



*30th
Anniversary*

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council

Welcome

As Chairman of your Board of Directors, I am pleased to welcome you to the 30th Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. I want to extend my sincere gratitude to our dedicated group of talented staff and volunteers. Without their work we would not have been able to meet our objectives for making Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley a strong and vibrant region for visitors and residents.

It has been a tremendous experience to watch the Tourism Council grow over these last three decades from a small tourism organization promoting Northern Rhode Island to one that has received several major international awards and been instrumental in the development of our Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park.

This year, we not only look back at our many accomplishments developing Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley into a world-class tourism destination, but also ahead into the future and the continued advancement of our tourism assets. The newly established Blackstone Valley Heritage Trust Fund will continue the revitalization of our natural resources, and advance the environmental education taking place on our Blackstone Valley Explorer with interesting high-tech learning tools and efficiencies.

As we keep meeting our challenges we thank all of our friends in the Blackstone Valley community for their ongoing support across these 30 years. We also appreciate the assistance of our national and state leaders in helping to sustain the programs of the Blackstone Valley. We are in a very exciting time as Blackstone Valley grows through the creation our new National Park.

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



David Balfour



Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Board of Directors 2015-2016

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Paul Jacob

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McCoy Stadium

William Blackstone Society

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Managing Editor of the Providence Journal (retired)

Dave Belisle

Coach, Cumberland American Little League

Bill Belisle

Hockey Coach, Mount St. Charles Academy



John J. Monaghan



Dave Belisle



Bill Belisle

Congratulations!

Navigant Credit Union – 100 years

The Gamm Theatre – 30 years

Pawtucket Central Falls Development Corporation – 25 years

30th Annual Dinner Planning Committee

Ann Jalette, Courtney Iannuccilli, Derek Collamati, Christine Sullivan, Donna Houle,
Geraldine Barclay-King, Diane Landry, Joan Milos, Alex Parmenidez



*To Inspire and Increase Sustainable Tourism
in the Blackstone River Valley*

In Review

Thirty Years of Turning Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley into an Internationally-Recognized Visitor Destination

In the beginning, or as we like to call it, the mid 1980s, Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley offered little in the way of attracting visitors to the region. Sure we had a couple of major attractions and a rich industrial heritage (being home to our country's industrial revolution is no small thing). But they came with a regional economy on the decline, some of Rhode Island's poorest communities, and an extremely polluted industrial river, whose only message to visitors was, "approach at your own risk."

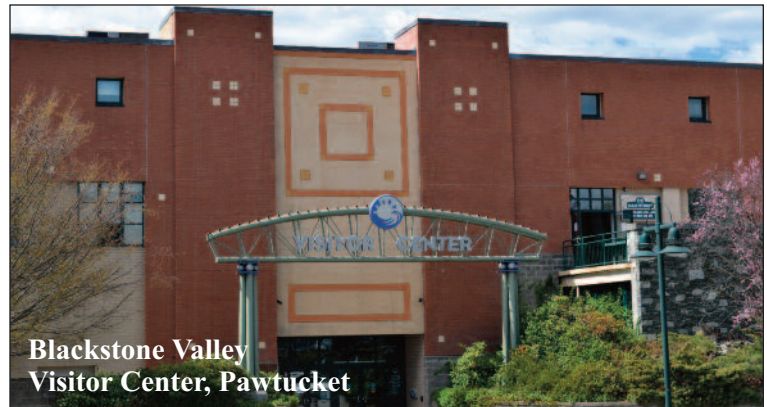
Today, thanks to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and many partners, the Blackstone Valley is considered one of Rhode Island's most significant visitor destinations, and a region where even our poorest communities have become more attractive places to live and work.

Home to some of Rhode Island's most visited attractions and only national park, the Blackstone Valley, through its many historic sites and museums, is THE place to relive our great industrial heritage. It is a major arts destination and location of some of our state's finest, most unique, dining establishments.

Its many parks, farms and open spaces containing miles of waterways, hiking trails, bike paths, and abundance of wildlife and fall foliage make it one of the state's outdoor recreational hotspots. At the heart of that renaissance is the Blackstone River which is now a haven for boaters, wildlife watchers, and fishermen.

So how did we get here?

Since its creation in 1985, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council has been a leader in transforming Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley into an internationally-recognized visitor destination — a strong, vibrant region for visitors and residents alike. Working in conjunction with local communities, state and federal governments, and like-minded nonprofits and businesses, the Council has



not only increased the number of visitors and enhanced their experiences, but strengthened the region's economy, created a stronger, cleaner environment, and improved the quality of life for Blackstone Valley residents.

Our turnaround can be attributed, in part, to Tourism Council efforts that include:

- Building a healthy environment through major cleanup of the Blackstone River and other environmental cleanup efforts that have made public boat tours, kayaking, fishing, wildlife observation, and river educational classes on the river not only possible but popular activities;
- Development and operation of several attractions and activities including the Blackstone Valley Explorer Riverboat, Rhode Island Chinese Dragon Boat Races & Taiwan Day Festival, and POLAR EXPRESS™ Train Ride;
- Historic preservation and construction efforts that enhanced our region's many museums and historic sites;
- Riverfront, community, business and other development efforts that have been important for not only attracting visitors but building a stronger economy for our region, improving quality of life, and providing better places to live and work;
- Focusing on sustainability that builds on the region's environment and natural resources, culture and heritage, health and safety needs, and other positive components, without compromising the Blackstone Valley for future generations;
- Strong networking and collaborative efforts between local, state, and federal government and nonprofit agencies and businesses;
- The ability to raise necessary funding beyond that provided by our primary state funding source.

With no mansions or ocean beaches, the Council built on many of the assets existing in the region prior to the Council's creation: a rich, cultural heritage and historic legacy, ethnic diversity, the Blackstone River, parks and recreational facilities, existing attractions such as the Pawtucket Red Sox, Twin River, Slater Mill, and a number of other historical attractions. Our success has been built

-continued on the following page

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upon the belief that healthy, vibrant and unique communities become stronger visitor destinations since proud residents, after all, are more likely to encourage people to visit their home towns.

Our Work

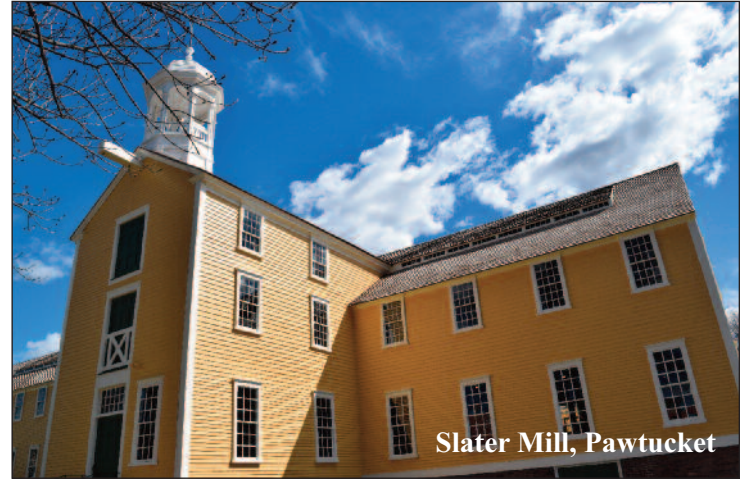
The Council's work involves creating positive change with regard to community values by developing and promoting coordinated, responsible and sustainable tourism in Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley communities. It is unique among Rhode Island's regional tourism councils in its use of sustainable tourism principles to improve quality of life, preserve the region's history, build a stronger, cleaner environment, and celebrate our cultural heritage – all of which contribute to making the region a stronger destination for visitors and home for residents.

These overarching missions are met through direct approaches including: 1) social justice & voice, 2) youth, adult & elder education, 3) urban planning & design, 4) community development, 5) disaster resiliency, 6) event & festival programming, 7) support of local entrepreneurs, 8) the arts & creative development, and 9) promotional support.

Council Programs, Activities and Initiatives

In addition to managing the day-to-day activities of its office, the Council manages the two visitor centers in the Blackstone Valley. It provides information resources, brochures and destination routing

for travelers and visitors on events, attractions, interests, and activities, and responds to telephone and mail inquiries. Information distribution services are also provided to the region's visitor centers and destinations.



It also carries out intergovernmental, marketing, and public relations programs, working with local and regional media outlets to promote and publicize regional events and with federal state, local and private sector officials on matters relating to tourism development in the region.

Finally, the Council has created, managed and promoted a number

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of projects and initiatives including:

Annual, ongoing, past and current attractions:

- Public river tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer Riverboat and several other boats including the Samuel Slater Canal Boat and Bed & Breakfast, glass bottom boat, Spirit of the Blackstone, pontoon, and commuter ferry boats;
- Train tours including the



THE POLAR EXPRESS™ Train Ride, Fall Foliage Tour, American Girl® Grace Thomas™ Train Ride Experience, and Easter Bunny Train Ride;

- Creation of festivals and museums including: Rhode Island Chinese Dragon Boat Races and Taiwan Day Festival, Pawtucket Arts Festival, Rhode Island Music Hall of

- Fame, Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Festival and the Rhode Island Film Festival;
- Other tours including the Blackstone Culinaria restaurant tours, Leisurely Bike Tours, paddling tours, trolley tours, day tours, and self-guided Detours;
- Other transportation programs including the double decker bus and surrey;



Chocolate Mill Overlook, Central Falls

- Brought the Thornton Brass Band and two soccer teams from England to the Valley;
- Other events and attractions including the Hachiko Monument, Chocolate Mill Overlook, Bike Path, Steamboat Muster, Ghost Army event, Dynamite and food contests, annual Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament, Footsteps in History, and River Island Campground.

Planning and development projects:

- Led the successful development of the Blackstone Valley as a national park;
- Waterfront development projects and boat launches;
- Broad Street Regeneration Initiative, Burrillville Geotourism Project and Glocester Main Street Plan;

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*Congratulations
to the Blackstone Valley
Tourism Council
on its 30th Anniversary*

Thanks for helping to make the region a better place in which to work and play



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Robert D. Billington, Ed. D., President
Natalie Carter, Director of Operations
Donna Houle, Manager of Special Projects
Amanda Wood, Office Manager/Translator
Olon Reeder, Public and Intergovernmental Relations
James Toomey, Director of Marketing
Geraldine Barclay-King, Program Director
Lisa Castellone, Fundraising Development Manager
H. Russell Taub, Relationship Manager
Joan Loos, Program Associate
Wendy Jencks, Visitor Center Manager
Ryan Bassett, Visitor Center Staff
Tim Viveiros, Visitor Center Staff
Silvio DiPippo, The Blackstone Shop
Robert Gilson, Blackstone River State Park Volunteer Staff
 Coordinator
Dianne Mailloux, Educational Coordinator, Blackstone Valley Explorer and Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful


William Blackstone Society

Leonard J. Panaggio *	Tom Ward
Patrick M. Malone, Ph. D.	John Worsley
Luther H. Blount *	Joseph O'Donnell, Jr.*
David Gulvin *	Peter Conway
Albert T. Klyberg	Robert Conway
David Macaulay	Helen Fairbrother-Moroney *
Robert D. Billington, Ed. D	Donna Houle
Louise Lind *	Gary Furtado
Clinton S. Johnson *	Rick Greenwood *
Thomas Shanahan	John Gregory
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Carol A. Metivier	Kathy Hartley
Bernard G. Mondor *	Louis Yip
John Chan	Sunny Ng
Michael Cassidy	Daryl Sherman
David Balfour	Michael Hebert
Dana M. Newbrook	Marcia Green
Elizabeth Johnson *	Ray Bacon
Rose Lavoie	

* deceased

Internship Program

- Johnson & Wales University
- Boston University
- Ser-Jobs For Progress
- Ser-Jobs Summer Youth Employment Program



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**Congratulations on the 30th Anniversary
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 and the community of the Town of Lincoln*

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- Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful, Great American Cleanup and Project Zap the Blackstone environmental cleanup programs;
- Blackstone Valley/Amber Valley International Compact;
- Central Falls bridge lighting and the Pawtucket River Bridge;
- Other projects including the Blackstone Shop, Outpost, hunger relief programs, and promotion of paddling routes on the Blackstone River.

Educational, informational and promotional projects:

- Environmental education programs including RiverClassroom (river education for students aboard the Blackstone Valley Explorer Riverboat and in the classroom), the JASON Project partnership with Mystic Aquarium, the first Watershed Council, and establishment of the Blackstone Valley Heritage Environmental Trust Fund.
- Websites, brochures, online and social media and resource directories for restaurants, Valley attractions and events, and marketing of the Blackstone Valley;
- Management of the visitor centers in Pawtucket and Lincoln;
- Sustainable Tourism Lab to educate the world about sustainable tourism;
- Blackstone Alert website to deal with weather and other regional natural disasters;
- Workshops, conferences, and networking events including hosting the Civic Tourism Conference II and creation of the World Canal Conference;
- Educational programs for students to learn about tourism;

- Education of government officials and policymakers about Council activities and accomplishments and the need for its services.

Why Sustainable Tourism?

Sustainable development demands that we improve our lifestyle and the quality of a region while preserving and building on the region's environment and natural resources, culture and heritage, health and safety needs, and other positive components. To be sustainable, a community must strive to: avoid decreasing biodiversity, avoid consuming resources faster than they are renewed, recycle and reuse virtually all materials, and rely primarily on resources of its own region.

Sustainable planning principles are playing a much more important role in all tourism planning and policy development, local to global. A growing number of communities, nations, regions and planning agencies are recognizing that sustainable tourism management of the natural and physical environment, more than ever before, must coexist with economic, sociocultural, and health and safety objectives of localities and nations.

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council believes that the use of sustainable tourism principles has played an important role in building a stronger region for residents and visitors by improving upon environmental quality, cultural appreciation and interpretation, historical preservation, and overall quality of life. Through its Blackstone River and environmental cleanup efforts and education programs, the Council has become one of the most stalwart environmental educators and patrons of the region.

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Proud to support the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.



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Through its tourism development practices, the Council has become an award-winning, international leader in the use of sustainable tourism principles for local regional and international destination management organizations. It is now part of the United Nations' Global Sustainable Tourism Alliance. Through its Sustainable Tourism Lab, the Council has become a leader in educating the global community about sustainable tourism, and the need and ability to build a strong tourism industry while respecting the local culture and environment.

How did it begin?

As you might expect, trying to turn a region with so many drawbacks into a visitor destination was not easy. While it was at the heart of the Industrial Revolution, in the mid 80s, when it came to booming economics, it was on the outside looking in. Billington got the idea when a Factory Outlet Association he created in 1984 attracted shoppers to the region who, he thought, might also be interested in local restaurants and attractions. The Rhode Island Division of Tourism offered a matching grant to begin the effort, stipulating that local communities contribute the same amount.

Setting out to convince local government and civic groups, the only question was whether he would be met with a snicker, guf-faw, or the all too frequent belly laugh. He persevered, however, and each community eventually met the matching grant, with many more groups and individuals coming over to his side during

the next few years.

In 1985, the Tourism Council was born with Billington elected President. Rallying support in the early years among local and statewide agencies and tourism directors was difficult. But with the help of several corporations and businesses that recognized the real value of tourism to the region's residents, and the National Guard and Heritage Corridor promoting environmental cleanup and other projects, he convinced many supporters to come aboard.

With the purchase of the 49-passenger Blackstone Valley Explorer Riverboat and public river tours came the dawn of the Blackstone River being the centerpiece of efforts to attract visitors to the region and build up the pride and spirit of those living and working here.

Organization

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is one of six regional tourism agencies created by state law in 1985. Its designated coverage is the Northern Rhode Island



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Congratulations to the 2015 Award Winners



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An advertisement for gocollette. The background is a photograph of the Eiffel Tower in Paris at night, illuminated against a dark sky. The text "gocollette" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, with a globe icon replacing the letter 'o'. Below it, "guided by travel" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. To the right, the text "Collette is proud to support Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and all the great work that you do." is written in a white, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the website "www.gocollette.com" is displayed in white text on a green background. Small text at the very bottom reads "CST# 2006768-20 UBN# 601220855 Nevada Seller of Travel Registration No. 2004-0679".

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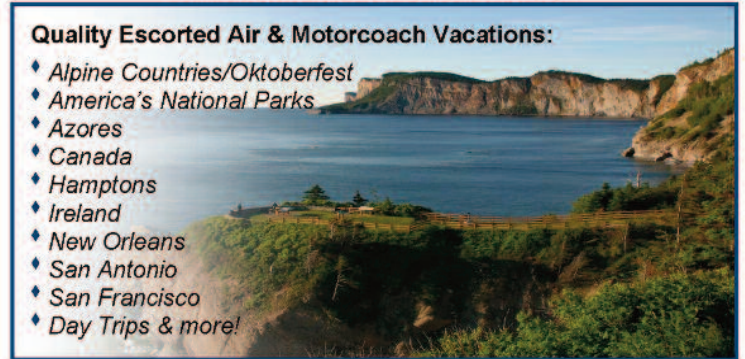
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The NEW Bike Path behind Pawtucket City Hall!



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Huge thanks to Bob Billington for his endless enthusiasm, wisdom, and support on this project.
Thanks to everyone in The Blackstone Valley Tourism office...
especially Natalie, Amanda, Lisa, and Geri.

Thanks to Don Leighton and Amanda Sloan at BETA.

Thanks to Mayor Grebien, Pawtucket Dept. of Planning & Dept. of Public Works, and The Pawtucket Foundation.

It takes a village to build a bike path. Gratefully, Pamela Hughes

Tourism District comprised of: Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Woonsocket, and the towns of Cumberland, Lincoln, North Smithfield, Smithfield, Gloucester, and Burrillville.

The Council is a 501(c)(3) educational, tax-exempt organization, supported in part by regional hotel room tax revenues via state law. Its Board of Directors represents tourism development interests throughout the region. Additional financial support comes from the public and private sector, charitable organizations, grants, and its own revenue-producing activities.

Since its inception, the Council has been headed by its founder, Robert Billington, who has been appointed by the Board with the titles of President and Executive Director of the agency.

Partnerships

The transformation of the Blackstone Valley into an internationally-recognized tourism destination has been the result of many agencies, businesses, and community groups working together towards a common goal. The Council has worked and partnered with local communities, planning and development groups, foundations, environmental and river cleanup groups, nonprofits, state, local and federal governments, and businesses to carry out its mission.

It has worked closely with the Statewide Tourism Division and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, in addition to

international communities and entities in the United Kingdom, Brazil, Colombia, Canada and Taiwan.

The broad partnerships, in conjunction with the Council's three decades of experience, have meant there is an unparalleled capacity for regional sustainable development. Besides continuous action and community support services, the Council's Sustainable Tourism Lab connects the foremost thinkers, writers, planners, and developers of sustainable development concepts. State-of-the-art conferences and consulting applications allow not only for discussion, but also for physical application in communities around the world.

Awards & Recognition

When someone asks how we are doing, don't take our word for it. The Tourism Council has won a number of local and international awards and recognition for our efforts to build up the Blackstone Valley and promote sustainable tourism. These include:

- Tourism for Tomorrow Destination Award from the World Travel & Tourism Council
- North American Travel Personality of the Year from the World Travel Awards
- SBEST Certification of Excellence from the United Nations World Tourism Organization
- Heritage Award from the Pawtucket Foundation
- Tom Roberts Prize for Creative Achievement from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities

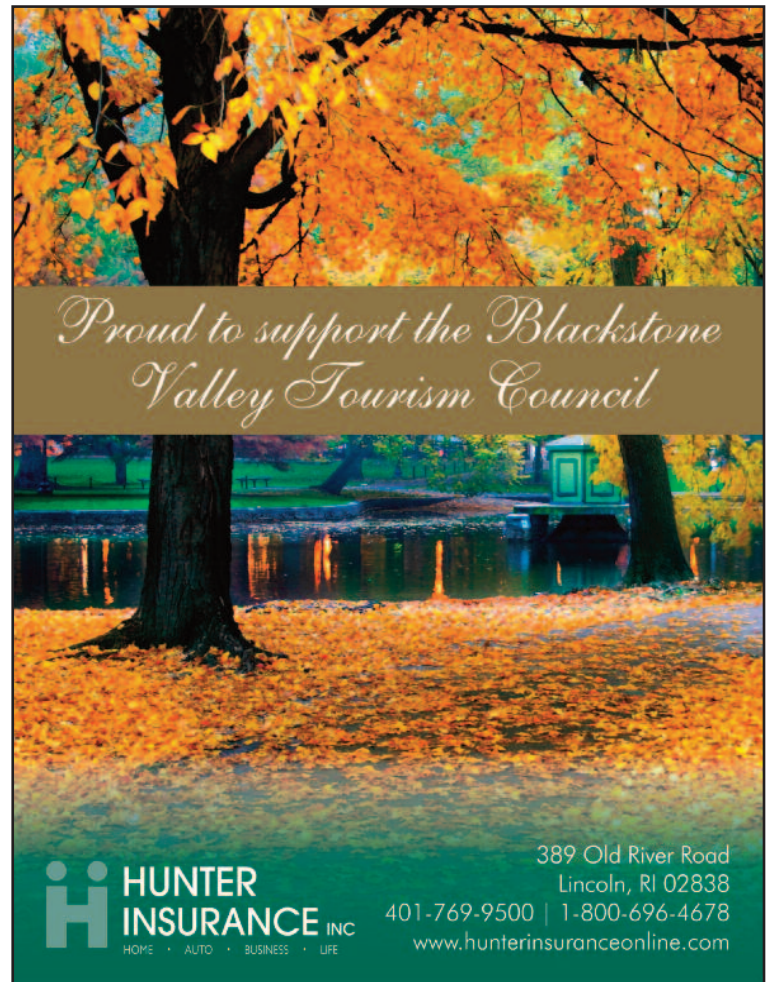
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- Mary Brennan Tourism Award at the “Stars of the Industry” annual meeting and awards ceremony
- Ulysses Award from the United Nations World Tourism Organization for destination management
- National Park Foundation Environmental Conservation Award
- Rhode Island Coastal Cleanup Institutional Award
- Blackstone Valley Explorer Riverboat is Yankee Magazine Editor’s Pick
- Audubon Society of Rhode Island Organization of the Year
- Save the Bay Environmental Achievement Award
- American Society of Landscape Architects Honor Award
- Awarded grant by National Trust for Historic Preservation
- New England Foundation for the Arts Cultural Programs Honor
- Society of American Travel Writers Phoenix Award

Looking Forward

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is looking forward to building a stronger, more vibrant Blackstone Valley, and to strengthen the strong tourism system that exists today. We will be launching our new strategic plan formulated during the past three years thanks to a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation’s Institute for Nonprofit Excellence.

The Tourism Council will be initiating new projects and programs to enhance the experience and opportunities for visitors, residents and businesses. It will continue ensuring that the region is a part



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of positive economic changes enjoyed by Rhode Island.

Some of the things to look forward to in the coming years:

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Congratulations!

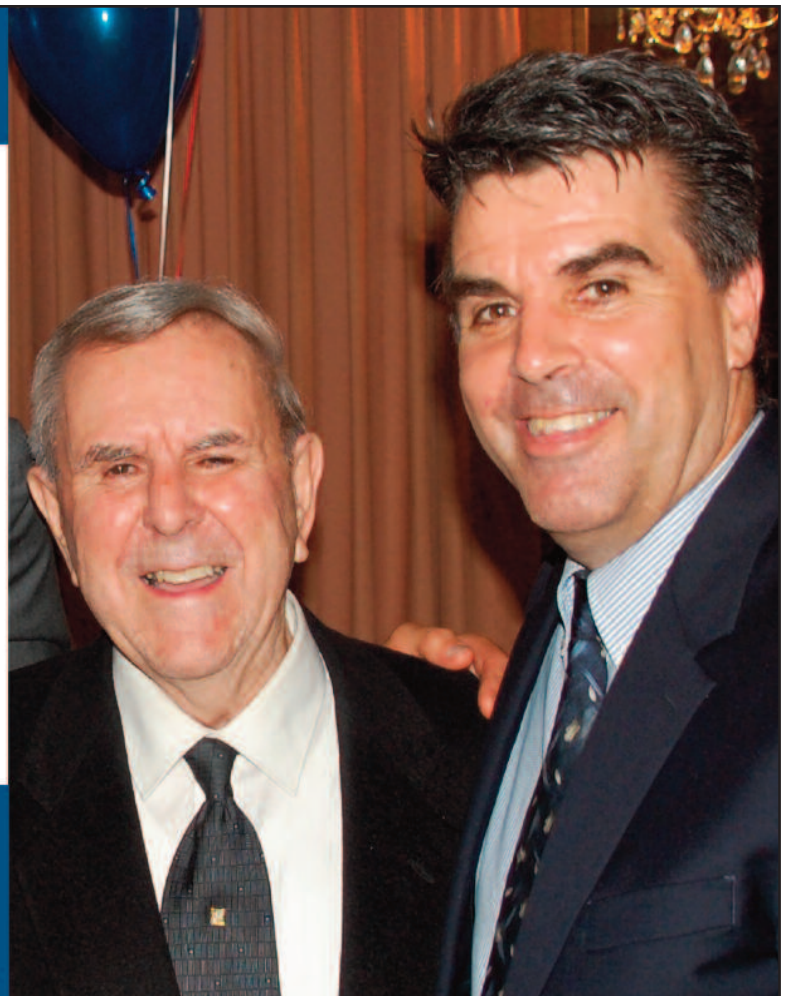
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for **30 years**
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In Review

continued from page 16

- Development of the Blackstone Valley's new national park that will maximize benefits to the region
- Establishment of the Blackstone Valley Heritage Environmental Trust Fund to enhance our environmental educational work in the Blackstone Valley
- Working to ensure the completion and increased usage of the Blackstone Valley Bike Path
- Re-launch of the Samuel Slater Canal Boat and Bed & Breakfast
- Completion of the Blackstone River cleanup
- Strengthening of Blackstone Valley marketing efforts as part of Rhode Island's new state brand



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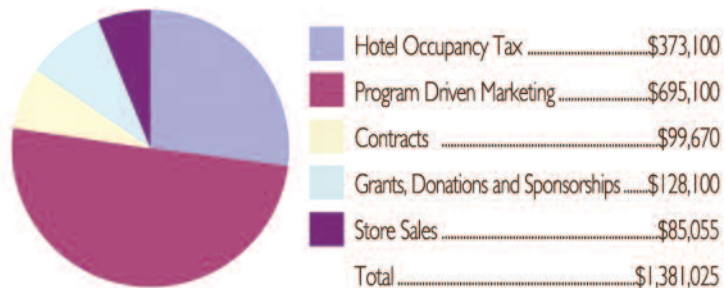
Congratulations
John J. Monaghan

Recipient of the
**William Blackstone
Society Award**

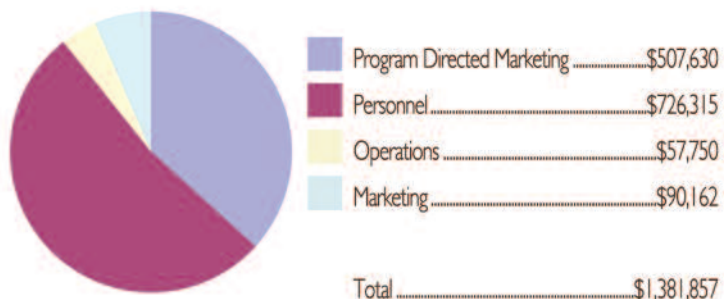
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Financial Report

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Use of Funds 2014-2015



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Beverly Daignault	Jim Wilbour	Lori Shaken
Gerry Noel	Herb Johnston	Ray Deslauriers
Steve Menatian	Eric Sjoblom	Louis Mailloux
Claudette Moore	Minn Robidoux	Sally Wilbour

Blackstone Valley Explorer Staff

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 Captain Matthew Prendergast
 Captain Sheila Paquette
 Captain Joe Walkden
 Captain Shawn Finan
 Captain Ken Scott
 Tour Guide Steven Todaro
 Tour Guide Patti McAlpine
 Tour Guide Paul Papineau
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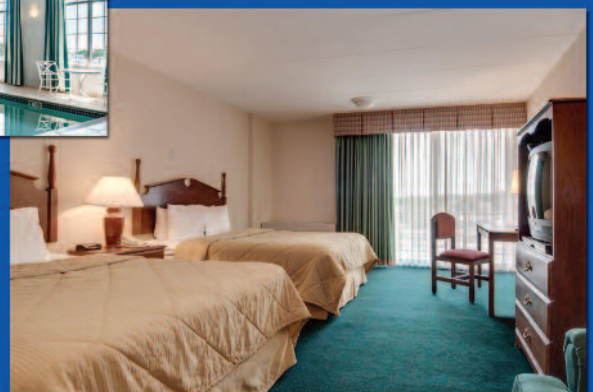
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