

2022 REGIONAL IMPACT & ANNUAL REPORT

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

MCCOY FALLS, NEW RIVER





HIKER AT GRAYSON
HIGHLANDS STATE PARK

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2022 - Year in Review

Friends,

Fortitude is something we rarely notice until we need it. Yet, over the past few years, with all the economic and health challenges we have faced in Southwest Virginia, our ability to stay focused, grounded, and hopeful proves how much fortitude has been growing in us over the years. It's this trait that drives us as a region to continually look for ways to work together to build a more sustainable economy for Southwest Virginia.

Southwest Virginia is strong and vibrant. With a network of 19 counties, four cities, and 53 towns in Appalachian Virginia, Southwest Virginia has proven it's stronger when the region works together. No better place shows off this strength in our region than the success of our creative economy. As one of the fastest-growing sectors of businesses in the world, the focus on growing the creative economy in Southwest Virginia has led us to preserve and protect the region's rich heritage and natural resources, create jobs, and attract visitors and new businesses.

The Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation and its supporting nonprofit, Friends of Southwest Virginia, are focused on being a strong partner to help rebuild our local economy, create stronger cooperation between businesses and local and state government, be an advocate for our local and regional tourism and economic development partners, and exercise leadership and commitment in the Southwest Virginia region.

This Annual Report showcases how the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation, Friends of Southwest Virginia, 'Round the Mountain Artisan Network, and The Crooked Road have encouraged 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.

The following is a list of a few of the key initiatives we accomplished in 2022:

Partnership and Community Development Initiatives

- Completed several regional planning initiatives that will result in strategic advances for the SWVA Outdoor recreation industry. These plans include:
 - Virginia Creeper Trail Master Plan
 - Cumberland Plateau Outdoor Recreation Economic Analysis and Development Plan
 - Mount Rogers Outdoor Economy Master Plan

- Celebrated Groundbreaking Ceremonies on two (2) destination centers in Southwest Virginia
 - High Knob Destination Center (City of Norton, VA)
 - Haysi River Access (Dickenson County, VA)
- Celebrated the Grand Opening of the Damascus Trail Center
- Launched a comprehensive economic development study of Breaks Interstate Park

Marketing Initiatives

- Increased out-of-state visitor engagement in digital and social media marketing initiatives.
- Worked with the Southwest Virginia Museums Group to assist with building the website, logo, and social media pages.
- Assisted Mount Rogers Regional Partnership with rebranding and development of a website and creation of several Mount Rogers videos.

Cultural Center Initiatives

- Launched LOVE SWVA Concert Series, hosting three concerts during the Summer/Fall of 2022 and sold tickets to visitors from Michigan, Indiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Georgia, Texas, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Kentucky.
- Increased visitor traffic, bus traffic, and retail record sales at Cultural Center.
- Hosted several artisan events at the Cultural Center.
- Updated and installed a new sound system at Cultural Center.
- Oversaw extensive roof and guttering work at the Cultural Center.

'Round the Mountain Initiatives

- Saw an 11% increase in membership over the past 12 months.
- Fourteen (14) new artisans juried into the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center.
- Launched a new e-commerce system with over 1,250 artisan items online.
- Experienced an 18% increase in artisan inventory at the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center.

The Crooked Road Initiatives

- The revamped Youth Music Festival & Competition, which saw over 70 competitors and awarded \$1,200 in cash prizes
- Brought Commonwealth of Virginia educators to the Center for regional heritage music overview & training
- Re-started the monthly Crooked Road jams after pandemic pauses.
- New performance showcases include educational and heritage music

Throughout this Annual Report, you will find more information about each of the initiatives listed above, along with information about who we are, our organization's background, an update on additional projects and initiatives, and tourism and economic development data for the entire Southwest Virginia region.

On behalf of the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation and Friends of Southwest Virginia team and Boards of Directors, we are honored to serve our region and the Commonwealth, and we are excited for all that is ahead for Southwest Virginia.

Sincerely,

Kim Davis



Kim Davis
Executive Director
*Southwest Virginia Cultural
Heritage Foundation and Friends
of Southwest Virginia*





LITTLE STONY FALLS
WISE, VA

Who Are We?

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 appreciation of 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, 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 business, learn new skills, and share their inspiration. 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 Heritage Music 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 a highly 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 54,000-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.

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 U.S. 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 more friendly, and a premier location 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 transition from 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 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 nonprofit, Friends of Southwest Virginia, businesses and individuals help artists, craftspeople, localities, nonprofits, and entrepreneurs mobilize and succeed.

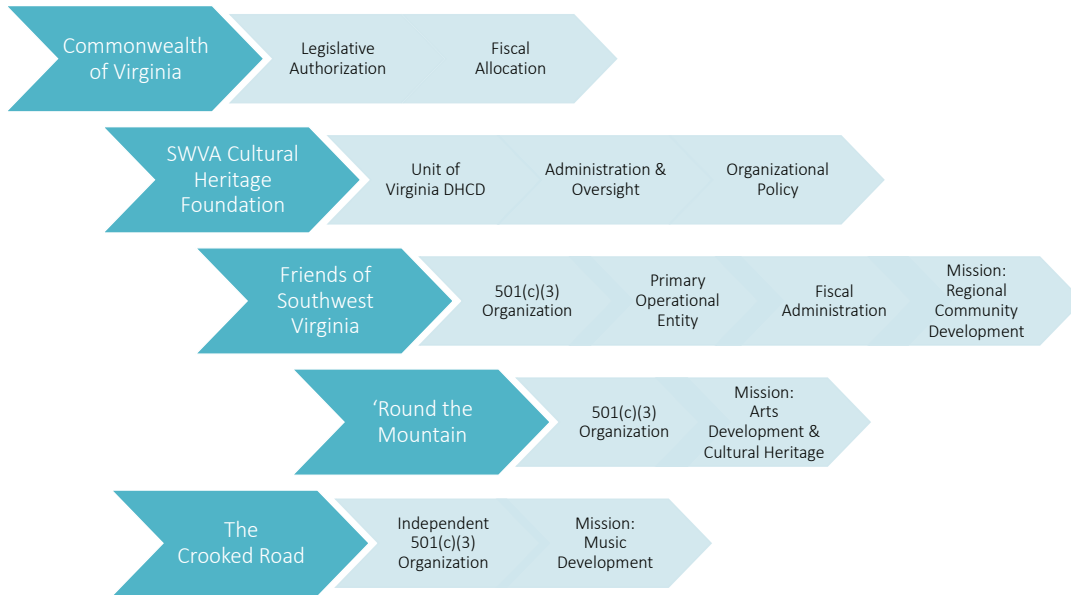
A multifaceted plan identifies the cultural and natural assets of the region; coordinates initiatives, organizations, and venues engaged in cultural and natural heritage toward more efficient operations for all partner organizations; and develops a comprehensive strategy and capital improvements plan 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 opportunities

Organizational Overview



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



The Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation (previously Commission)

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 consisting of Governor-appointed leadership from throughout the 19 counties and four cities of the region.



Friends of Southwest Virginia, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit 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 nonprofit.



'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 nonprofit 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) nonprofit

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Mission: 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.

Name	Serving As	Community, County	Business / Organization
Delegate James Will Morefield	Chair & Trustee, House of Delegates	Commonwealth of Virginia	Virginia House of Delegates
Senator Todd E. Pillion	Vice Chair & Trustee, Senate	Commonwealth of Virginia	Virginia Senate
Senator T. Travis Hackworth	Trustee, Senate	Commonwealth of Virginia	Virginia Senate
Delegate Marie March	Trustee, House of Delegates	Commonwealth of Virginia	Virginia House of Delegates
Delegate Sam Rasoul	Trustee, House of Delegates	Commonwealth of Virginia	Virginia House of Delegates
William J. Smith	Treasurer, Citizen	Wytheville, Wythe	Smith Enterprises
Kevin Byrd	Trustee, Planning District	Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski, and the City of Radford	New River Valley Regional Commission
Dean Chiapetto	Citizen	Floyd	Dean Chiapetto Insurance
Mike Cochran	Trustee, Abingdon	Abingdon, Washington	Town of Abingdon
Mary Anne Holbrook	Trustee, Washington County	Washington	United Way of Southwest Virginia
Duane Miller	Trustee, Planning District	Lee, Scott, Wise and the City of Norton	LENOWISCO Regional Planning District
Amanda Pillion	Trustee, Commission for the Arts	Abingdon, Washington	Virginia Commission for the Arts
Julie Walters Steele	Trustee, Round the Mountain	Critz, Patrick	Reynolds Homestead / Virginia Tech
John Kilgore	Ex Officio - Friends of Southwest Virginia Chair	Gate City	Scott County Economic Development Authority
Dylan Locke	Ex Officio, Chair - The Crooked Road Chair	Floyd	Floyd Country Store
Ellen Reynolds	Ex Officio, Round the Mountain Chair	Wytheville, Wythe	Beagle Ridge Herb Farm & Environmental Education Center
Dr. Adam C. Hutchison	Ex Officio - non-voting, President - VHCC	Abingdon, Washington	Virginia Highlands Community College
David Matlock	Ex Officio, ED, SWVAHEC	Abingdon, Washington	Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
Bryan Horn	Ex Officio, Director - DHCD	Commonwealth of Virginia	Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development
Rita McClenny	Ex Officio, VTC Director	Commonwealth of Virginia	Virginia Tourism Corporation

FRIENDS OF SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Mission:

- 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.

Name	Serving As	Community, County	Business / Organization
John Kilgore, Jr.	Chair	Scott County	Executive Director, Scott County Economic Development Authority
Aaron Sizemore	Vice Chair	Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe counties & Cities of Bristol and Galax	Executive Director, Mount Rogers Planning District Commission
Fred Ramey	Secretary	City of Norton	City Manager, City of Norton
Stephen (Steve) Lawson	Treasurer	Big Stone Gap	Town Manager, Town of Big Stone Gap
Linda DiYorio	Past Chair	Wytheville	Community Volunteer
Mandy Archer	Director	Carroll and Grayson Counties & City of Galax	Director, Blue Ridge Crossroads SBDC
Michael Armbrister	Director	Franklin and Patrick Counties	Executive Director, West Piedmont Planning District Commission
Amy Atwood	Director	Marion, Smyth County	Virginia State Parks
Shannon Blevins	Director	Wise	Associate Vice Chancellor, Economic Development & Strategic Initiatives, The University of Virginia's College at Wise
Amanda Livingston	Director	Smyth County	Director of Tourism, Smyth County Tourism Association
Scotty Wampler	Director	Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell Counties	Executive Director, Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission
Todd Wolford	Director	Wytheville	Executive Director, Downtown Wytheville Inc.
Bryan Horn	Ex Officio with Voting Rights, Director - DHCD	Commonwealth of Virginia	Director, VA Department of Housing & Community Development
Rita McClenny	Ex Officio with Voting Rights, President - VTC	Commonwealth of Virginia	President, Virginia Tourism Corporation
Delegate Will Morefield	Ex Officio with Voting Rights, Chair - SWVA CHF	Commonwealth of Virginia	Elected Member, Virginia House of Delegates

'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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

Name	Serving As	Community, County	Business / Organization
Ellen Reynolds	President	Wytheville, Wythe	Beagle Ridge Herb Farm & Environmental Education Center
Sandy Ratliff	Secretary / Treasurer	Abingdon, Washington	Assistant VP / Community Innovation Advisor, Virginia Community Capital
Martha Biggar	Director	Draper, Pulaski	Artisan / The Shedio
Sharon Buchanan	Director	Lebanon, Russell	Virginia State Parks
Sarah Gillespie	Director	Chilhowie, Smyth	Snyth County Chamber of Commerce
David McLeish	Director	Lebanon, Russell	Dreamland Alpacas
Debbie Milton	Director	Abingdon, Washington	Cumberland Plateau PDC
Amanda Lee Slaughter	Director	Rocky Gap, Bland	Artisan / Virginia Tourism
Julie Walters Steele	Director	Critz, Patrick	Reynolds Homestead / Virginia Tech
Kim Davis	Ex-Officio, Friends of SWVA	Abingdon, Washington	Friends of SWVA SWVA CHF
Shirley Edwards	Ex-Officio	Woodlawn, Carroll	Welcome Center Operations Manager West, Virginia Tourism Corporation

THE CROOKED ROAD

EXECUTIVE BOARD



Mission: As the designated trail for the growth of heritage music and music enthusiasts, The Crooked Road is Virginia's beacon for heritage music, engaging musicians, tradition-keepers, their communities, and audiences from around the world to share, inspire, and celebrate the cultural heritage while positively impacting the local economies in Southwest Virginia.

Name	Serving As	Community, County	Business / Organization
Dylan Locke	President	Floyd, Floyd	The Floyd Country Store & County Sales
Leah Ross	Vice President	City of Bristol	Birthplace of Country Music Museum
David Reemsnyder	Treasurer	Blacksburg, Montgomery	At Large
AJ Robinson	Secretary	Tazewell	Tazewell County Tourism & Communications
Jim Archer	Director	City of Salem	At Large
Jackie Christian	Ex Officio	Wise, Wise	VDOT
Richard Emmett	Director	City of Galax	Blue Ridge Music Center
John Kilgore, Jr.	Director	Gate City, Scott	Scott County Economic Development Authority
Jim Lloyd	Director	Rural Retreat, Wythe	Junior Appalachian Musicians
Daniel Pinard	Director	Rocky Mount, Franklin	Rocky Mount Tourism
Rita Surratt	Director	Clintwood, Dickenson	Dickenson County Tourism
Scotty Wampler	Director	Lebanon, Russell	Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission
Kim Smith	Director	St. Paul, Russell/Wise	Heart of Appalachia
Bethany Worley	Director	Ferrum, Franklin	Blue Ridge Institute & Museum
Larry D. Yates	Past President	Haysi, Dickenson	Town of Haysi
Kim Davis	Ex Officio	Abingdon, Washington	Friends of Southwest Virginia
Bill Kornich	Ex Officio	Sneedville; Hancock, Tennessee	At Large
Becky Nave	Ex Officio	Commonwealth of Virginia	Virginia Tourism Corporation

Creative Economy

INTRODUCTION & IMPACT

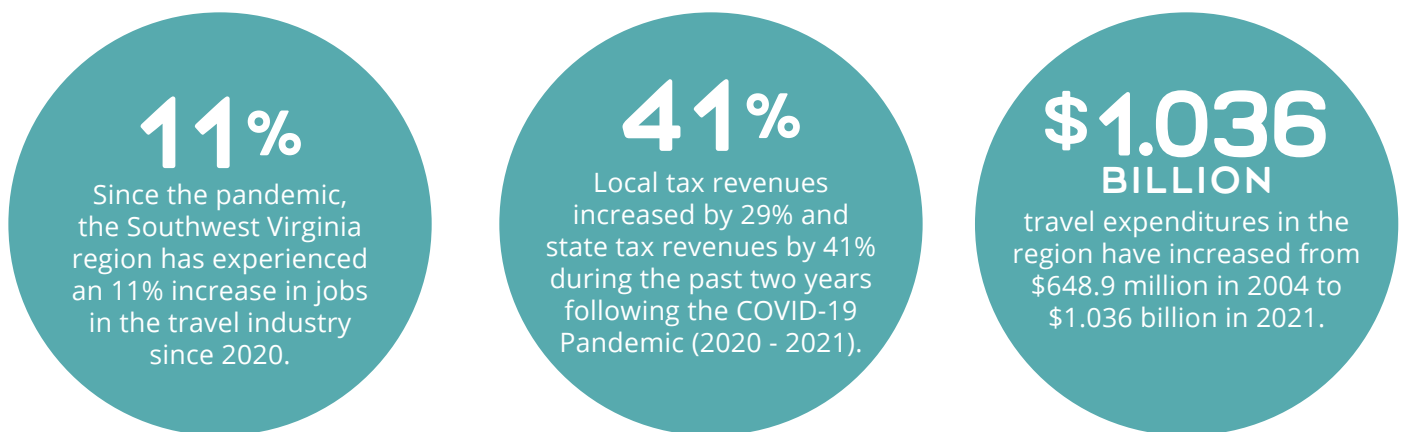
A network of 19 counties, four cities, and 53 towns make up Southwest Virginia, and these communities are working together to build a sustainable creative economy in the state’s southwestern corner. **The goal is to preserve, protect, and interpret the area’s rich heritage and natural resources, create jobs, and attract visitors and new businesses.** Work on this integrated regional strategy began with the creation and development of The Crooked Road – Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail and ‘Round the Mountain Artisan Network in 2004, followed by the creation of the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation in 2008. During this time, the region was adjusting to the economic changes in Region’s manufacturing, agricultural, and mining sectors.

Since the start of the Crooked Road in 2004, travel

expenditures in the region have **increased from \$648.9 million in 2004 to \$1.036 billion in 2021.** Additionally, travel expenditures have increased over the past two years following the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 to 2021), as **local tax revenues increased by 29%** and **state tax revenues by 41%** during the same two-year period.¹ The upward trend in these travel-related tax revenues had a significant impact at the local levels through increasing meals and lodging tax revenues in the region’s towns.

Additionally, prior to the pandemic, the overall employment in SWVA had dropped since 2001, but employment in the leisure and hospitality industry sector had increased by 15%. Yet, since the pandemic, the Southwest Virginia region has experienced an **11% increase in jobs** in the travel industry since 2020.

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



FOOTNOTE

¹ *Direct Economic Impact and Spending Shares by Industries, 2021 by Tourism Economics*

Creative Economy

REBOUNDED FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted visitor spending and travel expenditures. Visitor spending declined by 39.7% in 2020 throughout Virginia, a direct result of the pandemic. **However, in 2021, visitor spending increased across the Commonwealth by 44% from 2020.**

The outdoor recreation industry has grown vastly across the United States, with an estimated \$689 billion of annual consumer spending across the nation and

4.3 million jobs.² Southwest Virginia's numbers alone are impressive, with 14 outdoor companies calling the region home. Furthermore, **visitors to Southwest Virginia spend an estimated \$112 million on outdoor recreation each year.**³

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

FOOTNOTE

² 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report

³ Direct Impact and Spending Shares by Industry 2021 by Tourism Economics



FLY FISHERMAN,
DICKINSON COUNTY VIRGINIA

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 by working through 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:

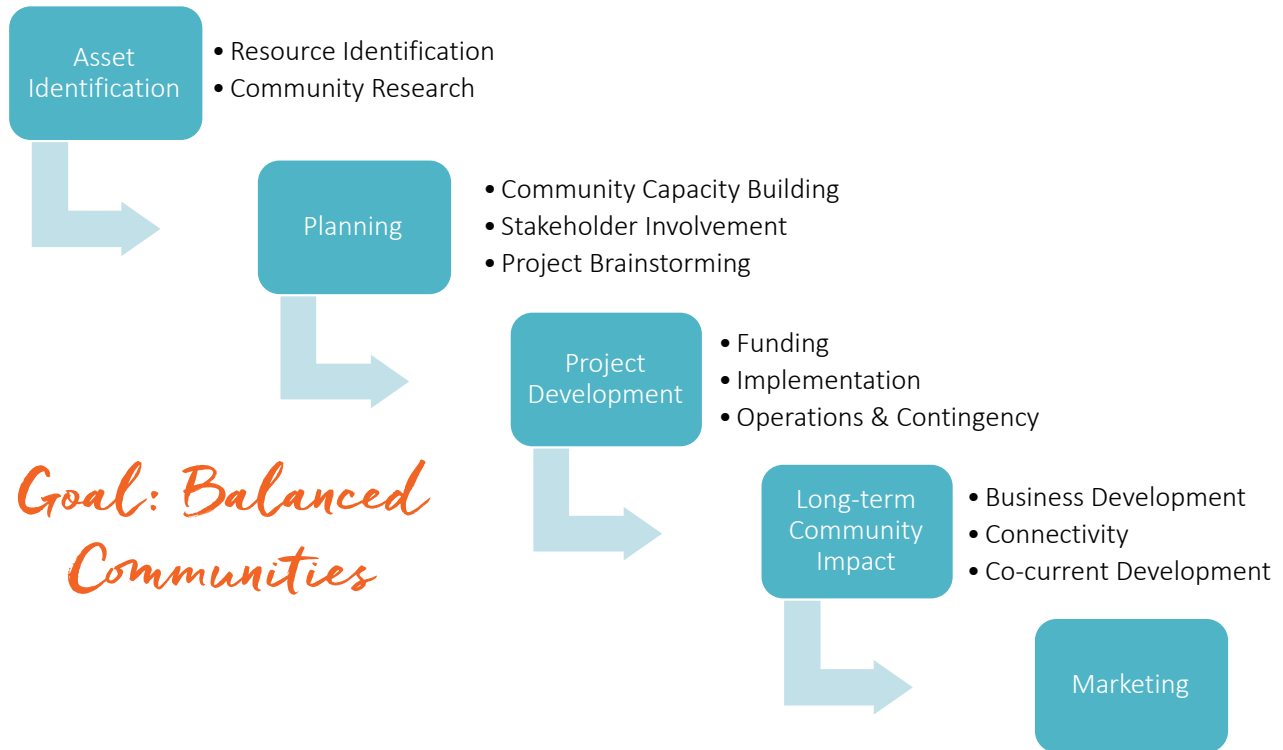
- Product development and planning
- Market and promotion through SWVA



Creative Economy

STRATEGY

HOW? Developing a community's creative economy consists of identifying assets, planning, capacity development, project development, long-term impact development, and marketing.



Creative Economy

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.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, from 2004 to 2019, travel expenditures in Southwest Virginia grew by \$469 million, with visitor spending a total of \$1.118 billion in 2019. In this 14-year period, travel expenditures have increased by 72%.³ In 2021, visitor spending rebounded to \$1.101.6 billion in Southwest Virginia.⁴

FOOTNOTE

⁴ Annual travel-related tax receipt estimates taken from the 2019 Virginia Tourism Corporation Economic Impact of Domestic Travel in Virginia report - U.S. Travel Association

Creative Economy

OUTDOOR RECREATION AND ARTISAN TRENDS



The Outdoor Industry Association reported in 2022, 54 percent of Americans ages six (6) and over participated in outdoor recreation at least once, the highest participation rate on record.⁵ Additionally, research shows that 57% of Virginians participate in outdoor recreation activities, and approximately 29% of these trips happen close to home (meaning within 30 minutes or less).⁶

In Virginia, the outdoor recreation industry continues to thrive. Fifty-seven percent of residents participate in outdoor recreation each year, with approximately 29% of residents taking outdoor recreation trips within 30 minutes of their homes.⁷ Additionally, visitors to Southwest Virginia spend an estimated \$112.4 million on outdoor recreation each year, with fishing, off-roading, and camping being the most popular outdoor activities.⁸

Friends of SWVA sees these insights as a path forward for growing the creative economy, and as an organization, we are addressing accessibility, capacity, and promotion of our creative economy assets, including outdoor recreation.

Additionally, 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. In the most recent report from 2020, the Virginia Artisan Industry has created 11,958 jobs, attracted 699,320 travelers, and generated \$15.6 million in state tax revenue while yielding a total economic impact of \$527.2 million.⁹

FOOTNOTE

⁵ 2022 Data from the Outdoor Industry Association

⁶ Data from the Outdoor Industry Association

⁷ Data from the Virginia Outdoor Plan

⁸ Direct Economic Impact and Spending Shares by Industries, 2021 by Tourism Economics

⁹ Data from The Economic and Fiscal Impact of the Artisan Industry in Virginia, CHMURA Economics and Analytics

Creative Economic Development

CAPACITY BUILDING AND ENGAGEMENT SPOTLIGHT

As we look back at the accomplishments of the last year, it is more imperative than ever to thank the regional partners who have led by example, moving projects forward despite rising construction costs showcasing the importance of regional partnership and a high standard of excellence at every turn. As we look ahead, we have high expectations for collaborative partnerships, innovative projects and strategic opportunities to share our region with an even broader audience every year. We couldn't be prouder of the strides our region has taken to hold in balance the protection and preservation of our natural and cultural

asset while rising to the opportunity for innovation and investments in the things that will keep our region the best place to call home for generations to come.

Over the last year, the Friends of Southwest Virginia Team has worked closely with federal, state, and local partners to build capacity, activate communities, and complete assets development projects in the creative economy sector. Below we will feature some of these partnerships and the development successes of the past year.

AIR Institute: Air Shift and Evolve

In Partnership with Virginia Tech and the Reynolds Homestead, "The AIR Institute provides rural and under-resourced communities with programming that inspires new connections and ignites the creative economy. Creative people expand business skills, businesspeople get more creative; they learn to collaborate, adapt, and thrive together." (Air Mission)

Friends of SWVA has been a proud partner and trained facilitator offering support and workshops across the region.

Currently, workshops are active in the Town of Wise and Patrick County are making plans for a 2023 collaboration.

Clinch River Valley Initiative

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

In November 2022, CRVI welcomed its first Executive Director, Sarah Romeo. This accomplishment was made possible through the support of community leaders, funders, and key partners. In addition to the 26 active partners, a special thank you goes to the Nature Conservancy and UVA Wise, who continue to bring capacity and support to the Initiative.



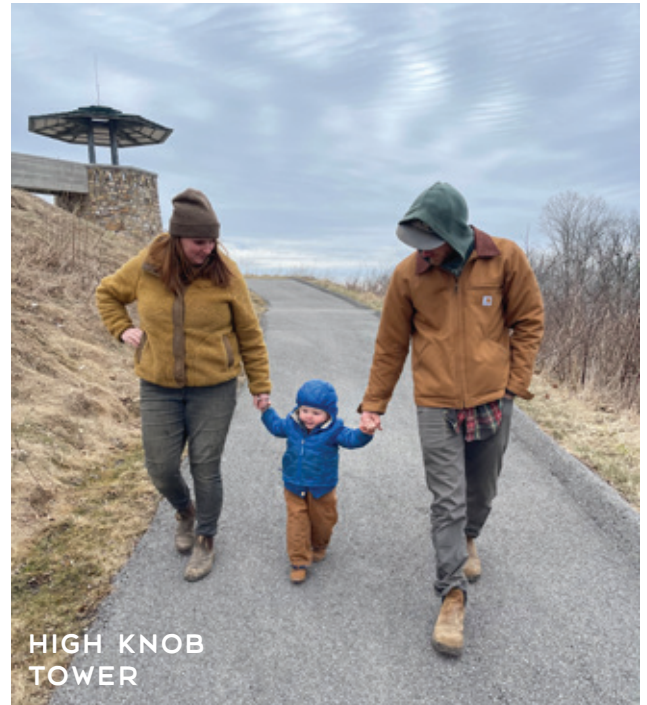
Creative Economic Development

CAPACITY BUILDING AND ENGAGEMENT SPOTLIGHT

Forest Recreation Outdoor Group (FROG)

Forest Recreation Outdoor Group, or FROG. This is a group of more than 30 organizations that have come together with a shared interest in the region’s economic, educational, physical, and mental well-being, as well as the role the national forest plays in providing recreation opportunities for the region’s residents and visitors.

The FROG group’s mission is to have a “collective impact” in providing ideas and resources to enhance recreation opportunities in the High Knob region, including strengthening the connections among the communities that surround the national forest and the infrastructure needed to maintain and grow recreational opportunities here. This includes trail maintenance and development, maintaining campgrounds and recreation areas, hunting and fishing access, and habitat, among other uses.



Opportunity Southwest Virginia

Opportunity Southwest Virginia is piloting the way for the region to align resources, highlighting opportunities for entrepreneurs, supporting their efforts, and expanding the spirit they bring to their communities. Through collaborative partnerships, the initiative is working to rally existing and emerging economic and community development efforts to create thriving entrepreneurial communities that will accelerate progress for both new and established ventures.



Rally SWVA – Real Action Leadership Learning

Rally SWVA is building community leadership capacity and reinforcing collaborative, entrepreneurial communities across the region. A strategy of the Opportunity SWVA initiative, Rally SWVA, is an action learning mini-grant program that engages community leaders in working together to make their community a better place for small businesses. In 2022, the Rally was implemented in the Town of Clinchco and the Town of Wise.

Creative Economic Development

REGIONAL PLANNING SPOTLIGHTS

Breaks Interstate Park Hospitality Study



This study was developed directly from recommendations showcased in the Cumberland Plateau Economic Analysis and Development Plan. This plan makes the case for future public and private investment to support operational changes at Breaks Interstate Park by demonstrating how strategic funds can help improve financial sustainability and bolster the broader economic value the Park brings to the region.

This study includes four phases of work that should be completed by Spring 2023. The planning process is guided by a steering committee made up of local regional and state representatives from both Kentucky and Virginia.

This study is funded by a partnership of two private family foundations who have come together to support Breaks Interstate Park as they look to grow its impact as a regional destination. The Thompson Charitable Foundation and Genan Foundation have each donated \$25,000 to this planning initiative.



Bridge Builders Interstate Collaborative

The SWVA Vision Plan deliverables capture the voices and aspirations of the many partners working to build a creative economy across Southwest Virginia. Informed by a three-year project entitled Bridge Builder with support from Appalachian Regional Commission and Americorps, this regional plan synthesizes and prioritizes catalytic projects that will contribute to and accelerate the ongoing economic restructuring of this Central Appalachian area.

The goal for this phase in the Bridge Builder initiative will create a strategy and a framework within which regional for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, in partnership with localities across Southwest Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and West Virginia, can communicate best practices and collaborative inspiration. The process of developing and sharing products will generate opportunities to work together to help build cooperation across state lines and strengthen the creative economy.

Creative Economic Development

REGIONAL PLANNING SPOTLIGHTS

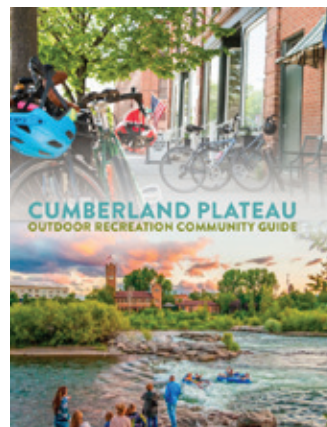


Cumberland Plateau Economic Analysis and Development Plan

The Cumberland Plateau Economic Analysis and Development Plan serves as a roadmap for the growing the outdoor recreation economy in the four-county region of Buchanan, Tazewell, Dickenson, and Russell counties. Friends of Southwest Virginia, along with the Cumberland Plateau Planning District, coordinated this planning effort. The project contracted with SE Group, a planning firm that works with recreation tourism communities across the country. The SE Group conducted an analysis of the existing conditions identifying the opportunities and gaps in the region.

Additionally, the study engaged with stakeholders, explored partnerships, and created a recreation and economic development roadmap for the Cumberland Plateau. The primary goal of this study was to identify new economic opportunities and encourage smart investment in the recreational tourism assets of the region. The deliverables included guidance for local residents interested in starting new small businesses that leverage existing assets as well as a development prospectus for resort developers to create a new draw to the region.

Three takeaway Guides were developed for this project. These included:



Creative Economic Development

REGIONAL PLANNING SPOTLIGHTS

Mendota Trail Master Plan

The Mendota Trail is led by the Mendota Trail Conservancy, a passionate all-volunteer group who are annually opening miles of trail to get to a full build-out of the 12.5-mile rail-to-trail. A section is proposed to connect to downtown Bristol and the VA/TN border, making the Mendota Trail the “Trailhead to Virginia.” Opening the Trail through “The Gorge” and the North Fork of the Holston will connect users to the incredible natural environment at the foothill of the Clinch Mountains. This area is truly the “Birthplace of Country Music,” and the area is rich in culture. You may find a bluegrass picking at The Store, just across from the Mendota Trailhead, or take a quick jaunt to the homeplace of the Carter Family—country music’s famed family. The following are steps that were taken in the planning process of this project.

Friends of Southwest Virginia oversaw the completion of the Mendota Trail Master Plan in 2021, with funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission and Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission. Friends continues to be a regional partner of the development of the Mendota Trail.



Mount Rogers Regional Connectivity

Outdoor recreation has become increasingly recognized as a tourism driver, quality of life asset, and growing economic sector. Communities in the Mount Rogers region, a hub of outdoor tourism, enlisted a research team—comprised of experts from Virginia Tech’s Center for Economic and Community Engagement, Arnett Muldrow & Associates, and Hill Studios—to develop an outdoor analysis and development plan.

1. Use past planning efforts to inform an actionable plan for improving access to and quality of outdoor experiences for visitors and residents. This includes the 2017 Outdoor Recreation Economic Development Framework completed by Arnett Muldrow for a portion of the Mount Rogers region. This report serves as a foundation for this plan.

2. Build the collaborative capacity of regional stakeholders to uplift outdoor assets.
3. Provide expertise to prioritize actionable steps for developing the region’s outdoors, with guidelines for implementation.

The research team collected and analyzed secondary data, including census and market data, qualitative input from a wide variety of stakeholders, and more for a comprehensive look at the region, its outdoor assets and existing gaps, as well as an analysis of regional and national tourism markets to inform key strategies and next steps.

Creative Economic Development

REGIONAL PLANNING SPOTLIGHTS

Recreation Access Development in the Coalfields

Outdoor Recreation Access the Coalfields of Virginia will positively impact the economies of the Counties of Lee and Wise, the Towns of Big Stone Gap and Pound, through the strategic planning of river access points in Lee County, mountain bike pump track in the Town of

Big Stone Gap, and a Recreational Assessment for the Town of Pound. The master planning process for this project is wrapping up, and the next phase will begin by Summer 2023.



LITTLE STONY FALLS, WISE, VA

Virginia Creeper Trail Master Plan

The Virginia Creeper Trail is at an important milestone in its history. Stakeholders of the Virginia Creeper Trail have developed a unifying strategic document to guide how it works with trail management partners (Damascus, Abingdon, and the US Forest Service). Project stakeholders developed a master plan that looks at major capital projects, maintenance, conservation of the trail landscape, organizational development of VCTC, measurement of trail impact, marketing, and outreach.

The Virginia Creeper Trail was recently ranked the #2 best trail in the nation by USA Today. This plan comes at a key time to continue to build the sustainability and longevity of this beloved trail and a key tourism driver in our region. With this plan and the support of all partners, we expect the Virginia Creeper Trail to stay at the top of the list of best trails in the country for years to come.

Creative Economic Development

REGIONAL PLANNING & PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

In Partnership with the 19 counties, four cities, and 53 towns of the region, Friends of Southwest Virginia is working to grow a sustainable creative economy that preserves, protects, and interprets our rich heritage and natural resources, creates jobs, to welcomes both visitors and new businesses to our region.

Haysi Riverwalk

Haysi Riverwalk Trail will connect Main Street in Haysi, Va., to its scenic natural assets with a handicap-accessible river walkway to encourage users to engage with the Russell Fork River in the Town of Haysi in Dickenson County, Virginia. This project is funded through a 2016 Appalachian Regional Commission

POWER grant, a Department of Conservation and Recreation's Recreational Trails Program, 'CPROP funding' from the Cumberland Plateau Company, a grant from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, and additional support from the Cumberland Forest Community fund. These activities include the construction of handicapped access to the riverfront, improvements to an existing parking lot/trailhead, and wayfinding/gateway improvements.



High Knob Destination Center



The High Knob visitor center is a project funded through a 2016 Appalachian Regional Commission POWER grant. The purpose of this project is to develop a visitor center at the entrance to the High Knob Recreation in the City of Norton, Va., for visitors as an interpretive, logistical, and orientation center for visitors to the natural and recreational assets of High Knob and surrounding communities.

Project activities include the construction of an approximate visitor center and trailhead, including parking, mapping and wayfinding, interpretive and orientation displays, and exhibits about the experiences, natural assets, history, and culture of the High Knob Region.

Creative Economic Development

REGIONAL PLANNING & PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

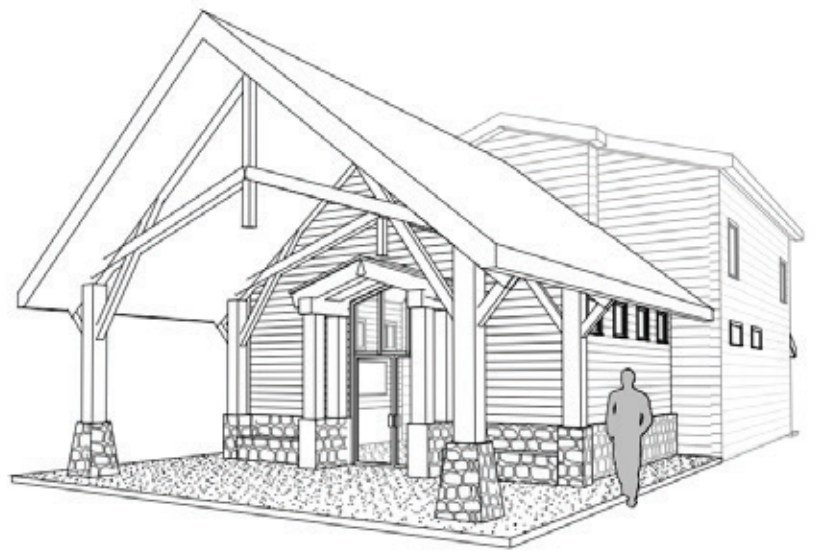


GILES COUNTY VIRGINIA

New River Center

The New River Center is a project funded through a 2016 Appalachian Regional Commission POWER grant, FLAP funds, and a grant from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. The purpose of this project is to develop a Trail/Visitor Center for all trails and amenities in Giles County (to include restroom and changing facilities) and site improvements, including a parking area for short-term visitors to the NRC.

Project activities include the development of a public restroom and changing facilities, site improvements, and construction of a parking area. All activities will take place on the property of Mountain Lake Lodge.



ADDITIONAL ASSET DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Tazewell Trails

Friends of Southwest Virginia continues to work closely with Tazewell County and funders to identify long-term sustainability strategy opportunities to connect the community with the existing recreation amenities.

Creative Economic Development

FEATURED PROJECT



Damascus Trail Center Opening

Friends of Southwest Virginia and the Town of Damascus partnered with ARC POWER, Tobacco and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to construct a 2,100-square-foot education and welcome center.

“The Damascus Trail Center (DTC) was built to educate, empower, and protect the region’s visitors, volunteers, and communities. The DTC educates by focusing on the principles of responsible recreation and environmental stewardship. High-quality exhibits and programming will showcase the nearby landscape and share stories of stewards who protect nearby outdoor spaces.

Instilling a sense of stewardship will be the foundation for programming and activities at The Center.

The DTC empowers by promoting volunteerism, community building, and connections to and stewardship of the region’s outdoor assets. Finally, the DTC protects local outdoor spaces, providing a destination where the relationship between the region and its outdoor resources can be fully explored and where people can learn how to develop a closer connection to the outdoors.” Emily Mayo Trail Center Director.

FACILITY INFORMATION

- 2,100 Square feet
- 1,000 Square feet of outdoor programming space
- .41-acre lot in the heart of “Trail Town, USA”
- Hands-on learning and training workshop.







GRAYSON HIGHLANDS
STATE PARK

Southwest Virginia Cultural Center

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA
CULTURAL CENTER AND
MARKETPLACE



Vision

- To serve as the gateway to our region by highlighting Southwest Virginia, its talented people, and its creative economy.
- To generate new economic impact while maintaining our organization's financial stability
- To set an industry standard for tourism, injecting the WOW factor at every turn

The Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace defined itself as both an outstanding destination and an impressive venue in 2022. As the Cultural Center reopened to the public full-time, six days a week, retail staff entertained visitors from across the U.S. and internationally throughout the year. The Cultural Center also saw an increase in bus and group tours, travel writers, and community groups visiting the facility.

The gallery space inside serves as a medium to introduce visitors to the vibrant creative economy that thrives in Southwest Virginia. As 'Round the Mountain membership continues to grow, the inventory is constantly updated to provide customers with the latest works of art provided by our artisans.



SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA
Cultural Center
& MARKETPLACE

Southwest Virginia Cultural Center

LOVE SWVA Concert Series



This year, Friends of Southwest Virginia launched a new summer/fall music series called LOVE SWVA Concert Series. The concert series allowed the Cultural Center to shine as a premier event venue in the region.

In July, the Cultural Center hosted a patriotic tribute as it donned beautiful outdoor display to our nation’s service members and veterans with the **Symphony of the Mountains** as part of our Independence Day Celebration.

In August, **Iron Horse** put a bluegrass spin on classic rock favorites as the band took the indoor stage. Local performers **Carly & the Barbirds** joined for the August show.

In October, **Scythian** and **Tuatha Dea** entertained an energetic crowd at the Cultural Center’s outdoor amphitheater.

Online sales reflected attendees from across at least 10 states, including Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Texas, Georgia, Kentucky, West Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia.



The LOVE SWVA Concert Series was sponsored by:



Southwest Virginia Cultural Center

Made in SWVA

This year, dozens of our regional artisans took advantage of opportunities to interact directly with customers as part of Made in SWVA events held in the summer and winter months. 'Round the Mountains artisans were provided booth space inside the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center for demonstrations and displays.



Christmas in Southwest Virginia

The Cultural Center comes to life around the holiday season with its beautiful, ornate decorations and sparkling lights inside and out. The Celebration of Lights kicked off the Christmas in Southwest Virginia winter festival and is a part of the Holiday Lights Driving Tour in Abingdon. The Crooked Road Jams celebrated with holiday flare and a meal for the monthly event. The Center also hosted opportunities for children to

take photos and write letters to Santa. Breakfast with Santa allowed families to gather over a special holiday meal and entertained children with reindeer games and activities. The Becky Buller Band and Nu-Blu took the indoor stage to bring their 'Happy Christmas Tour' to Southwest Virginia with traditional and original bluegrass holiday tunes.



Southwest Virginia Cultural Center

The Crooked Road Jams

Musicians mark their calendars each month to join other entertainers on the first Thursday of each month to attend The Crooked Road Jams. Talented groups form to pick and play for a couple of hours each month. Friends of Southwest Virginia provided a homecooked meal for sale to those gathering at the event.

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.

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 & Special Events

- More and more businesses and organizations are hosting events at the Cultural Center. From private parties to receptions to nonprofit fundraising events, the Cultural Center continues to be a go-to event venue for regional businesses.
- Interested in holding a special event at the facility? Contact us at events@FriendsofSWVA.org



'Round the Mountain Marketing & Programming



'Round the Mountain Overview

'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote the sustainable economic development of the region's communities through the 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.

'Round the Mountain & Friends of Southwest Virginia 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 the 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.

Jury

'Round the Mountain holds a jury twice a year. The Spring 2022 Jury was held in April, and we welcomed eight (8) new members. The Fall jury brought six (6) new artisans in a variety of mediums. We found it exciting that many of the Fall jury artists are younger craftsmen who are bringing new life to the arts in SWVA. In addition to artists, who are a must for the older generation, who have been mastering their craft for years, but never thought their creations would be valued by others. In the words of one new Jury member, "I never viewed myself as an artist."

'Round the Mountain Statistics

Total Members - 192

Juried Artisans - 145

Members by Medium

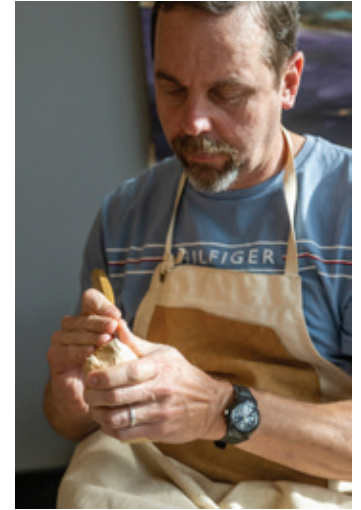
- Basketry - 6
- Fiber - 30
- Glass - 8
- Graphic Design - 3
- Jewelry - 17
- Leather - 8
- Literary - 3
- Metal - 6
- Mixed Media - 12
- Natural Materials - 6
- Painting - 14
- Photography - 10
- Pottery / Ceramics - 13
- Two-Dimensional - 8
- Wood - 31
- Partners/Supporters - 8
- Other - 9

Members by Community

(number of artisans)

- Bland - 0
- Bristol - 11
- Buchanan - 4
- Carroll - 7
- Dickenson - 3
- Floyd - 15
- Franklin - 5
- Galax - 3
- Giles - 2
- Grayson - 5
- Lee - 8
- Montgomery - 11
- Norton - 2
- Patrick - 7
- Pulaski - 2
- Radford - 1
- Russell - 9
- Scott - 4
- Smyth - 14
- Tazewell - 12
- Washington - 37
- Wise - 6
- Wythe - 11
- Other - 13

'Round the Mountain Marketing & Programming



Special Events

Made in Southwest Virginia Events

In 2021 we launched this event where artists come to Southwest Virginia Cultural Center to set up their craft. A family-friendly event allowed visitors to learn how our Southwest Virginia artisans create their work and gave them the opportunity to engage with the artisans.

This year we held two Made in SWVA events. The first being in tandem with Virginia Highlands. We had 18 artists set up over the course of the 10-day event. In November, we held our 2nd annual Made in SWVA Holiday in conjunction with William King's Mistletoe Market. We had 22 artists set up, and over 250 guests came through the center.



E-Commerce

During Fall 2022, Friends of Southwest Virginia launched a new e-commerce platform and website. Earlier in the year, the team worked on capturing high-quality photos of the artisan work, while also creating a website that showcases nearly 1,250 artisans items. The new website is shop.swwaculturalcenter.com.

Regional Marketing & Branding

In 2022, Friends of Southwest Virginia continued to expand our region wide marketing efforts. These included keeping our digital assessment management system up-to-date with new photography and videography, working with more partners to offer our Marketing Access Program, and promoting the region with traditional and digital marketing initiatives.

Digital Asset Management System

Friends of Southwest Virginia continues to expand access to digital marketing materials, such as photography and videography, to our regional partners. During community visits, we work with partners to gather resources that were lacking from

our archives, as well as theirs. We will also be using the valuable input gathered during conversations over the last year with our partners to strategize future content gathering and creation.

Marketing Access Program (MAP)

Friends of Southwest Virginia worked closely with the Blue Ridge Small Business Development Center to provide marketing resources to small businesses in Grayson County. Staff from the SBDC identified four qualifying businesses to receive marketing grants. Friends of Southwest Virginia staff partnered with a regional agency and met with local business owners to strategize initiatives, including digital advertising campaigns, content creation, and social media promotion. These plans are expected to continue into the spring and summer of 2023.

Additional MAP Projects included:

- Southwest Virginia Museums Group (website development, creating social media channels, and a digital marketing campaign.
- Mount Rogers Regional Partnership (website development, logo creation, and regional videos creation)

Southwest Virginia Media & Advertising

Friends of Southwest Virginia and 'Round the Mountain provide monthly newsletters and frequent press releases to keep the community informed of all the major projects, events, and announcements from the organization and the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace.

Additionally, staff has maintained relationships with local media outlets to continue monthly broadcast interviews to promote regional events, including the

LOVE SWVA Concert Series, the debut of the new e-commerce platform, and Christmas in Southwest Virginia. Our staff has also been available to provide quotes for print media drawing on the local expertise of the region, including topics like the tourism draw to the region for fall foliage.

Other marketing initiatives include traditional and digital advertising placement and public relations outreach to media outlets to key target audiences.

Regional Marketing & Branding

Regional Representation at the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center

Visitors who enter the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace often get their initial introduction to the region. We are proud to utilize this visitor center space to provide marketing materials and brochures for our regional partners through a variety of stations.

'Round the Mountain artisans also provide the context of cultural heritage to visitors through the retail space. The beautiful, handcrafted items enhance the experience by providing local merchandise throughout the gallery space.

MARKETING STATISTICS	
Combined Facebook Follows	40,850+
Combined Instagram Follows	16,280+
Combined Twitter Follows	5,400+

'Round the Mountain Marketing

As part of the mission of 'Round the Mountain, the artisan network seeks to provide its members entrepreneurial, educational, and marketing assets. Friends of Southwest Virginia has renewed an effort to offer artisans a spotlight through our 'Featured Artisan' series. Our staff engages artisans in a meaningful conversation about the passion of their work and its origin, while our photographers work to collect high-quality, unique photos of their products to feature in a series of newsletters, social media outlets, blog posts, and special e-commerce placements.

The organization has worked diligently to provide juried artisans with the best outlets and marketing opportunities to sell their products efficiently. The launch of the new e-commerce platform in October 2022 allowed a more aesthetically appealing and user-friendly option to engage customers in the online platform. Efforts are ongoing to continue marketing these products globally.



The Crooked Road

2022 IN REVIEW

The Crooked Road: Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail serves the Southwest Virginia region by 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 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, Floyd Country Store & County Sales, 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 a 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.

During 2022, The Crooked Road has added new projects

to directly benefit local communities and musicians, as well as promotion of the region for potential tourists through new concerts and publications.

The Crooked Road presented an original production at the Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech entitled “The Crooked Road’s Music & Dance Spectacular” that featured a narrative journey through Southwest Virginia’s music and dance with The Whitetop Mountain Band, Justin Golden, Becky Hill, Junior Sisk Band, Scott Freeman, Willard Gayheart, and Dori Freeman with Nick Falk and narrated by Eugene Wolf.

The Crooked Road Jams continued monthly at the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace, and TCR supported various community events and festivals. The Crooked Road also featured heritage music performers at Bristol’s Rhythm & Roots Reunion in the Birthplace of Country Music Museum’s performance space. Rhythm & Roots Reunion performers included a variety of genres with Twin Creeks Stringband, Linda & David Lay, ShadowGrass, The Brothers Young, and the Empty Bottle String Band.

The Crooked Road on Tour program also held events at out-of-region venues. In 2022, these performances included The State Fair of Virginia, with Junior Sisk Band as the Main Stage performer and Jim Lloyd, Junior Appalachian Musicians, Erynn Marshall & Carl Jones, Mac Traynham, and Jackson Cunningham. Other



YOUTH MUSIC FEST



EMPTY BOTTLE STRING BAND



THE BROTHERS YOUNG



Crooked Road On Tour performances were held at Barrier Islands Center and Lorton Workhouse Center.

The Crooked Road’s Artist-In-Residence program continued to support regional musicians. The selected artist serves as an ambassador for The Crooked Road by producing an original piece of music or new interpretation of an existing traditional piece of music for The Crooked Road use, conduct workshop/master classes and participate in concerts. Andrew Small completed his first year representing The Crooked Road in June 2022, and Johnny Williams was selected as the 2nd Artist-In-Residence. Hailing from Fries, Williams has been active in the traditional music community for over 30 years, playing with multiple bands and music organizations in the region, producing original music, and songwriting.

In addition, The Crooked Road has a music educational component through the Traditional Music Education Program (TMEP). In May 2022, The Crooked Road held its Youth Music Festival & Competition. The new format allowed for over \$1,200 of cash prizes to be given out to youth over various traditional instrument categories. TMEP has also supported Junior Appalachian Musician (JAM) student recruitment programs in the region.

Marketing outreach included a new quarterly magazine printed with festival, events, and tourism partner contacts. Other efforts included an electronic newsletter

on events and happenings, a Crooked Road sponsored Farm & Fun Time at the Birthplace of Country Music Museum and at the International Bluegrass Music Association’s conference in conjunction with Virginia Tourism Corporation and tourism partners across Southwest Virginia.

For 2023, The Crooked Road will also be looking to offer professional development opportunities for musicians and help identify music industry resources to emphasize SWVA as a unique place to live and work for heritage music. There will be a slate of activities and expos throughout SWVA to connect musicians to music industry services and other professionals to help successfully sustain their music careers.





(276) 492-2400

One Heartwood Circle
Abingdon, VA 24210

Partner Website: friendsofswva.org

Consumer website: visitswva.org



VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS



A different side of Virginia