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Partnership Benefits Battlefields, Historic Sites

By VIC BRADSHAW Daily News-Record 8 hrs ago

WEYERS CAVE — When the areas to be highlighted in a new Shenandoah Valley tourism branding and marketing campaign were announced Wednesday, neither history nor the Civil War was on the list.

To Terry Heder, director of interpretation, education and history for the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation in New Market, that was perfectly fine because he thinks the area's historical assets still will benefit.

"We've always seen the battlefields and historic sites as being part of the offerings to bring heritage tourism travelers here," Heder said at the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport following the announcement of a new regional tourism partnership and the campaign. "By having a lot more to offer in the Valley, it only raises the attractiveness of coming to our sites."

"For us, tourism is like a buffet. The more that we can offer travelers, the more that we all benefit, and the more the sites partner together the more we all benefit."

The announcement of the creation of the Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership, which involves 13 jurisdictions running the length of the Valley in Virginia, and its new branding and marketing campaign for the entire region attracted people affiliated with local attractions as well as government officials.

The effort received across-the-board support.

"It's very encouraging to have our folks doing something very intentional to help our community and lift up all our businesses," said Julie Haushalter, owner of White Oak Lavender Farm and the Purple WOLF Vineyard in Cross Keys. "Any time we can lift up the Valley and raise the awareness of this as a destination, it's going to benefit each of us."

Well-Timed Effort

As far as Greg Campbell is concerned, the new initiative couldn't have come at a better time.

The executive director of the regional airport in Weyers Cave said the Shenandoah Valley historically

has been a market visitors drove to because air service was tailored to the business traveler.

But with Orlando, Fla.-based ViaAir now offering low-cost service to and from Orlando and Charlotte, N.C., the Valley will be more attractive to travelers from those markets and other areas. Campbell said SVRA is starting to advertise the service in Orlando and will use the SVTP's branding and materials.

"As a leisure destination, with the fee structure and the way the schedules are working out," he said, "I see an opportunity for us to get exposure as a potential affordable travel option for the Orlando market and the Charlotte market."

The timing also is ideal for Showalter's Orchard and Greenhouse and the Old Hill Cider taproom outside Timberville, according to Kelli Stover, its sales and marketing manager. The business is about to begin constructing an event center to enhance its stature as an agritourism destination.

"Many people around the world know at least that Shenandoah Valley," she said. "[The website and campaign] definitely will make it easy to connect with people. They put such great building blocks together for marketing that it's a great opportunity."

Haushalter said White Oak should benefit most from the marketing effort targeting culinary tourists because lavender is enjoying a resurgence as an herb favored by chefs.

"We get a lot of people who are on food trails coming just to see," she said.

Heder said the new website VirginiasShenandoahValley.com provides people at the region's historic sites an easy way to help visitors find other things to do and see in the region. Conversely, Valley visitors here for other reasons can find out about the historic attractions they can visit.

"The more there is to offer here, the better it is for all of us," Heder said. "The easier it is for visitors to find that information, the better it is for all of us. This is just a huge tool in improving that."



The image features the Grilled Cheese Mania logo, which is a circular emblem with "GRILLED CHEESE" at the top and "MANIA" at the bottom, flanked by a yellow border with small dots. Below the logo is the text "simple comfort food". To the right of the logo are two photographs: one showing a sandwich filled with meat and cheese, and another showing a sandwich with tomato soup and chips.

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