



BLACKSTONE VALLEY
TOURISM COUNCIL





Welcome



As Chairman of your Board of Directors, I am pleased to welcome you to the 29th Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. I want to extend my thanks to our dedicated staff and volunteers without whose help we could not have met our objectives.

In the past year our growth has continued, and we have been the subject of both national and regional commendations.

This year we celebrate the 21st anniversary of the launching of the Blackstone Valley Explorer, which continues to carry passengers as they learn about the history and varied uses of the Blackstone River. We're also celebrating the 15th year of The Polar Express Train Ride, one of our most popular events which attracts families from far and near.

As we keep meeting our challenges we thank our friends in the Blackstone Valley community for their ongoing support. We also greatly appreciate the assistance of our national and state leaders in helping the programs of the Blackstone Valley to continue.

*With deep appreciation,
David W. Balfour, Chairman*



David Balfour

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Board of Directors 2014-2015

Board Members

David Balfour, Chairman

Barry Mechanic, Vice-Chairman

Keith Fayan, Secretary

Judy Fischbach, Treasurer

Mark Brodeur, ex officio

Debra Fournier

Michael Gywnn

Courtney Iannuccilli

Thomas Kravitz

Helen Fairbrother Moroney, emeritus

Dave Richards

Lori Urso

Louis Yip

Recognitions

Recognition for Public Service

Representative Elaine A. Coderre
Dean of the House of Representatives



Rep. Elaine A. Coderre

Footprints in History

Smith - Appleby House Museum
Smithfield, Rhode Island



Smith-Appleby House Museum

Blackstone Valley Excellence in Business and Community Support

Fuller Box Company
Central Falls, Rhode Island
AMICA, Lincoln, Rhode Island

ARISTA Prize - Rhode Island

Berroco, North Smithfield, Rhode Island

ARISTA Prize - New England

Polar Beverages, Worcester, Massachusetts

ARISTA Prize - National

Daniele, Inc., Burrillville, Rhode Island

Blackstone Valley Excellence in the Arts

Rick Beyer, Film maker, *The Ghost Army*

William Blackstone Society Inductions

Marcia Green, Editor, *The Valley Breeze*

Raymond Bacon, Co-Director, retired,
The Museum of Work and Culture



Marcia Green



Raymond Bacon

Happy Birthday GI Joe - 50 years!

Pawtucket Red Sox – 2014 Governor’s Cup Champions!

Year in Review

Walk the banks of the Blackstone River and you'll see ample evidence that the once-industrialized waterway is returning to its natural state. Blue heron wade in the shallows, painted turtles sun themselves on rocks and logs, and occasionally a fisherman will pull a trout from the water.

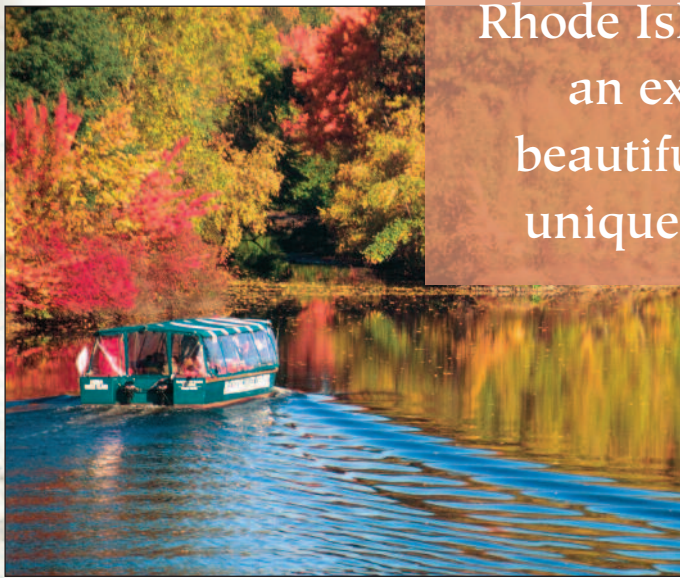
You might also spy the Blackstone Valley Explorer, the excursion boat operated by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. During New England's manufacturing heyday, no one would have suggested taking tourists on a river cruise. Over the past two decades, more than 300,000 have made the trip.



remote-controlled, video-equipped submersible device, a miniature version of the robot submarine Ballard used to explore the wreck of the Titanic.

Reminding those who live here that northern Rhode Island is an exciting, beautiful, and unique place.

"The beauty of this project," says Robert Billington, founder and Executive Director of the Tourism Council, "is that it makes people aware of this wonderful natural resource, and gets kids excited about science and technology at the same time."



For almost 30 years now, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council has been pulling visitors to the region and reminding those who live here that northern Rhode Island is an exciting, beautiful, and unique place.

This year the Council also re-launched the Samuel Slater, an English canal boat, after a five-year hiatus. The canal boat, docked in Central Falls, can be used for tours, corporate events, birthday cruises, and as a floating bed and breakfast.

The Blackstone Valley Explorer has been taking visitors up and down the river for 21 years and is a floating classroom as well. The Tourism Council has teamed up with the Sea Research Foundation, the non-profit that operates Mystic Aquarium; and the JASON Project, a science education program established by University of Rhode Island oceanographer Robert Ballard. Together they've launched a new science program that has middle-school students exploring the river's depths with a

From May through October, the Leisurely Bicycle Tour program takes cyclists to historic locations throughout northern Rhode Island, often along bikeways that follow the river. In 2014 a tour of Burrillville villages



-continued on the following page

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was added to the schedule. This year riders began peddling to Smithfield's Smith-Appleby House Museum, one of the few 17th-century stone-enders left in the region. No wonder Yankee Magazine recently called the Council's bike tours one of New England's top recreational attractions.

From their experience planning bike trips, the council is now helping others with similar events. They assisted the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council with a September bicycling fundraiser that took riders along that waterway from Providence to Smithfield.

The Council also organized a May conference to discuss the future of Rhode Island's bike ways with officials from the state's Department of Transportation, the Department of Environmental Management, and other organizations.

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is bringing art lovers to the river, too. Last year the Council helped promote efforts to add hundreds of LED lights to the Pawtucket River Bridge and the Pawtucket-Central Falls Bridge, illuminating the arches and lines and creating twinkling reflections on the water.

In late summer, the Council added music to the mix, with evening concerts and dance parties below the Pawtucket River Bridge. In mid-August the span served as an acoustic shell for Dot-Air, an intriguing sound and light show. Louisiana Nights, in mid-September offered Cajun music by several bands and disco by '70s hit makers Tavares.

The Rhode Island Dragon Boat Races and Taiwan Day Festival in mid-September took place on Pawtucket's newly renovated Festival

This year's prizes...were the biggest offered in the USA



Pier. Rival teams of 25 row the ornate fiberglass boats 1,000 feet, while thousands of spectators cheer from the

-See Year in Review page 7

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shore. The races are modeled after the popular Asian sport. Local businessman Louis Yip and the Republic of China (Taiwan) provided the boats. This year's prizes – made possible by the Luke Charitable Foundation -- were the biggest offered in the USA: \$10,000 for first place winner, \$5,000 for the top Rhode Island crew. The \$10,000 prize won by United Dragon of New York was donated to The Race for The Cure, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.

May's Discovery Tours are one of the Council's top springtime events. The motor coach day trips travel throughout Rhode Island. Buses traveled into Massachusetts and Connecticut, too, as part of an effort to promote southern New England as a tourist destination.

Popular autumn event -- the Fall Foliage Train Excursion -- puts leaf-peepers aboard the Providence & Worcester Railroad coaches for a two-hour trip across the Blackstone Valley. The destination: rustic Put-

nam, Connecticut, where the travelers disembark to enjoy antique shops, restaurants, a Farmer's Market, and an arts and crafts fair. This year the Putnam Business Association became a sponsor.

A new Ocean State tradition is the spring induction ceremony at the Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame. The Tourism Council helped organize the music museum in 2012, and continues to work on promotion. Housed in

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MARCIA GREEN
Valley Breeze Editor-in-Chief

Congratulations to
Valley Breeze Editor-in-Chief
Marcia Green

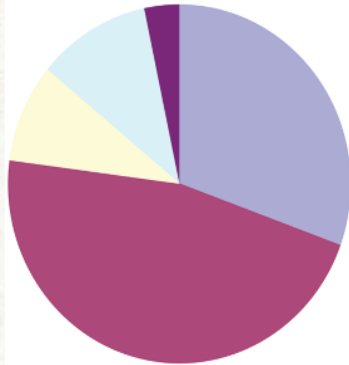
Her passion and love for the Blackstone Valley's history – past, present and future – and her commitment to reporting with clarity on its people, events and governance, makes her a deserving new member of the William Blackstone Society.

Well done, Marcia, and Congratulations from your family, friends and colleagues.

THE VALLEY
Breeze

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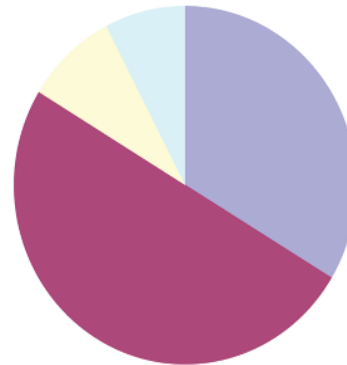
Financial Report



Source of Funds

July 1, 2013-
June 30, 2014

Hotel Occupancy Tax	\$345,449
Program Driven Marketing	\$543,569
Contracts	\$104,423
Grants, Donations and Sponsorships	\$124,577
Store Sales	\$38,535
Total	\$1,167,553



Use of Funds

July 1, 2013-
June 30, 2014

Program Directed Marketing	\$384,826
Personnel	\$573,012
Operations	\$99,533
Marketing	\$87,157
Total	\$1,144,528

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Staff

Robert D. Billington, Ed. D., President

Natalie Carter, Director of Operations

Donna Houle, Manager of Special Projects

Amanda Wood, Office Manager

Olon Reeder, Public Intergovernmental Relations

James Toomey, Director of Marketing

Geraldine Barclay-King, Program Director

Lisa Castellone, Program Manager

H. Russell Taub, Relationship Manager

Joan Loos, Program Associate

Qingya Wang, Project Associate

Chantel Bemah, Project Associate

Wendy Jencks, Visitor Center Manager

Ryan Bassett, Visitor Center Staff

Tim Viveiros, Visitor Center Staff

Lesley McLaughlin, Southern New England Discovery Tours

Silvio DiPippo, The Blackstone Shop

Robert Gilson, Blackstone River State Park Volunteer Staff Coordinator

Dianne Mailloux, Coordinator, Blackstone Valley Explorer and Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful

William Blackstone Society

Leonard J. Panaggio *
Patrick M. Malone, Ph.D
Luther H. Blount *
David Gulvin *
Albert T. Klyberg
David Macaulay
Robert D. Billington, Ed. D.
Louise Lind *
Clinton S. Johnson *
Thomas J. Shanahan
Robert E. Metivier
Carol A. Metivier

Bernard G. Mondor *
John Chan
Michael D. Cassidy
David W. Balfour
Dana M. Newbrook
Elizabeth Johnson *
Wilfrid L. Gates, Jr.
Rose Lavoie
Tom Ward
John Worsley
Joseph O'Donnell, Jr. *
Peter Conway

Robert Conway
Helen Fairbrother-Moroney
Donna Houle
Gary Furtado
Rick Greenwood
Gene Peloquin
Kathy Hartley
Sunny Ng
Louis Yip
Michael Hebert
Daryl Sherman
* deceased

Internship Programs

Lasell College
Johnson & Wales University
Bryant University
Ser-Jobs Summer Program

Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center Volunteers

Jerry Aissis
Joe Billington
Beverly Daignault
Gerry Noel
Steve Menatian
Claudette Moore
Ruth Pacheco
Andrew Whalen
Jim Tracy
Jim Wilbour
Sally Wilbour
Louise Mailloux
Eric Sjoblom
Martha Goyette
Herb Johnston
Joan Valaitis
Howie O'Neill
Ray Deslauriers
Brit Gorman
Margaret Mathias
Roxanne Arruda

Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful Board Members

Michael Debrosse
Maureen McManus
Andrea Hall
Dona Kahler
Arthur Plitt
David Bordieri
Joshua J. Giraldo

Blackstone Valley Explorer Staff

Captain Bob Dombrowski
Captain Kenneth Hudson
Captain Howard Labin
Captain Sheila Paquette
Captain Matthew Prendergast
Captain Joe Walkden
Cashier Dennis Lloyd
Tour Guide Gerald Carbone
Tour Guide Patti McAlpine
Tour Guide Steve Todaro
Tour Guide David Westcott

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Blackstone Valley Tourism Council's
29th year of outstanding work
and commitment
to the Blackstone Valley.

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Year in Review
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Pawtucket's Hope Artiste Village, the museum has grown into an independent operation with its own board of directors. This year's inductees included folkie Cheryl Wheeler and Tavares.

In April, Bob Billington emceed Gloucester's annual person-of-the-year event. It raises funds to turn the historic Rueben Mason House on Route 44 into a museum commemorating the Dorr Rebellion of 1841, which helped broaden democracy in the young United States.

WPRO reporter Kim Kalunian was crowned Rhode Island's Cherry Blossom Princess at a State House ceremony in March. The Council organized the first ceremony last year, after learning there was no Cherry Blossom Princess representing Rhode Island at the National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, DC. At the same time, the Tourism Council took steps to organize the first State Society of Rhode Island in the nation's capi-

tal. The organization helps Yankee transplants living there network and establish contacts. Collectively the state societies also play a major role in Washington's Cherry Blossom



Rhode Island's Cherry Blossom Festival

som event, hosting the Cherry Blossom ball. This year, according to Billington, the Rhode Island Society "has become a mature organization, with its own leadership."

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After attending Washington events, Kalunian returned to take part in Rhode Island's own Cherry Blossom Festival, held every May when cherry trees are in bloom along streets in Pawtucket and Central Falls. This year the event was extended to Woonsocket as well, with two trees planted in the city's River Island Park.

Preceding Woonsocket's celebration was a Main Street clean-up, made possible by a \$5,000 grant from Bud Light and McLaughlin & Moran, a local Budweiser distributor. Mayor Lisa Baldelli-Hunt and state Rep. Steve Casey joined volunteers picking up litter, trimming trees, and planting flowers. When the work was finished, Budweiser helped the crowd relax with a portable pub set up in River Island Park. Ciro's Tavern provided snacks and refreshments as well.

In June, the Tourism Council held its tenth annual fundraising golf tournament at Crystal Lake Country Club in Burrillville. The event attracted 72 golfers, a record crowd of competitors.

The Blackstone Culinary Secret Ingredient Dining Experience is a Council event that never ends. It's a restaurant tour, but nothing like those one-night affairs you hear of elsewhere. Every Wednesday night the culinary event

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The culinary event brings people to a different establishment for a meal and a cooking demonstration by the chef.



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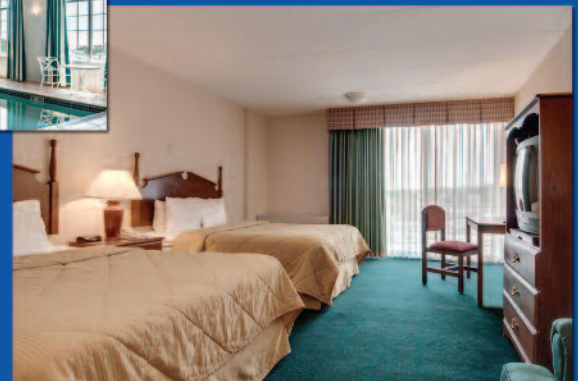
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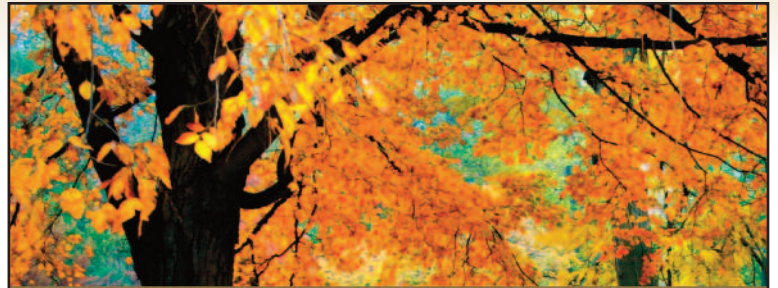
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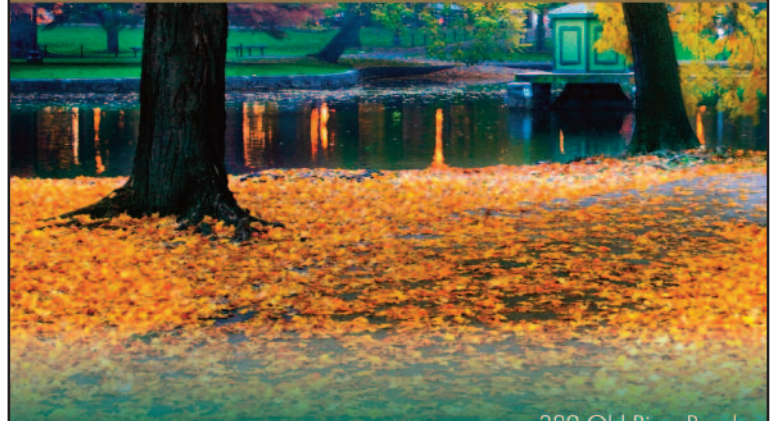




Mayor Donald R. Grebien and the City of Pawtucket Enthusiastically Support the Efforts of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and Congratulate its 2014 Award Recipients



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brings people to a different establishment for a meal and a cooking demonstration by the chef. Some favorite stops: Pho Horn's, a Vietnamese restaurant in Pawtucket, Central Falls Provision, and Bucket Brewery. A seasonal favorite is a sunset cruise on the Blackstone Valley Explorer with clam cakes, chowder, and a cold drink from Mickey

G's. This year the Council added restaurants in East Providence, North Providence and Johnston.

After helping the city of Central Falls build a pocket park -- the Chocolate Mill Overlook -- near the site of an 18th-century chocolate mill, the Tourism Council has hopes of creating a larger exhibit commemorating Rhode Island's chocolate industry nearby. Billington traveled to Virginia this year to meet with executives from Mars Corporation. While they declined to fully fund the project, they did offer some support. Now the Council is testing the waters for a fundraising campaign.



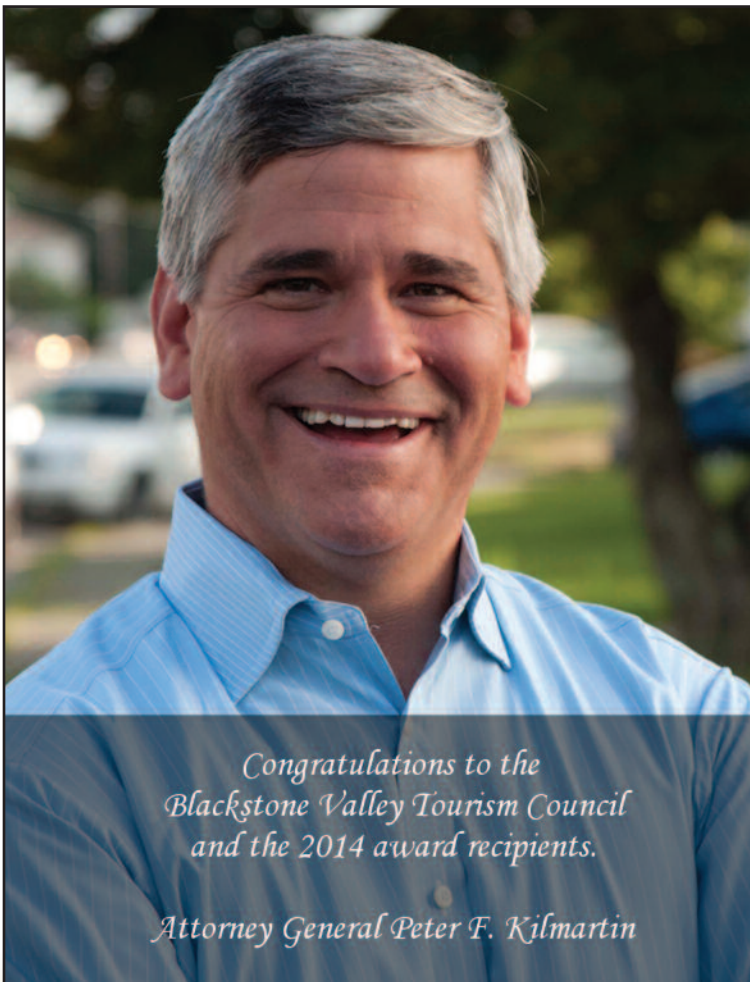
Woonsocket Mayor
Lisa Baldelli-Hunt

Volunteers picked up litter, trimmed trees, and planted flowers.

In 2013, the Tourism Council stepped forward to keep two Visitor Centers operating in northern Rhode Island, and those efforts continued in 2014 with much success.

After budget pressures closed the Pawtucket Visitor Center for two months, the Council devel-

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Congratulations to the
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
and the 2014 award recipients.

Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin

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oped a plan to generate revenue by marketing the space as an event venue. This year the Center by the Blackstone -- as the place is now known -- hosted more than 60 events, from engagement parties to a Valentine's Day Cupid Ball. The Council recently opened a gift shop at the Visitor Center in Pawtucket, The Blackstone Shop, which features Polar Express gifts and hand-crafted jewelry and artwork by local artists.



2014 Cupid Ball

The Tourism Council also now runs the Gateway Visitor Center on Route 295 in Lincoln, having signed a management contract with the state last year. Plans are now in the works to bring a family restaurant to the facility in the near future.

Several times a year the Council also hosts networking meetings at the two locations. Among the speakers: Mark Brodeur, the state's Director of Tourism, and Greg Gerritt from the Environmental Council of Rhode Island. Everyone in tourism or the hospitality industry is invited to attend.

The Council is predicting tourism will get a boost from recent legislation legalizing same-sex marriage in Rhode Island. This year the council hosted a seminar at Lincoln's Twin River Casino, where caterers, planners, photographers and others in the wedding industry got tips on the proper etiquette for such events.

In July, Tourism Council staffers traveled to England's Amber Valley, the place water-powered textile mills first appeared in the 1700s.

The region shares a history with the Blackstone Valley: two centuries ago British engineer Samuel Slater learned how to build a factory loom while working in an Amber Valley Mill, then smuggled the plans to Providence. Hard

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Representative Elaine A. Coderre



- Dean of the House of Representatives
- Democratic Caucus Chairwoman
- Member, House Oversight Committee
- Member, House Rules Committee

Elaine A. Coderre has served the residents of District 60, Pawtucket, since elected in November 1984. She is the longest-serving member of the House. In 2014, she announced her retirement from public service.

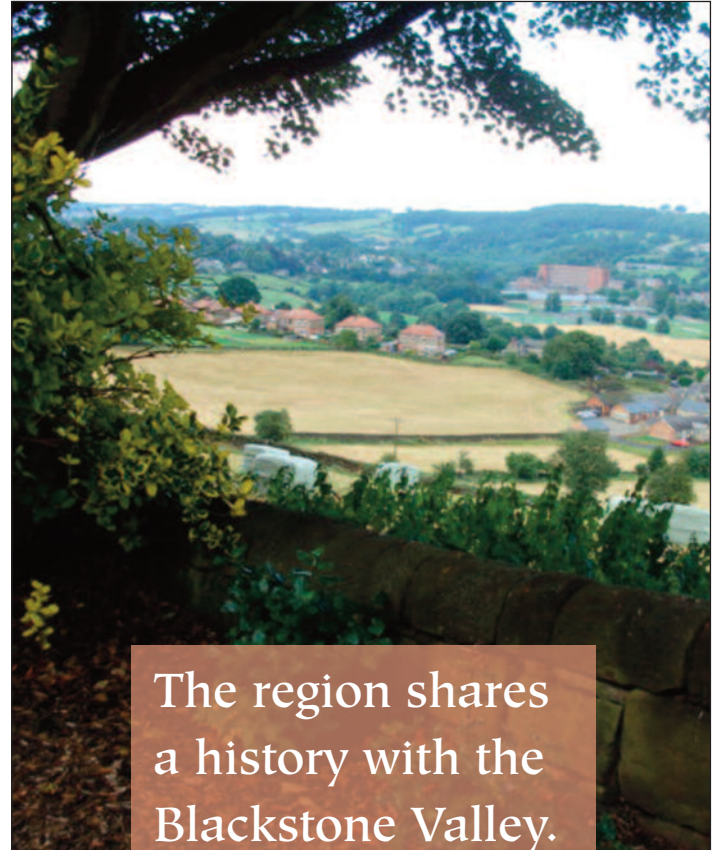
Representative Coderre is a member of the House Democratic Leadership Team, serving as the Democratic Caucus Chairwoman.

She has served as a member of the Commission on Aid to Families with Dependent Children Standards; Commission on Department of Children, Youth and Families; the Rhode Island Council on Alcoholism; the Association of Senior Center Directors, and the Children's Code Commission. She is on the Board of Directors for the Senior Inn of Pawtucket and is a board member for the Visiting Nurse Service.

***Congratulations on 30 years
of service to the Blackstone Valley!***



feelings over that bit of industrial espionage have long since been forgotten. Officials from both locations signed a compact two decades ago, pledging to work together to promote tourism. Through the years there have been regular cultural exchanges.



The region shares
a history with the
Blackstone Valley.

Council staff were on the move to several events in 2014. Billington attended Washington's Cultural Heritage Tourism Conference in May, pitching the Blackstone Valley to 25 national organizations. James Toomey, Director of Marketing, represented the organization at the Discover New England conference in Mystic, Connecticut, an event focused on bringing international visitors to the area.

Looking toward to the future, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is one of several organizations working with the state's Division of Planning to map the sustainable economic future for Rhode Island. Along with the state agency Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, the Rhode Island Foundation, and several hospitality groups, the council is preparing a section on tourism development.

As an enterprise, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council

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Woody Allen and the East Coast "Hollywood Walk of Fame." in Pawtucket.

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is going strong. The organization is in the second year of a \$40,000 grant from the Rhode Island Foundation's Institute for Non-Profit Excellence. The organization is helping the Council accomplish several 30th-anniversary goals by 2015: to update planning instruments and methodology, and to enhance the BVTC's sustainable tourism mission.

This year the council got a boost by expanding its internship program to include students from Bryant University, Johnson & Wales University, Lasell College, and Pawtucket's Tolman High School.



A 90-minute Christmas event on rails.

The year will end with one of the Council's most popular programs, The Polar Express excursion, a 90-minute Christmas event on rails. Inspired by author Chris Van Allsburg's children's classic, the trip is filled with characters from the book, including Santa Claus, the Conductor, chefs and elves. The Council recently signed a contract with Rail Events and Warner Bros (who made the book into a movie in 2004) to run the licensed excursions for three more years.

Families board the Providence & Worcester line at Woonsocket's beautifully-restored Victorian-era depot. The event always sells out, so this year the council is extending the calendar from 12 to 14 days and pushing the number of trips to 32. In five weekend's time,

more than 12,800 people are expected to take the journey.

-John Larrabee

Special Thanks to our Host and Sponsors!



Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc.

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