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HVAB, Commissioners announce Tourism Grant recipients

State College, PA, May 31, 2023 – The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB), along with the Centre County Board of Commissioners, today announced the awarding of \$840,000 in 2023-24 Tourism Grant funding for events and projects that will enhance the county’s tourism product. Under the theme of “Brewing Tourism Development,” the news conference took place at the new Boal City Brewing in Boalsburg.

“Our newest tourism asset, which is surrounded by some of our most popular, established tourism attractions, provides the perfect backdrop for announcing funding that helps to market and develop our overall tourism offerings,” said HVAB President and CEO Fritz Smith.

Smith said this year’s grant program received a record 82 applications, and a total funding ask of more than \$2.3 million. Seventy-two projects received funding. The \$840,000 in available funding marks a high point in the history of the more than 20-year program.

“The growing grant program reflects the strength of visitation to Happy Valley,” Smith said, noting that 20 percent of lodging tax revenue is dedicated to the program. “At the same time, the grant program has become increasingly more competitive. The independent Tourism Grant Review Committee, which makes the funding recommendations, looked at projects that are moving or have the potential to move the visitation needle.”

Smith said the HVAB and the committee are pleased that applicants are thinking more broadly about reaching audiences outside of the county, both overnight stays and day trippers.

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“The grant program is meant to help drive visitation,” he said. “The HVAB has research and staff expertise to help our grant recipients better achieve this goal. We are seeing more and more that are taking advantage of these resources in developing their applications.”

Smith and Centre County Commissioners also stressed that the projects funded provide tremendous value to all those who call Happy Valley home.

“Both nonprofits and the tourism industry in Centre County are recovering,” said Centre County Commissioner Chair Mark Higgins. “County tourism grants help local nonprofits and other organizations enhance our festivals and events, which in turn improves the quality of life in Centre County.”

Commissioner Amber Concepcion said it was great to see the incredible amount of interest in the grant program.

“We have such great community resources,” she said. “We are fortunate that increased revenue from tourism is giving us the opportunity to further invest resources into projects that also improve the quality of life for residents.”

Commissioner Steve Dershem said the impact that the tourism grant program has had on Centre County has been massive. “All regions of the county benefit by the tourism dollars that help build our communities and provide activities enjoyed by all,” he said.

Selected grant recipients spoke at the announcement, including new recipient Centre LGBTQA Support Network, which received a grant to market the upcoming State College Pride event.

“Being awarded a Happy Valley Adventure Bureau Tourism Grant means a great deal to our organization and those we serve,” said Cat Cooke, Executive Director of the Centre LGBTQA Support Network. “Last year’s Pride had an estimated 4,000 people in attendance. This included local residents, business owners, organizations, and places of faith who all attended in a huge display of unity and support for our LGBT+ community.

“To have an event like Pride here in Centre County speaks volumes to the strength, diversity, and acceptance of our community,” she continued. “It sends a clear message of love and inclusivity. We see you, we celebrate you, and you are welcome here. That is what Pride is about. We thank the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau and Centre County Commissioners for supporting us in extending our services even further.”

Centre Kitchen Collective was another first-time recipient.

Centre Kitchen Collective was co-founded as a nonprofit in winter 2023 by Sabine Carey of Centre Markets LLC and Elaine Meder-Wilgus of Webster’s Bookstore and Café, with the mission of nurturing a resilient community through cultivating connections between the local food economy and local farmers. In partnership with Centre Markets, Centre Kitchen Collective is opening an innovative food hub and shared-use commercial kitchen incubator project in Pine Grove Mills, with a local food retail store opening fall 2023 as phase 1.

“Through the support of The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau, we’ll be able to start our ‘Centre of the Table’ project, which will increase the visibility of our local food system by highlighting local farmers, chef developed seasonal recipes, and sharing the joy of collaborating with local restaurants that strongly support our local producers,” Carey said. “We look forward to growing our initiative in the future by partnering with additional local restaurants and food service providers.

“By strengthening the connections between our rich agricultural heritage and our creative restaurant community, we work to grow the resilience and vibrancy of Happy Valley.”

Happy Valley Comic Con is a second-year grant recipient. Founder Thomas Range spoke about the success of the inaugural event in January of this year, and of plans for 2024.

“Talking to other conventions, we were expecting to get about 100 vendors and 1,000 attendees for a first year convention,” he said. “Because of the tourism grant, we more than doubled our expectations. We had over 200 vendors and more than 2,000 attendees. We could not have done it without the (grant program).”

Range said he plans for expansion in year two.

“Though we will keep about the same number of vendors, we are planning to have at least 3,000 if not 4,000 attendees in 2024,” he said. “With this new grant, we will be able to build on what we have already established and reach out farther than we had last year. With the help of the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau and the tourism grant, we are boldly going where no Con has gone before! With the bureau’s help, the convention is going to live long and prosper!”

2023-24 Tourism Grant recipients:

- **Bryce Jordan Center** -- \$10,000 for promoter incentives
- **Bryce Jordan Center** -- \$10,000 for digital and social media marketing
- **Happy Valley Women’s Cycling** -- \$16,000 for marketing the Seasons of Rothrock race series
- **State College Downtown Improvement District** -- \$8,000 for IRONMAN related event marketing
- **Bellefonte Art Museum** -- \$22,500 for marketing of permanent and visiting exhibits
- **Centre LGBTQA Support Network** -- \$6,000 for the marketing of Pride Week
- **Philipsburg American Legion Post 437** -- \$5,000 for mural painting beautification project
- **Haines Township** -- \$3,900 to market the Dutch Fall Festival
- **Howard Volunteer Fire Company** -- \$3,000 to market the Punkin’ Chunkin’ Festival
- **Arts Fest and First Night** -- \$40,000 to market both events
- **The Makery** -- \$2,500 for studio marketing
- **Advent Historical Society** -- \$1,500 for marketing to expand audiences for musical events at the historic church

- **Rowland Theater** --\$13,000 to move concession stand and ticket both to adjacent building in order to stay open after the movies so people have a place to gather.
- **Stage at Talleyrand** -- \$10,000 in support of design, planning work
- **Art Alliance of Central PA** -- \$3,000 to market its workshop series
- **Re Farm Café** -- \$3,000 to market the Taste of Happy Valley Culinary Crawl
- **Nittany Mountain Biking Association** -- \$18,000 to support Phase II-B of Harvest Fields
- **Moshannon Valley EMS** -- \$14,000 to market Philipsburg Heritage Days
- **Happy Valley Comic Con** -- \$11,000 to market the second annual event
- **Historic Bellefonte, Inc.** -- \$40,000 for event and general marketing
- **Nittany Valley Symphony** -- \$5,000 to market symphony performances
- **Nittany Performing Arts Center** -- \$10,000 to support the development of a capital campaign for the proposed center
- **Arboretum at Penn State** -- \$8,000 to market facilities and special events
- **Way Fruit Farm** -- \$5,000 to market Art in the Orchard
- **Discovery Space of Central PA** -- \$15,000 for digital and print media to promote workshops
- **Tempest Productions** -- \$15,000 to market Theatre and Dance Fest
- **People's Choice Festival** -- \$12,000 to market the event
- **Palmer Museum of Art** -- \$17,000 to help market the new museum
- **Centre County Library & Historical Museum** --\$35,000 to continue the restoration of the Howard Street porch
- **Centre Volunteers in Medicine** -- \$15,000 to market the mini-triathlon to a broader audience
- **PA Environmental Council** --\$2,500 to promote several theme bike routes in the county
- **Clearwater Conservancy** -- \$4,000 to promote trails and land access in Rothrock State Forest
- **Clearwater Conservancy** --\$6,000 to market the Centered Outdoors Program
- **State College Choral Society** -- \$2,500 to market concerts
- **Happy Valley Improv** -- \$18,000 to market the third annual Happy Valley Improv XL
- **Millheim Walkfest of Art and Music** (rebranded as SummerFest) -- \$6,250 to market the event
- **Ten Thousand Villages State College** --\$2,000 for special event marketing
- **Grange Encampment and Fair** -- \$25,000 to market the 2023 Grange Fair
- **Tussey Mountain** -- \$5,000 to market WingFest
- **Snow Shoe Rails to Trails** --\$10,000 to produce marketing assets: rack cards and maps
- **State College Borough** -- \$12,500 to help with the construction of an action skate park
- **State College Borough** -- \$6,000 to market events in MLK Plaza
- **Tussey Mountainback Ultramarathon** --\$6,500 to market the 50-mile relay race
- **Center for the Performing Arts** -- \$18,000 to market CPA events
- **Philipsburg Revitalization Corp.** --\$10,000 to market PRC events
- **Roland Curtin Foundation** --\$17,500 for multiple marketing tactics to promote the historic site
- **Wildlife for Everyone Foundation** -- \$4,000 to advertise the Great Outdoor Picnic
- **Centre Region Parks & Rec** -- \$3,000 for marketing to promote Millbrook Marsh

- **Centre County Farmland Trust** -- \$5,000 to market the Farm Routes initiative
- **3 Dots Downtown** -- 20,000 for facility infrastructure improvements
- **Apple Hill Antiques** --\$3,000 to produce Centre Region Antiques Road Trip rack cards and maps
- **Rooted Farmstead** -- \$4,000 to produce an agritourism experience master plan
- **Central PA Tasting Trail** -- \$15,000 for marketing to promote the Trail
- **State Theatre** --\$33,000 for marketing, promoter incentives and infrastructure improvements
- **Pennsylvania Chamber Orchestra** -- \$4,000 for concert series marketing
- **Central PA 4th Fest** -- \$40,000 to market and promote the event
- **Gorinto Productions** -- \$10,000 to market the Rhoneymeade music festival
- **Climb Nittany** -- \$10,000 for general marketing and installation of a bike repair and bike station
- **The Crooked House** --\$8,000 for final installation of the historic home sculpture in Milesburg
- **Centre Film Festival** --\$25,000 for marketing tactics to support the festival
- **Centre County Historical Society** -- \$9,000 for marketing and advertising
- **Centre County Historical Society** -- \$10,000 for restoration work on Centre Furnace Mansion
- **Potter Township** -- \$6,000 for the installation of chain link fencing and field grading
- **Happy Valley Music Fest** -- \$25,000 to market and promote the event
- **Bellefonte Victorian Christmas** --\$12,000 to promote the event
- **HaVAC llc** -- \$7,500 for a facility development plan for an aquatics facility
- **Your Cigar Den** --\$6,000 to market HavanaFest
- **Centre Kitchen Collective** -- \$10,000 to market the Centre of the Table project, which will increase the visibility of the local food system
- **Mountaintop Swimming Pool** --\$5,000 for facility improvements
- **Millheim Township** -- \$10,000 to market Route 45 Getaways
- **Centre Stage** -- \$10,000 to promote events and a theatre sneak preview event on Aug. 29
- **Boal Estate Museum** -- \$16,000 for AC and ADA improvements to the Boal Barn

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