

T E N N E S S E E ' S
SOUTH
CUMBERLAND
TOURISM PARTNERSHIP

For immediate release

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NEW TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS UNDERWAY FOR THE SOUTH CUMBERLAND REGION

There is a great deal of interest in helping the South Cumberland region improve its economy by encouraging responsible tourism. “Responsible tourism” describes a type of tourism that values and celebrates the natural and cultural attractions of an area, while respecting the values and traditions of the people who live there.

To encourage responsible tourism, area leaders have begun a new initiative to bring more overnight visitors to this area, and, more broadly, to stimulate visitor spending in local communities.

Tennessee’s South Cumberland Tourism Partnership, a newly-formed nonprofit organization composed of local leaders and businesspeople, is working on both near and longer-term plans to help get the South Cumberland region ready to welcome these visitors, and to identify and promote responsible tourism opportunities that can create and sustain new local businesses and local jobs. The partnership is the brainchild of Grundy County Mayor Michael Brady.

“The Partnership’s efforts will include ways for the towns of this region to promote a variety of visitor-friendly natural, historic, recreational and entertainment venues, along with restaurants and overnight accommodations,” explains Joe Gray, the Partnership’s chair. “These efforts will respect the authentic rural character of each of this region’s “gateway communities” — the towns that welcome visitors as they come to enjoy the region’s natural and cultural attractions, such as The Caverns, South Cumberland State Park, Bigfoot Adventures, the Coalmont OHV park, the University of the South, and others.”

Dominic Gialdini, a recent AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer assigned to the Grundy County Mayor’s office, has now taken a full-time position as the Grundy County Tourism Coordinator, and works closely with Tourism Partnership leaders. “By having authentic, inviting and vibrant gateway communities throughout the region — from Beersheba Springs, Altamont, Gruetli-Laager, Coalmont and Palmer to Tracy City, Monteagle, Pelham and Sewanee — and every place in between — we can all come together to improve our area’s economy, create new opportunities for our local entrepreneurs, and in turn create good jobs for local residents,” Gialdini explains.

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“Authenticity is the key to our success,” explains Iva Michelle Russell, the Partnership’s Secretary. “Our communities each have unique places and traditions that visitors will find attractive. Our challenge is to lift up and celebrate these places, and to surround them with the hospitality services visitors also need — from food and beverage establishments to outfitters, crafts and entertainment venues to overnight accommodations that reflect the style, values and traditions of each area.”

To create the kind of welcoming environment that will attract these visitors, says Gialdini, communities across the region must each develop their own unique ideas and approaches for taking advantage of these opportunities. “By sharing their vision of how they would like to participate in this regional effort, each community will help lay an important part of the groundwork — the “game plan,” if you will — for our region’s future prosperity and success,” he explained.

Gray sees tremendous opportunities for economic progress through development of responsible tourism: “As we move forward together, *Tennessee’s South Cumberland Tourism Partnership* hopes to develop and be able to offer strategic, entrepreneurial and marketing resources to aid community leaders and business owners in fulfilling their community’s vision. With a game plan that has broad community support, it will be possible to create the kind of authentic gateway communities that will attract visitors and encourage them to spend the dollars that can significantly improve the well-being of all community members.”

To learn more about the Partnership’s efforts, visit its website at TNSouthCumberland.org.

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