



BLACKSTONE VALLEY
TOURISM COUNCIL

Annual Report
2012

The 27th Annual Awards Dinner
Thursday, September 27, 2012

Agenda

5:30pm.....**Reception and Silent Auction**

7:00pm.....**Welcome and Dinner**

8:00pm.....**Recognitions**

*Footprints in History Recognition -
Forestdale Schoolhouse*

*ARISTA Prize - Rhode Island -
Robert I. Burke, The Independence Trail*

*ARISTA Prize - New England -
Christopher "Kip" Bergstrom,
Deputy Commissioner, Connecticut
Department of Economic &
Community Development*

*ARISTA Prize - National -
Mars, Inc.*

*Blackstone Valley Excellence in Business -
Maugus Corporation/DBA The Comfort Inn*

*Blackstone Valley Excellence in Arts,
Business, and Design -
Hasbro, Inc.*

*William Blackstone Society Induction
Louis Yip
Sunny Ng*

Welcome



David Balfour

Board of Directors

- David Balfour, Board Chairman,
D W Balfour Associates
Barry Mechanic, Board
Vice-President, businessman
Jacqueline Boudreau, Board
Treasurer, businesswoman
Sue Tessier MacKenzie, Board
Secretary, The Call
Robert Conway, Vice President,
Conway/Grayline
Mark Brodeur, Executive Director,
RI Tourism Division
Dave Richards, Owner, *WOON Radio*
John Lefrancois, Owner,
The Blackstone
Helen Fairbrother Moroney,
Owner, Echo Lake Campground
Richard Murphy, *Maugus Corporation*
DBA The Comfort Inn
Anthony Capuano, Jr.,
Vice-President, Webster Bank
Louis Yip, President,
TAI-O Corporation
Paul Eno, Owner, *New River Press*
Moe Rondeau,
Travel Advisors International
Judy Fischbach, VP Controller,
Navigant Credit Union
Carl Freedman, Esq., *Chace*
Ruttenberg & Freedman, LLP
Keith Fayon, Attorney, *Blais,*
Cunningham & Crowe Chester
Deb Fournier, General Manager,
Hampton Inn
John Gregory, President
Northern RI Chamber of Commerce

As chairman of the board of directors, I am pleased to welcome you to the 27th Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. I want to extend my thanks to our board members, and especially to our dedicated volunteers, without whose help, we could not have met our program objectives. Our budget has grown over 10 percent, in spite of our nation's economic problems.

In the past year, we've stretched our wings, and helped the City of Central Falls to construct the Chocolate Mill overlook; we've supported the Blackstone River Celtic Festival, the 1812 celebration along Lincoln's Great Road, and we've worked with the Japanese Consul General to help bring the Cherry Blossom Festival to three Blackstone Valley Communities.

Our Blackstone Valley Explorer continues to carry passengers on the river, and our River Users conference has met with success for the fourth consecutive year. We continue to work along side the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission to create a national park in the Blackstone Valley.

We have met our challenges, and continue to push ahead with a steady hand to foster the growth of tourism in the Blackstone River Valley and in Rhode Island in general.

Thank you for your support, and thank you for helping us to promote the Blackstone River Valley.



With Deep Appreciation,
Chairman David Balfour

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Staff

- Robert D. Billington, MBA Ed. D., President
Natalie Carter, Director of Operations
Donna Houle, Manager of Special Projects
Amanda Wood, Office Manager, Manager of Special Programs
Olou Reeder, Public and Intergovernmental Relations
Lorraine Provencher, Special Programs and Website Manager
Lesley McLaughlin, Tour RI, Special Programs
James Toomey, Sustainable Tourism Lab Co-ordinator
Ryan Basset, Social Media Co-ordinator
Geri Barclay-King, Special Programs
Wendy Jencks, Blackstone Valley Visitor Center Manager
Rosemary Danforth, Group Tour Guide
Silvio DiPippo, RI SCFEP
Isabel Tiodor, RISCPEP
John Meyers, RISCPEP
Joshua Sanchez, Ser Jobs Summer Program
Yamique Duarto, Ser Jobs Summer Program
Dennis Lloyd, Ser Jobs Summer Program
Zak Yip, Visitor Center Staff

College Internship Program

- James Toomey, *Bristol Community College*
Ged Carbone, *Brown University*
Ryan Basset, *Bryant University*
Lixen Lee, *Johnson & Wales University*
Geraldine Barclay-King, *Johnson & Wales University*
Kerstin Hudon, *University of South Carolina*
Dillon Olander, *University of Rhode Island.*

High School Internship Program

- Central Falls High School
The Met
Shea High School

Volunteers

- Barbara Leach
Richard Provencher

Creating an oasis of historic charm in Central Falls ...

Establishing a hall of fame for Rhode Island's great musicians ...

Preparing for the Blackstone Valley to host a national park ...

Forging further friendly ties with foreign nations (and their tourists) ...

These are among the many accomplishments of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council (BVTC) during 2011-12, a busy year when great progress was made promoting the Valley while enhancing its quality of life by presenting new attractions and events.

A major question is whether the federal government in the form of Congress will authorize a full-fledged national park in the Blackstone Valley, a development that will bring considerable attention and an economic advantage to our area.

The proposal "is still very much alive," recently reported Dr. Robert D. Billington, president of the tourism council. And, although "it's been quiet," he said, considerable work is being done behind the scenes to make the Blackstone River Valley National Park a reality. The BVTC is working closely with the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor on national park plans. Rallies were held in November and March to show public support for a national park.

At the state level, BVTC worked with tax officials to sponsor educational forums at its Pawtucket Visitors Center home to explain the realities of the 7 percent sales tax on scenic tours (a levy since repealed). This is but one example of how the BVTC routinely collaborates with the state and other agencies, including the private sector, on tourism issues and other matters of importance to the Valley.

In other examples, the tourism council worked with the state tourism division and a private business in Warwick, Brave River Solutions, to present a training session for trade representatives on best use of the state tourism website. The BVTC has a standing agreement with the state transportation department to develop public access sites along the Blackstone River. A new access site, dedicated this year, is the Chocolate Mill Overlook in Central Falls.

The Chocolate Mill Overlook

An oasis of historic charm in the financially beleaguered city of Central Falls, the Chocolate Mill Overlook at Roosevelt Avenue and Charles Street is a park situated on the Blackstone River.

It is a relatively tiny park, but a most attractive one with kayak/canoe access, cherry blossom trees similar to those in Washington D.C., new landscaping that shows off the state's largest champion Cottonwood tree, and interpretative panels telling the story of the long-forgotten mill. A rain garden, a relocated veterans' memorial made more accessible and an attractive stone stairway to the river bank are also part of the park.

The factory itself was located at a site close to the overlook, where the old mill's foundations still exist. William Wheat around 1782 established what was one of North America's earliest water-powered chocolate mills, roughly a decade before Samuel Slater founded Slater Mill. Old-time lore tells



us the area used to smell of sweet chocolate when the mill was working.

This year, the overlook park was formally dedicated in a ceremony at the site May 19, when guests included many of those responsible for creating it, such as: Takeshi Hikihara, consul general of Japan in Boston; Brad Figel, vice president of public affairs for Mars Inc., the international candy company; and Tim Walker, associate professor of history at the University of Massachusetts in Dartmouth. Among those who supported the park, financially and otherwise, were nonprofit foundations, local, federal and state government entities, educators, veterans groups, private businesses and individuals.

Work at the Chocolate Overlook is far from finished. Development of the site sparked more donations, mostly from local businesses, so BVTC is now working on plans for additional streetscape improvements, lighting of the Roosevelt Avenue bridge and the planting of more cherry trees. Eventually, ambitious plans call for the mill to be rebuilt as a chocolate factory museum, so perhaps the sweet smell of chocolate could drift through the streets of Central Falls once again.

-continued on the following page

The Cherry Blossom Festival

The dedication in May of the Chocolate Mill Overlook was but one part of a three-part festival held in Central Falls, Pawtucket and Woonsocket -- the Cherry Blossom Festival -- with each city hosting a different segment of the celebration.



The event began three years ago when, in an astonishing display of friendship, the Japanese government presented to the Blackstone Valley a gift of cherry trees, grafted from those in the Washington D.C. Tidal Basin and now thriving along Pawtucket's Roosevelt Avenue.

In 2012, as part of the Cherry Blossom Festival, the Japanese added another 22 trees for the cities of Central Falls, Pawtucket and Woonsocket – to thank Rhode Island for its support after the devastating 2011 earthquake in Japan. “Cherry blossoms bring hope and a bright prospect for the future,” said Takeshi Hikihara, consul general of Japan, when presenting the gift.

At this year's festival, Hikihara and his colleagues were especially pleased with the Hachiko statue dedicated in Woonsocket, commemorating the beloved Japanese dog that waited for his deceased master at the same spot at the train station many years. The tale was the subject of a heart-rending Richard Gere movie filmed in part in Woonsocket, at the same Depot Square station where Hachiko's statue now sits. Hikihra held out the hope that the Valley's statue “will become as well known and beloved as the one in [Tokyo].”

The festival, said Dr. Robert E. Billington, BVTC president, presented “the best of the Valley,” an example of how sustainability in tourism “can improve the quality of life in a place for its residents while creating a place that visitors will enjoy coming to.”

The R.I. Music Hall of Fame

Much is made about our cuisine, considered among the best in the nation. Much is made about our beaches, our mansions, our history – and all such acclaim assuredly is well-deserved. But there is one special facet of the Rhode Island

experience often missing from the usual catalogue of assets. It's around us all the time, complements the best parties and most solemn occasions of our lives as nothing else can, and it's so local it's always there to be appreciated when we want it.

It's Rhode Island music, of course.

More than 700 people attended the opening and dedication Feb. 26 of the new Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame, located in an actual gallery at The Met Cafe in Hope Artiste Village, Pawtucket, where eight of the state's most legendary artists became the first class to be inducted into the hall. They are: Roomful of Blues, Ken Lyon, Dave McKenna, Oliver Shaw, Eileen Farrell, Gerry Granahan, Peter Anders and Vini Poncia, and John Cafferty & the Beaver Brown Band.

Establishment of the state's first music hall of fame was in part the work of BVTC, spearheaded by Billington who remains chair of the Hall's board of directors. He and others close to the local music scene for a long time saw the need for a permanent place to document and preserve the state's musical legacy, a need best expressed on the Hall of Fame's own web site:

“From the early years of the 20th century to the present, Rhode Island has consistently produced musicians, singers, composers, producers and educators of statewide, regional, national and even international importance, but their legacy has been largely ignored by the various entities and organizations charged with preserving the artistic history of our state.” (www.rhodeislandmusicHalloffame.com).



Staffed entirely by volunteers, work continues to expand the Hall of Fame museum, induct a second class in early 2013 and develop an online archive.

-continued on the following page

Educating the public – even ‘ourselves’

One of the most important responsibilities that the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council embraces is education, not just for the public but also for the tourism and hospitality industries as well.

In the previous year, BVTC sponsored two hands-on sustainability labs for trade representatives and others close to the tourism industry: the first focused on how sustainability principles could be applied to development of the Chocolate Mill Overlook; and the second, on working with the National Park Service as a tourism partner.

Considered a leader in the field of sustainability -- a concept that suggests the best improvements for long-term tourism are those that make a place better to live in – Billington takes the responsibility of teaching others about it quite seriously. “We’re educators in sustainability,” he said, explaining why BVTC sponsors the labs. “It’s all about educating. We want the Blackstone Valley to be a sustainable destination and we have to teach, ourselves and others, about that.”

Challenges at the Visitor Centers

Unfortunately, the Pawtucket Visitor Center downtown and part of the Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center in Lincoln on Route 295 were each closed in the past year for different reasons, for different periods of time.

In Pawtucket, the center closed for about four months due to a lack of operational funding. Good use was made of the down time because when the center re-opened in April, the lobby floor map of the Valley had been newly refurbished with added detail and more vibrant colors. The BVTC, whose work was not interrupted by the closure, is now working with interested parties on a financial plan to keep the center open and its budget in the black.

Across the Valley, the state-operated visitor center along Route 295 has been without a food vendor since Jan. 1 when Dunkin’ Donuts departed, but BVTC’s informational services continue at the site. The BVTC is working with the state Department of Environmental Management to identify a new vendor and, to date, two eatery proposals are under consideration.

Improving old favorites

Now in our 28th year, BVTC finds that our most long-standing programs – our signature events -- remain among our most popular offerings. We’re referring to the Blackstone Valley Explorer and the Polar Express, both of which have undergone recent changes intended to make them even better.

Nearing completion of 19 seasons, the Blackstone Valley Explorer continues to ply the waters of the Blackstone River, taking visitors from the Central Falls landing for a ride along a remarkably scenic river that seems wild and almost-pristine away from the bustle of city streets. Wheelchair access

to the Explorer was improved this year and, after a hiatus of several years, the Haunted River Adventure returns next month, just in time for Halloween.

The Polar Express for the first time this year undertook a full holiday season of departures from the Woonsocket railroad depot, offering an expanded schedule of 22 trips to the North Pole over 11 days -- and every trip was a sell-out. The Christmas train ride is based on Chris Van Allsburg’s classic book. “I have never seen my children’s faces light up the way they did on the Polar Express,” said one satisfied mom.

And in the end ...

What we’ve presented here are just some of the most significant accomplishments of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council during the past year, but there is plenty more we could tell you about if we had the space and you had the time.

Among those extra highlights are these:

- We’ve begun work to revise our website with consultant Hannah Paramore and we have a new logo done for us this year by Fusion Design of Pawtucket.
- Two AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers provided a full year of service, working on our Broad Street Initiative in Cumberland.
- The Blackstone Culinaria continues insider tours of Valley restaurants every week and, in its three years of existence, has brought visitors to 150 local eateries. Participants especially enjoy learning about the business from proprietors and chefs.
- Tour Rhode Island took place May 5 when hundreds of visitors – filling seven buses -- toured sites in the Blackstone Valley.
- Excellent weather helped make the Rhode Island Chinese Dragonboat Races and Taiwan Day Festival a success once again. It’s an event that the BVTC has sponsored since 2000 and each year, it gets bigger and better. This year, dragonboat crews from across the Northeast competed for a \$3,000 in prize money.





The Blackstone River was responsible for powering the mill activity in what is now Central Falls. The river is named for William Blackstone who, among his many other accomplishments, was the first English settler of the Blackstone Valley.

Central Falls, Rhode Island
Historical Preservation

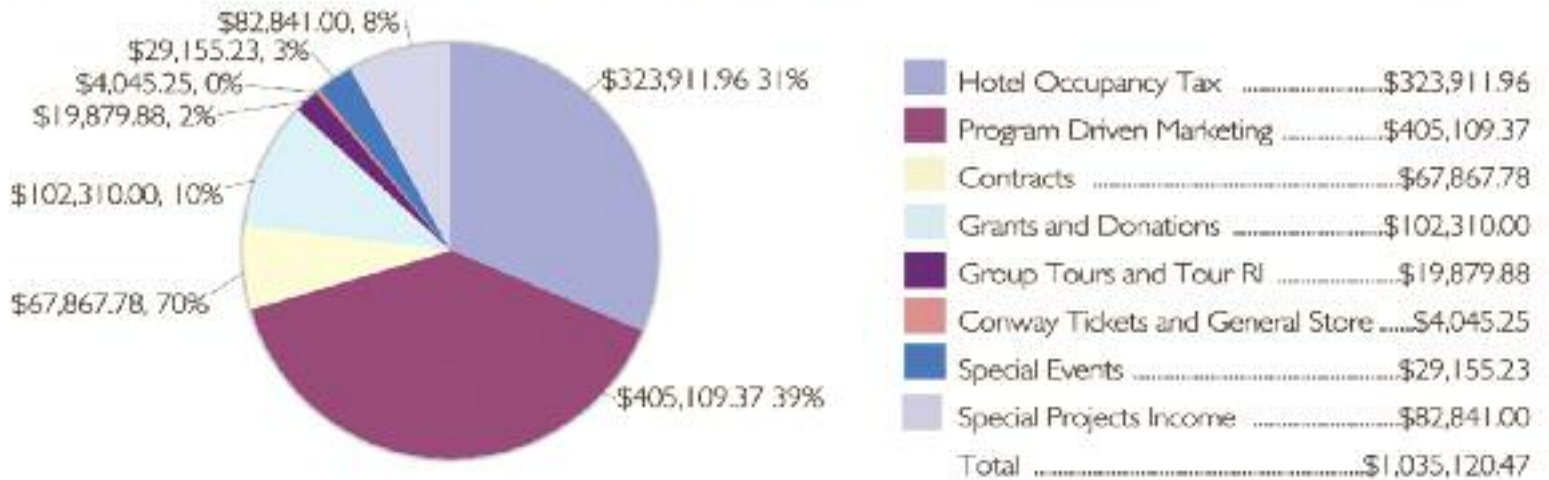
Central Falls, Rhode Island (The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1978), p. 8.

William Blackstone Society Members

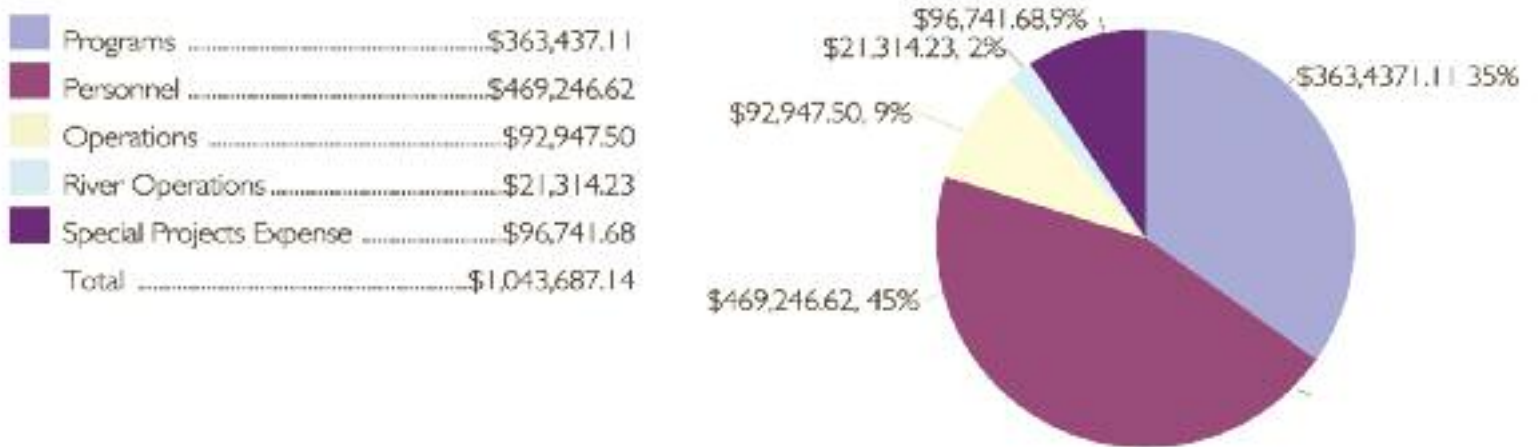
Leonard J. Panaggio	1989
Patrick M. Malone, Ph.D.	1990
Luther H. Blount	1991
David Gulvin.....	1992
Albert T. Klyberg.....	1993
David Macaulay.....	1994
Robert D. Billington	1994
Louise Lind	1995
Clinton Johnson	1995
Thomas J. Shanahan	1996
Robert E. Metivier.....	1997
Carol A. Metivier.....	1997
Bernard G. Mondor.....	1997
John Chan	1998
Michael D. Cassidy	1999
David W. Balfour.....	2000
Dana M. Newbrook.....	2001
Elizabeth "Betty" Johnson	2002
Wilfrid L. Gates, Jr.....	2003
Rose Lavoie.....	2004
Tom Ward	2005
John Worsley.....	2006
Joseph O'Donnell, Jr.	2006
Peter Conway	2007
Robert Conway.....	2007
Helen L. Moroney	2008
Donna Houle.....	2009
Gary Furtado.....	2009
Rick Greenwood.....	2010
John Gregory.....	2010
Gene Peloquin	2011
Kathy Hartley.....	2011



Source of Funds 2011-2012



Expenses 2011-2012



Special thanks to our Host and Sponsors



Blackstone Valley Explorer Staff

Diane Mailloux, *River Education & Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful Coordinator*
Robert Dombrowski, *Riverboat Captain*
Raymond Massey, *Riverboat Captain*
Jeffrey Baris, *Riverboat Captain*
Kenneth Hudson, *Riverboat Captain*
Joseph Walkden, *Riverboat Captain*
Robert Prendergast, *Riverboat Captain*
Len Mailloux, *Tour Guide*
Steven Todaro, *Tour Guide*
Jennifer Champagne, *Explorer Site*

**Blackstone River State Park
Visitor Center Volunteers**

Gerry Aissis	Joan Valaitis
Joe Billington	Sally Wilbour
Bev Daignault	Andrew Whalen
Jim Fusco	Eric Sjoblom
Steve Menatian	Pat Bannon
Claudette Moore	Darlene Trudeau
Ruth Pacheco	Helen Carney
Lori Shaken	Gene Peloquin
Minn Robidoux	Kathy Hartley
Bernie Plante	Robert Gilson, <i>Volunteer Staff Manager</i>
Jim Wilbour	
Donna Mascio	
Gerry Noel	
Tom Perkins	



**At the Soucy Agency, we know
that the best investment we can make**

is in our community.

Since 1914, we have proudly provided our customers with superior service and quality insurance options to help them protect what matters most.

Soucy
Insurance Agency

401.762.2218 • 800.585.2218
362 Rathbun Street, Woonsocket
www.SoucyAgency.com

Serving MA and RI



AUTO HOME BUSINESS LIFE





*A smarter way to bank AND
A smarter way to invest in our
communities.*

*Best wishes to the
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.*



**Pawtucket
Credit Union**

The smarter way to bank

Come and visit us in one of our 15 locations in Cranston, Cumberland, East Greenwich, East Providence, North Providence, Pawtucket, Smithfield and Warwick.

401-722-2212

www.pcu.org

800-298-2212

THE VALLEY
Breeze
NEWSPAPERS

Now delivering 62,400 community newspapers each week, with tens of thousands more readers visiting us online and on their mobile device at:

valleybreeze.com

Phone: (401) 334-9555

Address: 6 Blackstone Valley Place, Suite 204, Lincoln, RI

Joint Partners in
Sustaining Community Values

H O P E
G L O B A L
Engineered Textile Solutions

**WE ARE PROUD TO SUPPORT
BLACKSTONE VALLEY TOURISM COUNCIL.**

www.bristolcountysavings.com



**BRISTOL
COUNTY
SAVINGS
BANK**

Commitment. Stability. Community.

Member FDIC/Member DIF



**Strong Supporters
of the
Blackstone Valley
Tourism Council**

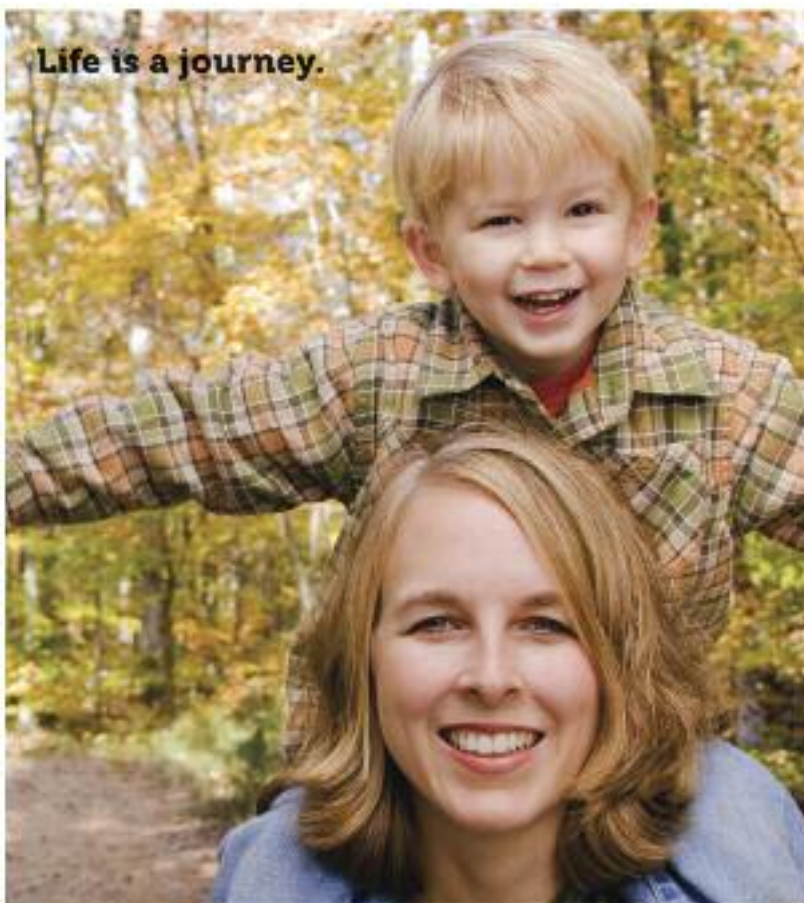


**A Proud Supporter
of the
Blackstone Valley
Tourism Council**

State Representative
Elaine A.
CODERRE



D-District 60
Pawtucket



**Proud to support
the Blackstone Valley
Tourism Council**

Proud to support our community

401.233.4700 • navigantcu.org



Enjoy Life's Journey



Mayor Donald R. Grebien and the City of Pawtucket Enthusiastically Support the Efforts of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and Congratulate its 2012 Award Recipients



AUCLAIR & AUCLAIR LLP
WEALTH MANAGEMENT

RAY AUCLAIR AIF®, CLTC
ANN AUCLAIR AIF®, CLTC

RI OFFICE 401.765.1711
TOLL FREE 1.866.355.2002

RHODE ISLAND
598 GREAT ROAD
N. SMITHFIELD, RI 02896

FLORIDA
103 LAS BRISAS CIRCLE
HYPOLUXO, FL 33462

IT'S A MATTER OF TRUST®

Securities and Advisory Services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA, SIPC, a Registered Investment Advisor.



COLLETTE
VACATIONS

TRAVEL
THE
WORLD



A leader in travel since 1918, Collette Vacations offers tours to all 7 continents. Our diverse travel collection features inclusive land tours, river cruises, rail journeys, small group tours, family vacations and more. From Italy to Australia to the Canadian Rockies and beyond, embrace your dreams. We seamlessly handle the details - you experience the world!

For more information
call 800.340.5158
or visit collettevacations.com

BEST
of
LUCK

to the
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council



Congressman Jim Langevin
D-2nd District, Rhode Island

Authorized and paid for by Langevin for Congress

*Uncompromising in
Freshness & Quality*

Specializing in
Fresh Bottled Milk
and Real Whipped Cream
Cakes and Pastries



**Wrights Dairy
Farm & Bakery**

200 Weonsodet Hill Road
North Smithfield, RI 02896
401-767-3014

www.wrights-dairyfarm.com
Mon-Sat 8am-7pm
& Sunday 8am-4pm

CONGRATULATIONS
BLACKSTONE VALLEY TOURISM COUNCIL

Congratulations to the
Blackstone Valley
Tourism Council
for Another Great Year
and to all of its
Award Recipients.



State Representative
**J. Patrick
O'Neill**
D-District 59
Pawtucket

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
and all of the honorees



www.pawtucketfoundation.org

★ CONGRATULATIONS! ★

to the
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
and all of its
2012 Honorees

Shove
INSURANCE, INC.
Bill Hunt and Dave Francis

www.shove.com
376 Newport Ave., East Providence
401-431-5200



Storage America

Indoor / Outdoor Self Storage

CONGRATULATIONS & a JOB WELL DONE from STORAGE AMERICA !!!!!

Your friends and colleagues at STORAGE AMERICA wish to extend a warm and heartfelt pat on the back for your significant contributions.

We look forward to continuing our shared bond as we focus on strengthening our community and creating an even more prosperous and beautiful Blackstone Valley of tomorrow.

Thank You



The Town of Lincoln



is a Proud Supporter
of the Blackstone Valley
Tourism Council

Congratulations on hitting so many high notes

from the
Senior Digest



Travel Advisors International

**A full service travel agency
with multiple locations!**

204 Front Street, Lincoln, RI 02865
401.725.1234

9 Dog Lane, Storrs, CT 06268
860.487.2030

164 Main Street, Putnam, CT 06260
860.963.6620

email: moe@tairtrips.com
www.tairtrips.com



TWIN
RIVER
CASINO

SO MUCH. SO CLOSE!
SO GIVING!

TWIN RIVER IS PROUD TO SUPPORT THE
BLACKSTONE VALLEY TOURISM COUNCIL!

WINNING AMONG FRIENDS...
JUST 10 MINUTES FROM PROVIDENCE!

GAMING · DINING · LIVE MUSIC · COMEDY · DANCING · NIGHTLIFE

100 TWIN RIVER ROAD | LINCOLN, RI 02865 | 877.82.RIVER
WWW.TWINRIVER.COM

