

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TDA Initiatives Reach Out To Help Local Tourism Industry, Receive Honors *Fiscal Year-end Highlights for 2008-2009; New Alliance for 2009-2010*

Rutherford County, NC – In a time when much economic news about Rutherford County is troubling, Tourism Development Authority (TDA) sleeves are rolled up to help.

2008-2009 initiatives are complete, and with three of them winning awards at last week's annual Destination Marketing Association of NC (DMANC) meeting, the TDA kicks off 2009-2010 with its new Alliance. The Alliance is an expansion of the Stakeholder Services program begun last year, a program which was one of the DMANC innovation award winners.

With the addition of the Alliance to Stakeholder Services, the TDA seeks to connect all involved in the county's tourism industry to growth prospects, information, and each other.

Through upcoming monthly seminar-meetings, an ENewsletter and its new TDAAlliance.com website, the Alliance will offer local networking opportunities between attractions, lodgings, and restaurants.

So **mark your calendars** for one of the formational meetings of the Rutherford County TDA Alliance group: Wednesday, July 22nd at 2:00 PM in the Tanner Board Room on the Tanner Campus, and Tuesday, August 18th at 2:00 PM in the Lake Lure Inn Dining Room. There is no fee for Alliance offerings.

Attend one of the formational meetings of the TDA Alliance to learn who your TDA is, what we and the Alliance have to offer you, and about the information we want to share to help you. Come also to tell us what you need from your TDA.

"We are encouraged by the positive response to our efforts. We are very hopeful the Alliance will get a positive response, as well," says Almond. "We believe the Alliance will be critical to providing our hospitality industry the news and tools they need, just as our marketing efforts have been critical to raising the traveling public's awareness about our diverse and beautiful area."

About the Awards:

At the June 7-9, 2009 annual meeting of the DMANC, Rutherford County received three awards chosen from 184 statewide entries. Judged by an international panel of judges, the Rutherford County TDA received a platinum award for the Polar Plunge Campaign, a gold award for the eight niche marketing pieces developed and an innovation award for its new Stakeholder Services campaign.



Caption: At left, Ann Almond displays awards Rutherford County TDA tourism marketing campaigns received at last week's annual meeting of the Destination Marketing Association of NC (DMANC). The TDA has received 18 awards in six years. The DMANC is the state organization for Convention Visitor Bureaus and TDA's across NC who promote tourism.

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Highlights of 2008-2009 TDA Initiatives and Accomplishments:

"We want people to know our team is doing our best to raise our rankings even further. Visitors bring millions of dollars to our county – together, we can be our own local economic stimulus," Ann Almond, TDA Executive Director.

- Developed and implemented award-winning year-round event marketing campaigns.
- Developed e-newsletters for both potential visitors and county hospitality industry.
- Launched a revamped and enhanced website: <http://www.rutherfordtourism.com/>
- Established a web media room: <http://www.rutherfordtourism.com/mediaroom/>
- Established a Facebook site: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Forest-City-NC/Lake-Lure-the-Blue-Ridge-Foothills-in-Rutherford-County-NC/58452767766>
- Established Convention Services Program – served 13 groups, consisting of over 2,600 people.
- Celebrated National Tourism Week at Legislative Building in Raleigh with a county tourism display; talked with legislators and exhibited at I-85 South Interstate Welcome Center.
- Designed 30 sets of acrylic stand displays to hold niche pieces which serve as mini info centers throughout the county.
- Assisted Blue Ridge National Heritage Area with tour of Tri-City area; joined PR Taskforce which ties into new state tourism website and networking.
- Attended Media Missions in Raleigh and Atlanta.

Key Tourism Facts (from 2007, the most recent year state data is available):

- Rutherford County is 26th among 100 NC counties in tourism revenues.
- A total of \$135 million tourism dollars were spent in Rutherford County.
- Over \$4 million in tax dollars were paid to Rutherford County by its overnight visitors, saving each Rutherford County resident over \$180 in taxes.

Lake Lure & The Blue Ridge Foothills operates visitors' centers in Forest City and Lake Lure, N.C. The area is home to filming locations for the blockbuster movies "The Last of the Mobicans" and "Dirty Dancing." It is also the site of HGTV's Dream Home 2006.

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