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Nine State Tourism Grants Benefit Valley Efforts

By VIC BRADSHAW Daily News-Record 14 hrs ago

HARRISONBURG — New tourism campaigns, an effort to highlight farm-to-fork dining in Page County, a new magazine focused on the region's wineries and other efforts are being backed by nine state tourism grants totaling \$107,513.

The local awards are among 62 tourism efforts to receive \$772,000 in state grants as part of the Virginia Tourism Corp.'s Marketing Leverage Program. The amounts awarded by the state, which were announced last month, are matched or exceeded by partners involved with the initiatives.

The Front Royal-based Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission, which represents Valley jurisdictions north of Rockingham County, is listed as the official recipient of a \$25,000 grant for a new tourism campaign to benefit the entire Shenandoah Valley in Virginia.

Brenda Black, Harrisonburg's director of tourism and visitor services, said all the tourism offices in the region participated in the grant effort. The campaign, dubbed "Today's Shenandoah Valley," will be rolled out at a media event in May.

The Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce also received \$25,000 from the state. The money will be used to help put on and promote Farm-to-Fork in Luray and Page County.

Gina Hilliard, the chamber's president, said the event will be held later this year. It will be a full-course dinner featuring dishes prepared by local restaurants with ingredients purchased from Page County farmers.

"We want to bring awareness to the whole farm-to-fork movement and how important it is to the

county,” she said, “and tie into the fact that things are opening up to farmers and having them bring their products to restaurants.”

The Central Shenandoah Valley Planning District Commission, headquartered in Staunton, received \$12,500 for its Bike the Valley marketing program.

Black said the funds will be used to launch a new website, create marketing materials and have research done on potential additional bicycle trails in the region.

“We have such a big cycling community that when the program launched, we jumped on to support it and want to support the new initiative as well,” she said.

Promoting Valley Grapes

Rockingham County agritourism destination Back Home on the Farm and various partners, including the Explore More Discovery Museum, received \$12,448 for its “Get Outside and Play ‘in the Burg’” marketing effort. Black said the program will target families with children and will promote outdoor activities in the region.

“With spring coming,” she said, “we want kids to get out and play and enjoy the outdoors.”

Efforts to reach the owners of Back Home on the Farm were unsuccessful Wednesday.

The Shenandoah Valley Wine Growers Association was awarded \$7,500 to support the creation of a Shenandoah Valley Wine Trail magazine.

Curt Hartman, who was president of the association when work on the project began, said the publication will be informational and not include advertising. Wineries in the Valley will submit editorial content and photos to fill a page in the publication, and 20,000 to 25,000 copies will be printed and distributed in and outside Virginia.

The goal, he said, is to produce a helpful guide for people interested in a wine tour of the region.

“We want to build the value of the Shenandoah Valley as a grape-growing region,” said Hartman, president of Bluestone Vineyard outside Bridgewater. “Northern Virginia and Charlottesville get a lot of mentions, but from a viticultural standpoint, the Shenandoah Valley is better for grape-growing, and we know that because other wineries are putting vineyards in the Shenandoah Valley.”

The publication, which also will include information about wine association partners such as restaurants and bed and breakfasts, has no release date yet, he said. It likely will be updated and

reprinted annually or semiannually.

The Shenandoah Valley Travel Association will receive \$9,050 to use for its Visit Shenandoah marketing campaign, while the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation was awarded \$8,515 for a film on the 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaign, which started with the Battle of New Market, and an orientation film for the Third Battle of Winchester.

The Shenandoah Valley Music Festival in Orkney Springs received \$5,000 to help promote its Music Lovers Weekend Getaway Package. Discover Shenandoah received \$2,500 toward its "Discover Virginia's Romantic Blue Ridge Whisky Wine Loop," which incorporates several Page County businesses.



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