in Review

Total Artisan Sales:

Total sales of regional art & craft for January 2020 - November 2020 (Closed March - July): \$46,510

Average Sale Per Customer: \$170

Top Selling Artisans:

1. Beagle Ridge Herb Farm - Farm-Crafted Bath & Body Products, Wytheville
2. Sandy Hart Davenport - Stained Glass, Damascus
3. Timbertones - Woodwork/Furniture, Christiansburg
4. James Barnes - Woodwork, Floyd
5. Patricia Hertzog - 2D/Painting, Grundy

Highest Priced Item Sold:

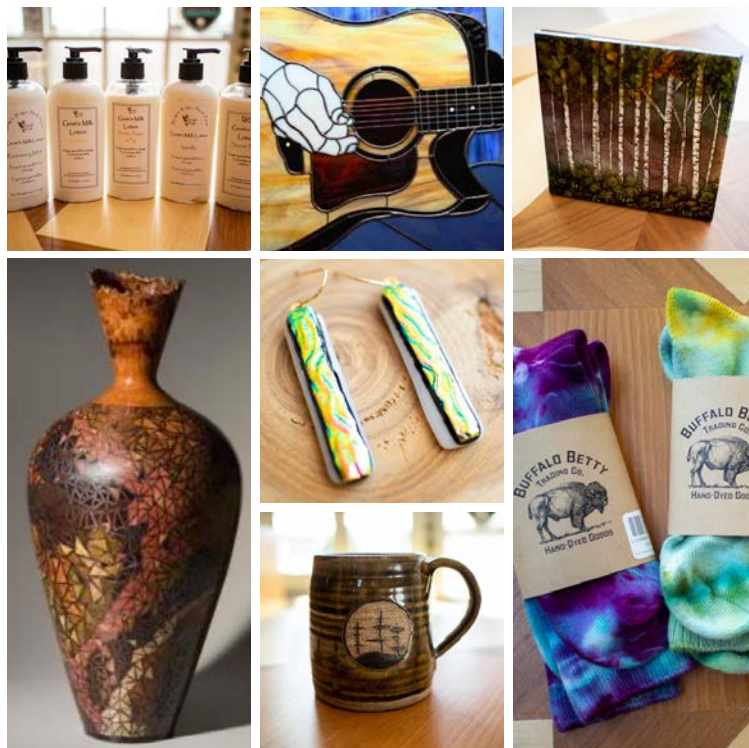
"Hitchin' Post" Metal Sculpture by Kim Warner, Hillsville

Most Items Sold in 2020:

Beagle Ridge Herb Farm, Wytheville

Top Selling Individual Item:

Quilted Mug Mats - Sondra Blevins, Meadowview



SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CULTURAL CENTER

RENEWED VISION:

Showcase a comprehensive picture of Southwest Virginia and the creative economy as a gateway to the region and create new economic impact while sustaining financial stability as an organization.

What has been renewed?

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cultural Center was able to still focus on the mission of the facility and Southwest Virginia. The facility closed from March - July of 2020; however, upon reopening had a new focus on the region's unique storytelling. Below are some of the main focuses of the SWVA Cultural Center & Marketplace, despite the pandemic.

- An expanded focus on the artisans and connecting them with the facility: this includes expanded space for retailing and exhibiting art and craft, increased attention to connecting the facility to other arts facilities through SWVA, and more opportunities for artisans to interact with the public.
- A commitment to quality service and experience for both artisans and customers.
- An expanded visitor center with additional brochure and display space. The centerpiece of the visitor center is a new custom-designed map with each city and county formed from historic woods from their communities. A companion guide book details the history of each piece of precious wood and encourages visitors to explore the region.
- The Crooked Road theater room has been transitioned into the main performance area at the Cultural Center. The space has an immersive video experience that allows visitors to hear and see the music of SWVA any time the facility is open to the public.
- Incorporation of the Southwest Virginia Outdoors brand, outdoor anchor areas, and businesses into the facility.



Cultural Center & MARKETPLACE

The staff at the Cultural Center are preparing for the year ahead. A new Facilities Manager has been hired to prepare the space for new revenue-generating opportunities that continue the mission of the Friends of SWVA, SWVA Cultural Heritage Foundation, 'Round the Mountain, and The Crooked Road.



SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CULTURAL CENTER

The Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace closed to the public on March 17, 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. The facility was reopened on July 23, 2020 with standard social distancing and health and safety measures in place.

- Masks or face coverings for all staff and visitors
- Temperature checks
- Sanitizing stations
- Disposable gloves for handling merchandise
- Social distancing markers

For current hours information, please visit our website at www.SWVAculturalcenter.com.

Get involved with the SWVA Cultural Center



Artisans:

- Join 'Round the Mountain today! Visit www.JoinRTM.org to join today and start experiencing the benefits of this world-class artisan network!
- To sell in the facility, members must pass the bi-annual jury process. Contact Marketplace Manager Jamee Gillespie at jgillespie@FriendsofSWVA.org



Communities:

- Interested in getting your brochure or community information displayed and marketed in the Visitor Center? Reach out to our Visitor Center staff at visitorcenter@FriendsofSWVA.org



Musicians:

- Music is coordinated by The Crooked Road. Contact admin@thecrookedroad.org

Venue Rentals

2020 has been a challenging year for sales and venue rentals at the SWVA Cultural Center. The 2019 re-opening and renovation of the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace allowed for opportunities for growth in programming, sales, and events. In 2021, the team at the SWVA Cultural Center hopes to continue venue rentals and sales, including group experiences, entertainment events, and meetings. Craft an authentic Southwest Virginia event experience through locally sourced vendors at the SWVA Cultural Center. It is with pride and a high level of responsibility that the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace serves visitors and locals daily.

Special Events:

- Interested in holding a special event at the facility? Contact us at events@FriendsofSWVA.org

'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN: CULINARY

In 2019 and early 2020, the SWVA Café & Mountain Brew Bar aimed to promote the region's wonderful farmers, growers, and producers by serving a menu consisting of 85% locally sourced ingredients and products. The Cafe's goal was to introduce the flavors of SWVA to all patrons visiting the facility, encourage visitors to explore Southwest Virginia communities and learn more about the food of the region.

The Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace closed to the public on March 17, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Upon reopening, the leadership at Friends of SWVA determined the best way to support the region and continue to tell the culinary stories of Southwest Virginia would be to seek a sustainable partnership for the restaurant operation and food service. The staff continues to have conversations around this opportunity with potential businesses and hope to have a restaurant inside the facility in 2021.



Our culinary programs were also put on hold due to COVID-19, as these relationships were very hands-on within the 19 counties and four cities of SWVA. We have continued to do food education, promotion, and small-scale canning and cooking classes, as well as expanded membership levels for culinary members. We plan to revisit our culinary programs through 'Round the Mountain in 2021.



THE BERRY PATCH
ABINGDON

In 2019, Friends of Southwest Virginia developed and implemented a new role to better showcase the region's unique food and beverage crafters and creators. The SWVA Chef and Culinary Ambassador did this through many new and creative initiatives. Whether he was at a local farmer's market conducting cooking demonstrations and tastings, or in a local community doing farm-to-table dinners, the Culinary Ambassador was always telling the stories of the region's farmers and producers.

Prior to the closure of the SWVA Cafe & Mountain Brew Bar in 2020, the following were local farms and businesses that helped sourced 85% of our products.

FARM	COMMUNITY
Old Rich Valley	Saltville, VA
Highlands Farms	Russell County
River Valley Farms	Abingdon, VA
Ziegenwald Dairy	Gate City, VA
T-N-T Farms	Meadowview, VA
Pick -N- Grin Farms	Bristol, VA
Harvest Table Farm	Meadowview, VA

FARM	COMMUNITY
Laurel Springs Farm	Marion, VA
Pop's Veggie Basket	Rural Retreat, VA
My Shepherds Farm	Rural Retreat, VA
Moyer Family Farms	Castlewood, VA
Southern Fork Farm	Sugar Grove, VA
SWVA Farmers Markets	Region-Wide
Appalachian Sustainable Development	Region-Wide

'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN: CULINARY

Food Education & Promotion

Cooking Along The Crooked Road classes have been educating visitors and locals on regional cooking. Please see below for the following classes held in 2020:

- Matt Shy - Bristol Gardens and Grill, Bristol, VA - Barbeque and Hot Sauces
- Elizabeth Gardner - Abingdon Vineyards, Abingdon, VA - Charcuterie Board and wine pairing
- Gwyn Hill - SWVA Cultural Center, Abingdon, VA - Breakfast - This was done with a representation of all Southwest Virginia products and suppliers.
- Chef Charles Parker - Harvest Table Restaurant, Meadowview, VA - Soups
- Chef Joel Jerkins - JJ's Restaurant / Cajun Persuasion, Abingdon, VA - Cajun Cuisine



HIGHLANDS FARMS, LEBANON

The Let's Jam Canning Classes allowed us to educate participants on canning practices. Please see below for the following classes held in 2020:

- Blueberry Jam - The Berry Patch, Abingdon, VA
- Preserving Tomatoes - Tracy McGlothlin / Highlands Farms, Lebanon, VA
- Apple Butter - Gwyn Hill / SWVA Cultural Center
- Wild Game - Sandy Stoneman / Virginia Tech
- Sauerkraut - Dirk Moore / Blue Hills Market, Abingdon, VA



REGIONAL MARKETING & BRANDING

Digital Platform

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA VISITOR WEBSITE - VISITSWVA.ORG

Virtual content creation has been a valuable for visitors to Southwest Virginia. Regional content production has been utilized through the use of blogging for regional marketing, organic traffic growth, and promotion of partners. VisitSWVA.org has seen great improvements during this recovery period with new and returning visitors being reflected in analytics.

- User visits increased 30.2% (5,100)
- Website sessions increased 25.5% (6,000)

PARTNER WEBSITE - FRIENDSOFSWVA.ORG

Friends of SWVA's website is a digital resource for our partners around the region. This website is dedicated to our partners and sharing information. The new partner website was launched in the Spring of 2018 and continues to be a valuable resource.

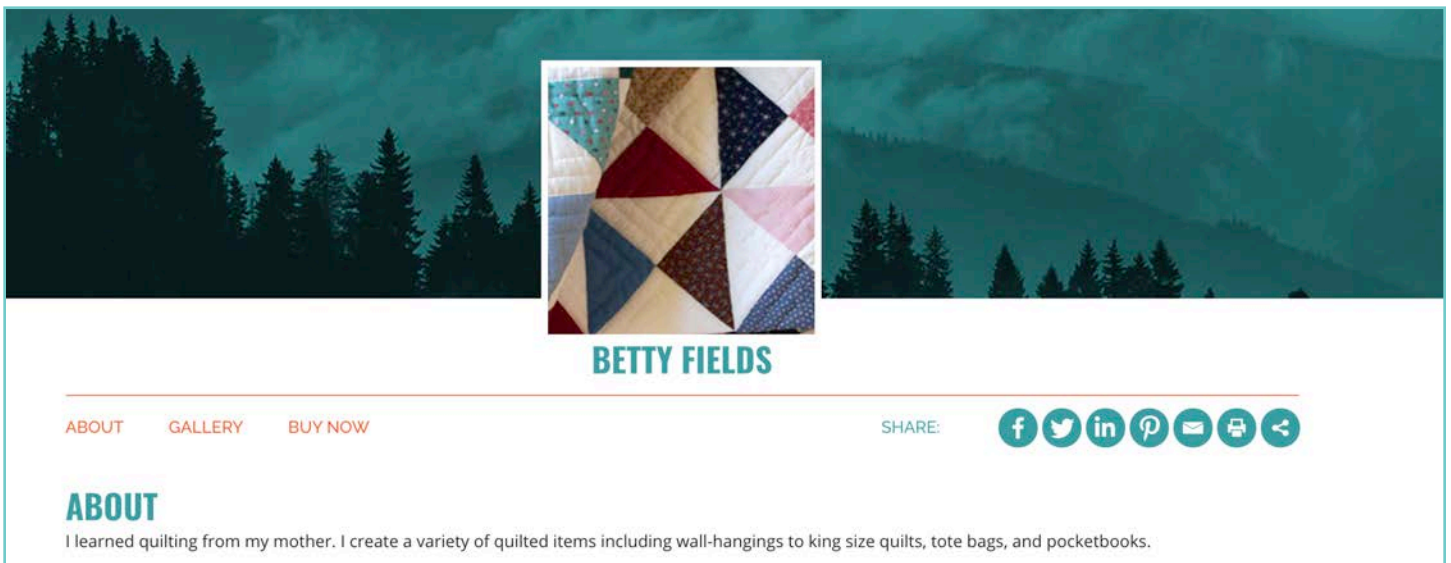
CULTURAL CENTER WEBSITE - SWVACULTURALCENTER.COM

New trends have showcased increased interest in online shopping. In 2020, the Friends of SWVA launched the newly designed shop for the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace.

- 250+ artisan products and SWVA branded merchandise
- Wholesale access for partners and merchants
- Local and international sales and shipping capabilities

'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN WEBSITE - ROUNDTHEMOUNTAIN.ORG

To further aid 'Round the Mountain Artisans, RoundtheMountain.org has seen dramatic design changes to member pages. New profile pages make online shopping experiences easier for consumers, while showcasing artisan profiles with more accessibility.



The screenshot shows a website profile for Betty Fields. At the top, there is a header image of a forest at dusk. Below the image is a central image of a colorful quilted item. Underneath the quilt is the name "BETTY FIELDS" in a teal font. Below the name are three navigation links: "ABOUT", "GALLERY", and "BUY NOW". To the right of the navigation links is a "SHARE:" label followed by social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Email, Print, and a share icon. Below the navigation links is a section titled "ABOUT" in teal, followed by a short bio: "I learned quilting from my mother. I create a variety of quilted items including wall-hangings to king size quilts, tote bags, and pocketbooks."

REGIONAL MARKETING & BRANDING

2020 Projects

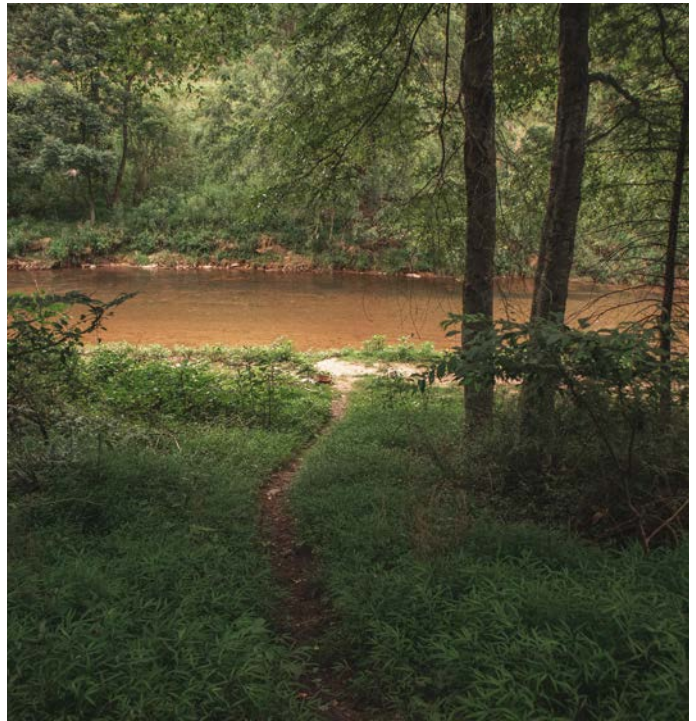
DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The team at Friends of SWVA has been actively working on building our partner accessible Digital Asset Management System (DAM), with both photo and video content. This regional content building initiative has collected assets from around the region to better assist in future promotions and marketing. Currently, the DAM hosts 2500+ files available for marketing.

More information can be found at <https://friendsofswva.org/marketing/dam/>.

WANDERLOVE

Friends of SWVA was a recipient of the Virginia Tourism WanderLOVE grant. This grant focused on safe road trip ideas within the Commonwealth of Virginia. As a regional DMO, Friends of SWVA focused on locations across Southwest Virginia.



NEW RIVER TRAIL



BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

1. St. Paul / Norton / Wise (The Crooked Road)
2. Abingdon / Damascus / Glade Spring / Whitetop (I-81)
3. Wytheville / Hillsville / Galax (I-77)
4. Tazewell / Marion (Back of the Dragon)
5. Floyd / Stuart (Blue Ridge Parkway)
6. Bristol / Gate City / Duffield (Wilderness Road)

During this campaign, we focused on content generation, photography, videography, storytelling, and advertising for the region. We created simple itineraries for current and future visitors to explore the region with road trips. These road trip ideas take our guests on fun adventures to natural area assets, as well as downtowns.

REGIONAL MARKETING & BRANDING

2020 Projects

SOCIAL MEDIA & VIDEO MARKETING

Both social media and video marketing have proven success rates for marketing the region. Shares from partners, as well as content generation, have showcased dramatic growth on all platforms. Organic and paid traffic have seen a great increases since this programming began.

YouTube Statistics

- 221% View Increase
- 87% Watch Time Increase
- 32% Subscriber Increase
- 63% Reach Increase

Facebook Statistics

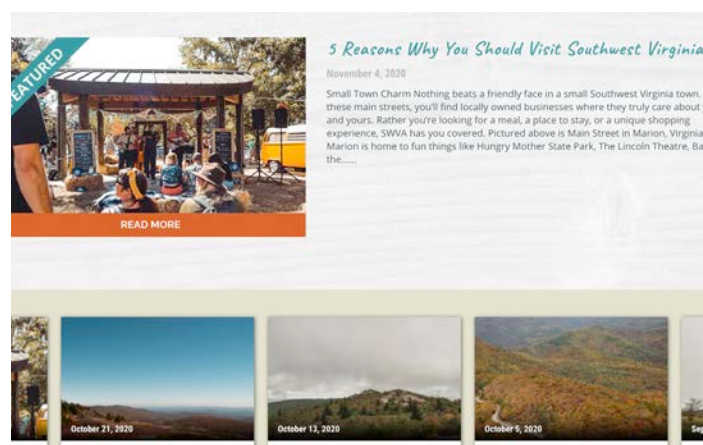
- 100% Page Actions Increase
- 17% Page Views Increase
- 22% Video Views Increase

Social media has been a powerful tool for us to connect with our guests, visitors, and locals to tell the stories of Southwest Virginia. Friends of SWVA team members encourage engagement through commenting, sharing photos, and polls.

STORIES FROM SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA PODCAST

During the COVID-19 pandemic, digital content became a staple for the tourism industry. In an effort to assist partners around the region, Friends of SWVA created the “Stories from Southwest Virginia Podcast” to add an additional storytelling platform and reach new audiences.

Podcasts are a fun and effective way to reach a larger digital audience, while giving guests a platform to share their insights. We have showcased musicians, music venues, restaurateurs historians, leaders, and more.



REGIONAL MARKETING & BRANDING

2020 Projects

CONTENT PRODUCTION

Content became a key element in marketing the SWVA region during the pandemic. The team at Friends of SWVA has utilized digital storytelling platforms to tell regional stories through photography, videography, and blogging.

- Weekly blog posts promoting various locations around the region
- YouTube videos showcasing locations
- Podcast episodes speaking with area leaders and influencers
- Social media posts promoting partners, events, and itineraries for guests



HIGH KNOB OVERLOOK

MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Friends of SWVA has been actively involved with regional media to promote programming, events, artisans, and news throughout the organization. Staff currently participates in two monthly news segments with WCYB and WJHL, as well as sends monthly email newsletters to partners.

Our public relations program has been on hold, due to COVID-19; however, we are continuing to send press releases and hosting travel writers as requested.

MERCHANDISE AND WHOLESALE PROGRAM

Visitors love SWVA branded merchandise and the team at Friends saw an opportunity to engage our regional partners and businesses. The team has worked closely with our retail team and merchandise partners to develop a sustainable and affordable wholesale program for branded gear. This includes branded merchandise geared toward travelers, as well.

To learn more about merchandise and wholesale opportunities, please visit <https://friendsofswva.org/marketing/merchandise/>.



HIGH KNOB MERCHANDISE

REGIONAL MARKETING & BRANDING

2020 Projects

SWVA REGIONAL MARKETING ROUNDTABLE

The Marketing Manager works with the SWVA Cultural Heritage Foundation / Friends of Southwest Virginia Joint Board Marketing Committee for marketing support and to communicate about marketing efforts.

The SWVA Regional Marketing Roundtable was formed in the Spring of 2019 to engage partners from around the region in marketing efforts. This group helps to provide direction to the Joint Board Marketing Committee and staff.

MARKETING ACCESS PROGRAM

In 2020, Friends of SWVA revitalized our Marketing Access Program based on partner needs during the pandemic. We made the program easier to use, friendly to all budget types, and included new features to further aid our regional partners.

The newest feature of the MAP program is added microsite capabilities hosted on VisitSWVA.org. This is a great opportunity for partners who do not have the time or budget to create a comprehensive website.

To learn more about merchandise and wholesale opportunities, please visit <https://friendsofswva.org/map/>.

EMAIL PROGRAM

Friends of SWVA has worked diligently with our marketing and partnership agency to provide a brand new “smart” email system to better suit market needs. This includes a series of emails that become relevant to the interests of different audiences and provide them with information they find most important.



THE CROOKED ROAD

2020 in Review

The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail serves the Southwest Virginia region through supporting and promoting traditional music and musicians, and generating economic impact. Since its designation as Virginia's Heritage Music Trail by the Virginia General Assembly in 2004, this 330-mile long driving route has connected visitors with nine major music venues and over 50 affiliated venues and festivals. Each partner showcases the region's incredibly rich heritage music traditions. Major venues of The Crooked Road span the Southwest Virginia region and include: Blue Ridge Institute & Museum at Ferrum University, Floyd Country Store, Blue Ridge Music Center, Galax Old Fiddler's Convention, Rex Theatre, Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace, Birthplace of Country Music Museum, Carter Family Fold, Country Cabin and the Ralph Stanley Museum.

The Crooked Road region is also home to some of the greatest names in American music - the Carter Family, the Stanley Brothers, Jim and Jesse McReynolds, and the Stonemans. The musical history and vibrant scene of heritage music in the region attracts visitors from across the U.S. and from other countries to experience unique musical traditions that have had a profound impact on American music and the American story.



This story and heritage music endures, even through the COVID-19 pandemic. During 2020, The Crooked Road organization hired a new Executive Director, underwent a strategic planning process and adapted with alternative programming, including promotional recording sessions and live stream events. Marketing outreach via increased social media postings and a new electronic newsletter were also used to continue advertising The Crooked Road and its venues, affiliates, artists, and communities to potential visitors.

**THE CROOKED ROAD PROGRAMS
NOW GENERATE \$9.1 MILLION PER
YEAR OF ECONOMIC IMPACT IN
SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA.**

THE CROOKED ROAD

2020 in Review

As an economic development initiative, The Crooked Road continues to be a recognizable brand in Virginia. Previous studies have determined that TCR-related programs have generated \$9.1 million per year of economic impact in Southwest Virginia (per March 1, 2016 report by Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development). This is only part of the impact that TCR has had on the Southwest Virginia creative economy and tourism development, with tourism increases over 60% since the creation of The Crooked Road.

Crooked Road On Tour concerts take regional musicians to out-of-region venues, increasing The Crooked Road's visibility and reaching new potential visitors. In 2020, Crooked Road on Tour program held 3 performances before shutdowns commenced. This program has always been beneficial as a way to showcase local musicians to a broader audience.

In addition, The Crooked Road has a music education component through the Traditional Music Education Program (TMEP). TMEP has supported Junior Appalachian Musician (JAM) programs in the region and has reinforced the overall partnership with JAM. The inaugural TCR-JAM joint fundraiser was held virtually to raise funds for JAM and TMEP programming. This will be a standing fundraiser going forward each year in October. Although the annual Youth Music Festival and monthly Youth Music Series concerts have been temporarily paused, TCR will continue those in the future.

For 2021, The Crooked Road looks forward to welcoming visitors back to the region and its venues and will be conducting an advertising push to encourage increased tourism. The Crooked Road plans to partner with regional tourism initiatives, including those with Friends of Southwest Virginia and the Virginia Tourism Corporation to promote The Crooked Road programming and the Southwest Virginia region.



CROOKED ROAD PROMOTIONAL
RECORDING SESSION



BIRTHPLACE OF COUNTRY MUSIC MUSEUM
PHOTO BY BILLIE WHEELER

The Crooked Road is positioned to welcome back visitors to Southwest Virginia venues and communities in 2021 with regional tourism initiatives and partner programming.



A different side of Virginia



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ONE HEARTWOOD CIRCLE
ABINGDON, VA 24210

PARTNER WEBSITE: FRIENDSOFSWVA.ORG
CONSUMER WEBSITE: SWVA.TRAVEL



VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS