



THE BLACKSTONE VALLEY TOURISM COUNCIL, Inc

Blackstone Valley Visitor Center 175 Main St, Pawtucket, RI 02860

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**TO CREATE POSITIVE COMMUNITY CHANGE
WITH A HIGH REGARD TO
COMMUNITY VALUES...**





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1. MISSION STATEMENT

Blackstone

2. PURPOSE

To create positive change with regard to community values by sustaining and enhancing the character of the Blackstone Valley through planning and collaboration with intrastate, state, regional, national and international organizations to develop the Valley's public and private natural, historic, cultural, ethnic, industrial, recreational, educational, special events, artistic and commercial resources. The Tourism Council promotes coordinated, responsible and sustainable tourism development in the communities of Pawtucket, Central Falls, Cumberland, Lincoln, Woonsocket, Smithfield, North Smithfield, Burrillville and Glocester in Rhode Island.

3. VISION STATEMENT

The Blackstone Valley becomes a place where history and the environment have great stewardship. The resources of the Valley are sufficient enough to provide a high level quality of life for residents. The American story of the Blackstone Valley is told to visitors from all over the world in such levels so as to support our institutions for generations to enjoy.



4. INTRODUCTION

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is the state designated regional tourism development agency for the Northern Rhode Island Tourism District, as authorized under of Pawtucket, Central Falls and Woonsocket and the towns of Cumberland, Lincoln, Smithfield, North Smithfield, Gloucester and Burrillville.

Founded in July 1985, the Tourism Council is a non-profit corporation registered with the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c) 3 educational organization. It is governed by a 21 member Board of Directors, representing tourism development interests throughout the region. The Board of Directors appoints a President, who serves as the Executive Director and CEO of the agency. There are also support staff and independent contractors assisting Tourism Council functions and projects.

The Tourism Council is supported by revenues from a statewide hotel room tax, as authorized under Chapter 42-63.1 of the Rhode island General Laws, along with receiving financial support from public and private sectors, charitable donations, and grants.

Since its beginning, the Tourism Council has worked to develop, promote and expand the economic and community development base for the cities and towns in Rhode Island's Blackstone River Valley as a prime visitor and cultural destination, while improving the region's quality of life, environment and historic preservation of the region's heritage, culture, environment and recreation. The Tourism Council has initiated many exciting, challenging, innovative and inventive projects and programs to meet and exceed its mission. It has worked closely with public and private partnerships, worked as an interpreter and educator of the history and ecology of the Blackstone River, initiated ongoing international relationships of major importance to the region, worked closely with cities and towns in their community development projects and provided input on future riverfront and economic development impacting the surroundings, and developed various recreational activities.

The Council operates on the philosophy that sustained economic development in the region must rely on sustained historical preservation and environmental protection. To that end, the Council has promoted the region to residents and visitors through tourism development of the region's rich farms to factories heritage, cultural diversity and ecotourism.



The Blackstone River Valley has significant importance to the United States and Rhode Island. The region is the actual birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution, that began in 1790, when Samuel Slater began textile manufacturing in a wooden mill on the banks of the Blackstone River in Pawtucket.

Through its visionary mission, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council operates on the philosophy on taking a positive leadership role in initiating many exciting, challenging, innovative and inventive tourism development products, projects and programs. The Tourism Council has become a global and national model for how successful tourism development is achieved, through working in a "one to many" public and private partnership setting.



5. HISTORY

The council began in April 1985. In 1986, the General Assembly implemented the first room tax on hotels to share with tourism groups. Billington, a four-year Coast Guard veteran and trained in the family business as a cabinet maker, was working in New Bedford where the business community was urging him to start up a tourism office in that city.

“No. I can’t. I want to go home,” he told them. Back in the Blackstone Valley, the new board of directors hired him to the fulltime slot in September 1986. “It was up to me to figure out how to get paid and run the place,” says Billington. His son, Ryan, was 9 years old and daughter Sarah was 6. “My wife supported the endeavor. I had to figure out early on how to raise money, put enough aside for labor and staff, and do the projects. “And we started from there. The state didn’t give us money. It was thin and thin.”

The hotel tax had sounded like a treasure trove but in fact, says Billington, “The tax scared up just a few hundred dollars the first year and it wasn’t for 10 years before it became a significant contributor.” One source was \$10,000 in job-training funds available through the Rhode Island Department of Employment and Training for Vietnam-era veterans, which, as a Coast Guardsman, he was. A sense of place from day one, Billington says his focus has been defining the Blackstone Valley.

Says Billington, “The idea was to improve quality of life and develop pride of place. Building on what we know – the heritage and history that was all locked up in great historical societies – we needed to share with one another.”

Always someone eager for partnerships, Billington remembers that early on he approached the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce in Pawtucket with the thought of working together on the development of tourism. The 1,000 members were contacted and asked their opinion “and not a single one responded with any interest in tourism,” says Billington. The council went forward with seven communities and Billington went on to add Burrillville and Glocester “and the package was complete.”

He remembers getting a phone call one day from Chamber members asking exactly what communities were part of the Blackstone Valley. “And I knew we had some work to do,” he says. Billington was laughed at, too, the day he reported to Gov. J. Joseph Garrahy’s office to serve on the Governor’s



Advisory Council on Tourism. Jack Gaines of Narragansett demanded, "What the hell are you doing here? There's no tourism in the Blackstone Valley."

Ten years later, Billington took Gaines around the valley and won over the man's respect (and discovered Gaines was a Woonsocket native). "We've always fought the uphill battle," says Billington. "Most of the support we've had here in developing tourism in the Blackstone Valley has not come from what people call the rank and file in the tourism industry. Here we've relied on the entire community. Hope Global, Brooks, Credit Union Central Falls, Ocean State Power, Amica Insurance, Fidelity Investments, the Northern Rhode Island Chamber, The Valley Breeze, Residential Properties - our strength has been in our Valley corporations and our cities and towns. They always help with financially supporting new projects.

"These people were convinced that tourism is good for the community first - the primary beneficiary is the local community. Look at the bike path. The primary benefit is to local people who can go there everyday." Billington notes that the BVTC is a 501C3 non-profit educational corporation making it grant eligible. In 1992, this glass bottomed boat was plying the Blackstone River, giving visitors a new perspective on their environment. "(Former Cumberland Mayor) Rick Alger in 1987 helped us get that designation and that created a sea of change. We're now able to take contributions and use them for the valley. No other tourism council in the state has that. But if we didn't have it, we wouldn't have a tourism council in the Blackstone Valley." "The Tourism Council works to redevelop the Blackstone Valley as a great place to work, visit and live. "And I think we're achieving that goal," says Billington. "Our first 20 years has been a great challenge. Here are the major accomplishments:

A TOURISM COUNCIL TIME LINE

1986

- General Assembly approved first hotel room tax that sends a few pennies per visitor to fund tourism efforts. Valley's hotels and motels were Woonsocket Motor Inn, Howard Johnsons in Pawtucket and Hi- View in North Smithfield.
- Hired Bob Billington as council's first full-time director.



- Federal government authorized the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. (In 1999, it would be named for the late U.S. Sen. John Chafee.)

1987

- Moved to first office - 120-squarefoot North Gate building on Lincoln's Old Louisquisset Pike.
- Created 8-foot-tall William Blackstone character to march in parades and make public appearances.

1988

- Launched the slogan "Destination Blackstone River Valley - Something new, something different."
- Enticed Conway Bus Service to schedule seven tours of Blackstone Valley highlights, a move that educates local residents and prompts outside companies, like Chariot World Tours of Boston and Camara Tours of New Bedford to bring buses filled with tourists for the first time.
- Filled more than 10,000 requests for information about the valley.

1989

- Launched Blackstone Valley Tourism One, a 16-foot rubber raft secured through Navy surplus. Government VIPS and news writers got early looks at a surprisingly scenic river that had been shunned for decades.
- Started fall foliage sight-seeing tours aboard the Providence & Worcester Railroad.
- Released "The Fiber That Wove America's Spirit," the Blackstone Valley's first promotional videotape, produced by Mike Bannon and highlighted by Pendragon's singing of "The Working River."
- Established the Travel Experiences trade show with Conway Tours, now in its 17th year.



1990

- Yankee magazine featured chicken family style dining in the Blackstone Valley, a story that prompted 90 requests for information in the first two weeks.
- Opened first cruises on the Blackstone River - using a glass-bottom boat supplied by Luther Blount - They proved access to the water is critical to the Blackstone Valley's future. Access landings were eventually planned in Pawtucket, Central Falls, Cumberland, Uxbridge and Woonsocket.
- Launched three-year "Let's Build a Boat" campaign to raise \$50,000 and purchase 49-foot Explorer riverboat.

1991

- Relocated to the 500-square-foot office in the Blackstone Valley Electric Building on Route 116. A September open house included Gov. Bruce Sundlun.
- First Steamboat Muster at State Pier on School Street, Pawtucket.

1992

- Wrote and published the first comprehensive tourism guide for the Blackstone Valley

1993

- Launched the 49-passenger Explorer riverboat; first riverboat on the Blackstone in 170 years.

1994

- Offered President Bill Clinton his first look at America's Blackstone Valley while in Rhode Island for the 200th anniversary of the Slater Mill.
- Signed the Blackstone Valley-Amber Valley Compact in Belper, England.



1995

- Expanded and relocated Tourism Council headquarters to Main Street, Pawtucket, while opening the first year-round, full-time visitors center on the Blackstone River.
- Purchased the Blackstone Valley's first trolley in 60 years in partnership with Conway Gray Line of Cumberland.
- Put students on the river for the first time by developing River in the Classroom program that offered lessons on history, ecology, wildlife.
- Developed Christmas trolley tours through Blackstone Valley neighborhoods.
- Blackstone River, already "America's hardest working river," receives the prestigious designation, named an American Heritage River.

1996

- Hosted 45-member Thorton's English Brass Band.
- Hollywood star Dustin Hoffman comes to Pawtucket to film "American Buffalo" and, along with TV star Dennis Franz, leaves behind handprints in Times Square.
- Hollywood star Dustin Hoffman comes to Pawtucket to film "American Buffalo" and, along with TV star Dennis Franz, leaves behind handprints in Times Square.

1997

- Established plans for first Blackstone Valley Watershed Council.
- Coordinated World Canal Conference in October.
- Introduced Blackstone Valley Chicken – Seymour De Vallee character.
- Presented First Lady Hillary Clinton with a Blackstone Valley poster at the Slater Mill.

1998

- Launched a second riverboat, the Spirit of the Blackstone Valley.



- Established Rhode Island Rivers Day on third Saturday of June to celebrate the Blackstone's impact on the community and honor volunteers who've helped clean it up.
- Laid the keel for the British-built canal boat in England.

1999

- Launched Hope and Renaissance, two European-style ferry boats to shuttle commuters between Providence and Pawtucket.

2000

- Welcomed Mr. Potato head in the form of William Blackstone and Betty the Elephant.
- Launched the Samuel Slater British canal boat offering overnight accommodations and daytime cruising.

2001

- Hosted an 18-person tour group from the Amber Valley in England, hometown of Samuel Slater.
- Began work on the Central Falls Landing, a project that places a massive dock on the river and opens room for commercial and residential spaces.

2002

- Created the first Easter Bunny Express in the Blackstone Valley along the Blackstone Valley Scenic Railway tour. Over 600 people attend.
- Partnered with the Great American Cleanup in the Blackstone Valley. In cooperation with 9 communities and the Friends of the Blackstone, over more than 3,000 tires are cleaned-up along the Blackstone River.

2003

- Created the first Easter Bunny Express in the Blackstone Valley along the Blackstone Valley Scenic Railway tour. Over 600 people attend.



- Partnered with the Great American Cleanup in the Blackstone Valley. In cooperation with 9 communities and the Friends of the Blackstone, over more than 3,000 tires are cleaned-up along the Blackstone River.

2004

- Fifth annual Blackstone Valley Polar Express a great success! SOLD OUT trips for two weekends in November. Sanctioned and Licensed by Warner Bros. producers of the Movie “The Polar Express.”
- Hosted Travel Experiences 2005 group travel trade show with co-sponsors Conway-Grayline Tours and Group Tour Magazine. Over 60 group travel destinations in US and Canada showcased to over 300 New England based group tour organizers and tour planners. This is the longest running group travel show in New England.
- Blackstone Bike Tours. Introduced new bike tours based upon European casual bicycling touring. Program offers four designated tours for visitors and includes lodging and food accommodations while visiting points of interest.
- Nineteenth Annual Meeting, highlighting the people throughout the Blackstone River Valley involved in historic and cultural tourism development. William Blackstone Society Award presented to Gloucester businesswoman Rose Lavoie, involved in local historical preservation.
- Hosted 2004 Chinese Dragon Boat & Taiwan Day Festival featuring Asian ethnic cultural activities and signature race event along the Pawtucket River. Event serves as a signature statewide event, as part of the annual Pawtucket Arts Festival.
- DeTours. Continued joint marketing and promotional efforts with the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and the Blackstone Valley, MA chamber of Commerce in releasing new “DeTours” themed self-guided interpretive tours for visitors.
- “Smiles Per Gallon” BVTC Joined with RI Tourism Division and State Tourism Districts in “Smiles Per Gallon” summertime visitor promotion package. Efforts designed to promote state’s attractions and have visitors stay close to home to cut gasoline costs. Included downloaded coupons to save \$1-\$5 discounts on attractions and services.



- Central Falls Landing Project – On June 19, 2004 BVTC joined with the City of Central Falls in opening the Central Falls Landing. Continued planning to include a restaurant and river science center.
- Trade Mission. BVTC President Bob Billington, US Rep. Patrick Kennedy and group of Blackstone Valley business executives attend trade mission to Taiwan and China to support Asian visitation to Blackstone Valley and development of ongoing cultural connections associated with Pawtucket Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, a new arts & entertainment event established in the last few years in Pawtucket on the riverfront.
- Tour RI. On May 1, 2004 BVTC joined with Governor & Mrs. Carcieri, RI Tourism Division and State Regional Tourism Bureaus to present “Tour RI: There’s No Place Like Home”. This one day motor coach cavalcade allowed one thousand RI residents the opportunity to discover and explore the many visitor attractions located in the state and promoted to tourists and destination marketers.
- Great American Cleanup. BVTC announces involvement with 2004 Keep America Beautiful’s “Great American Cleanup” with projects along the Blackstone River.
- Tenth Anniversary of the Blackstone Valley-Amber Valley Compact. BVTC announces that a delegation from Amber Valley, England will visit Blackstone Valley and Rhode Island for one week in late April and early May to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Blackstone Valley-Amber Valley Compact, with the two regions continuing their “twinning” efforts in economic and tourism development. Agenda includes meetings with top public and business leaders and visits to historic and cultural destinations.
- 2004 Blackstone Valley Regional Tourism Award. Governor Carcieri and BVTC present the 2004 Governor’s Blackstone Valley Regional Tourism Award to the Pawtucket Red Sox Baseball Club, noted as one of the state’s premier sports and family attractions.
- British-American Cultural Connections. BVTC hosts international press from Great Britain promoting British-American cultural connections within Blackstone River Valley and significance of heritage-ecology-ethnic diversity and recreation to tourism development.



2005

- Sixth annual Blackstone Valley Polar Express another great success!
SOLD OUT
First two weekends in November.
- Footsteps In History - Initiated a successful new event over Columbus Day Weekend, Footsteps in History Preserve America Weekend.
- Twentieth Anniversary Celebration Events and Twentieth Annual Meeting. At the Annual Meeting, Chris Van Allsburg, author of *The Polar Express*, and his wife Lisa presented with the 2005 Lifetime Achievement Award; William Blackstone Society Award presented to Valley Breeze Publisher, Tom Ward and the Providence Journal Blackstone Valley Bureau honored for their 10-part series "*summer on the Blackstone.*"
- New Elderhostel Bike Program - Developed several new 3-day and 5-day programs for Elderhostel.
- Blackstone Canoe Trail - canoes painted by local artists are displayed along the Blackstone River Heritage Corridor.
- Golf Blackstone - First Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament held in June.
- RiverSing - New event celebrating the Blackstone River in Song part of the Rivers Day Celebration.
- EventBlackstone.com - Produced a usable web calendar highlighting events throughout the Blackstone Valley.

Awards

The work of the BVTC and its partner organizations has received wide recognition for quality and the benefits it has provided to the region.

- National Park Foundation Environmental Conservation Award 2000
- Rhode Island Coastal Cleanup Institutional Award 1999
- Blackstone Valley Explorer is Yankee Magazine Editor's Pick 1999
- Audubon Society of Rhode Island Organization of the Year 1998
- Save the Bay Environmental Achievement Award 1997
- American Society of Landscape Architects Honor Award 1997
- Awarded grant by National Trust for Historic Preservation 1996
- New England Foundation for the Arts Cultural Programs Honor 1996
- Society of American Travel Writers Phoenix Award 1995



6. PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

In the last twenty years, the various programs/activities and projects that are being undertaken by the black stone valley tourism council and that are being offered to the public are as follows:

- **Administration & Operations**

This program includes the oversight of the day to day management of the tourism council office functions and coordinates personnel, accounting, purchasing and contracts.

- **Visitor Information Services**

Staff under this program operate the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center and provide information resources, brochures and destination routing for travelers and tourists on events, attractions, interests and activities. It also responds to telephone and mail inquiries. This program also offers information distribution services to the region's visitor centers and destinations.

- **Program Development & Special Events**

Working with its multi-level partnerships, the tourism council assists in developing and marketing tourism products and creating special events. This program includes scheduling seasonal Spring and Fall Heritage Train Tours of the Blackstone River Valley. It also assists in many statewide, regional and local events.

- **Public Affairs & Communications**

This program is responsible for the tourism council public relations and intergovernmental relations. It works with local and regional media outlets in promoting and publicizing regional events. It deals on behalf of the tourism council with federal, state, local and private sector matters relating to tourism development in the region. It also prepares tourism council Calendar of Events and quarterly Blackstone Valley Visitor Guides.



- **Group Travel & Tourism**

Through extensive outreach and planning, the program serves the needs of group travelers and visitors to schedule and arrange itineraries to introduce visitors to the various aspects of the Blackstone River Valley. It works with group tour developers, corporate tour leaders, educational and senior citizen tour planners and motor coach operators to capture their business in offering customized tour packages.

- **River Programs**

The tourism council owns and operates the Blackstone Valley Explorer, a Coast Guard certified 49-passenger river vessel offering seasonal American Heritage River Tours of the Blackstone River in Rhode Island. The Blackstone Valley Explorer was launched in 1993 and serves as a tour boat along the Blackstone River offering visitors interpretive historic, cultural, environmental and recreational tours from landings in Central Falls and Woonsocket.

The tourism council also owns and operates a 10-passenger river craft, Spirit of the Blackstone Valley, which can be available for tours in Pawtucket, Lincoln and Woonsocket, the inland waters of Northern Rhode Island, and the Blackstone Gorge in Blackstone, Massachusetts and the Blackstone Canal in Uxbridge, MA.

For a unique experience on the Blackstone River, the tourism council operates a floating B&B the Samuel Slater Canal Boat, which can sleep four. The Samuel Slater is also available for twilight cruises, wine & cheese cruises, and offers British Tea Tours in the summer and fall. All programs aboard our vessels are managed by a River Engineer and staffed by trained crew.

- **Educational Programs**

Because of the region's strong ethnic cultural diversity and ecological importance to Rhode island and New England, the Blackstone Valley Explorer also serves as a floating laboratory offering river classrooms in Central Falls and Woonsocket to students from K-12. Cultural programs aboard the Explorer offer historic interpretation on the heritage, development and social aspects of the Blackstone River Valley and may also include specialized walks throughout the valley. These programs are managed by an Educational Coordinator.



WORK PLAN 2006

- Operate the M/V Blackstone Valley Explorer in Central Falls and Woonsocket
- Provide handicapped accessibility in Waterfire on the Spirit of the Blackstone
- Operate the Canal Boat Samuel Slater as a Bed and Breakfast and for river tours in Central Falls
- Operate the Easter Bunny Express on the Providence and Worcester Railroad
- Manage the Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament
- Operate the Blackstone Valley Scenic Railway Fall Foliage Excursion to Putnam CT with Providence and Worcester Railroad
- Operate the Blackstone Valley Polar Express for 8 to 12 trips in November
- Coordinate the Blackstone Valley Annual Dinner Auction at Kirkbrae Country Club in September
- Operate the 12 passenger Blackstone Valley Shuttle
- Manage the Footsteps in History Event using the resources from Preserve America
- Continue the Blackstone Valley Tourism Network
- Manage the Rhode Island Chinese Dragon Boat Festival and Taiwan Day Festival
- Assist in the production of the Colombian Independence Day Festival
- Rhode Island Rivers Day celebration in conjunction with RiverSing on the Blackstone
- Continue to offer for sale advertising in the back-lit displays at the Visitor Center
- Continue to work with all Higher Education institutions seeking internship opportunities
- Continue to work with Universities of higher education in the education of students in tourism planning and development
- Present the 18th Annual Travel Experiences Trade Show at Wrights Farm
- Develop further the Blackstone Valley Elderhostel program
- Continue to develop the Canoe Trail for the Blackstone Valley
- Continue to support tourism development programs in Pawtucket, Burrillville, Central Falls, Cumberland, Gloucester, Lincoln, North Smithfield, Smithfield and Woonsocket



- Work with RI Committee on Agricultural Promotion to further the efforts of Blackstone Valley Agricultural sites
- Chair the Tour Rhode Island' There's No Place Like Home event
- Collaborate with all agencies federal, state, local, nonprofit or for profit for the benefit of the communities of the Blackstone Valley
- Participate in conferences and educational opportunities that benefit the mission of the Council and educate the staff to better serve the Blackstone Valley
- Continue to develop the promotional public relations programs for the Blackstone Valley
- Develop additional educational programs for the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- Continue the work with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission with projects that require NGO assistance
- Work closely with the City of Central Falls to move the Central Falls Landing project to completion
- Work with the City of Central Falls to insure repair of the Landing Docks
- Continue the work with RIDOT and the local communities in the design and construction of Manville Landing, Lincoln Landing, Pawtucket Landing, Woonsocket Landing to complete the Blackstone River and Canal Navigation and Transportation System
- New Programs and Projects
- Develop a Manufacturers Tour of the Blackstone Valley, in collaboration with RIEDC & NRICOC
- Create the Forest City Blackstone Valley Cajun Music Festival
- Develop the Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory
- Work with the Providence Piers Company to retrieve the income owed on the M/V Hope
- Work to create the Blackstone Valley Historic/Cultural and Artistic Site Network
- Develop a conference to understand the flood situations along the Blackstone River so as to mitigate future damage
- Develop the Keep America Beautiful program for the Blackstone Valley working with the VISTA program
- Produce and promote the International Restaurant Brochure in conjunction with the RI Foundation, DiningQuest, the SBA, Bryant College and



Verizon, for authentic markets, bakeries and restaurants of the Blackstone Valley

- Working with JWU MBA students to create a history of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Complete the 20th Year financial audit for the Tourism Council
- Develop a debt-reduction program for Long-term debt
- Dispose of surplus property
- Pilot new Dunn Foundation View Finders program to Blackstone Valley school teachers
- Develop new education programs to encompass the vital river ecosystem and history such as the Blackstone Valley Eco-lab Discovery Program
- Develop interpretive programs that will engage and educate the general public about the historic, natural and cultural resources in the Valley working with partners such as RI Audubon Society to develop new and innovative experiences aboard the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- Develop the “Little Engine that Could” program with the Blackstone Valley Scenic Railroad program
- Work with Providence and Worcester Railroad on means to insure wheel chair accessibility aboard the BV Scenic Railroad tours
- Work with the Town of Cumberland in the selling of their publication: Cumberland by the Blackstone
- Develop a George Washington University like “Voluntourism” program for the Blackstone Valley focusing on farm experiences for visitors
- Marketing
- Work in conjunction with the State of Rhode Island and the regional tourism district managers, to promote Rhode Island as a destination
- Work in conjunction with the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor and the Blackstone Valley Chamber Visitor Bureau to promote the Blackstone Valley as a destination
- Attend the National Tour Association and American Bus Association Trade Exchanges and other appropriate Travel Shows
- Work with the Valley Breeze in the production of the Official Blackstone Valley Visitor Guide
- Work with the Navigator Publication in the production of the Officials Blackstone Valley Map
- Build the “Partners in Distance Learning” program to export the Blackstone Valley using teleconference ability



- Update Tour Blackstone.com Website
- Re-design Website for Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Work with Lincoln Park with partnerships to further Blackstone Valley tourism marketing
- Work to promote interest in the Sustainable Destination Tourism Development Laboratory
- Develop monthly newsletter
- Update Event Calendar
- Create a digital photo archive

International Programs

- Continue the international development of partnerships with England, Brazil, Taiwan and China and Canada
- Work with Discover New England to promote New England as a destination to foreign visitors
Tourism Research
- Work with the Travel Industry Association of America in the economic study of the Blackstone Valley's tourism impacts

Front-line Visitor Service Programs

- Continue management of the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket
- Coordinate the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Visitor Services at the Blackstone River Visitor Center on I-295 Visitor Center
- Continue the distribution program of Blackstone Valley tourism literature to local outlets

GeoTourism Planning

- Complete development on the Central Falls Riverfront Plan
- Update the 1992 Blackstone Valley Comprehensive Regional Tourism Plan
- Work to develop the Rhode Island Sustainable Tourism Planning Project
- Develop the Blackstone River Science and Exploration Center



- Adopt George Washington University's S.A.V.E concept based on the Geotourism principles developed by National Geographic Society: Scientific, Academic, Experiential and Educational tourism markets to create wealth while conserving natural resources and stimulating culture in the Blackstone Valley, as they build upon the Council's Elderhostel and Riverclassroom programs
- Continue to investigate possibilities with the National Geographic Society to develop of a MapGuide to highlight the natural, historic and cultural assets of the Blackstone Valley
- Work with the National Geographic Society on signing a GeoTourism Charter, as a first step in adopting a GeoTourism strategy
- Develop the World Tourism Organization's VolunTourism concept with opportunities for this program specifically in agricultural tourism locations
- Continue discussions with the World Tourism Organization to seek their WTO.Sbest certification for Excellence in Destination Management

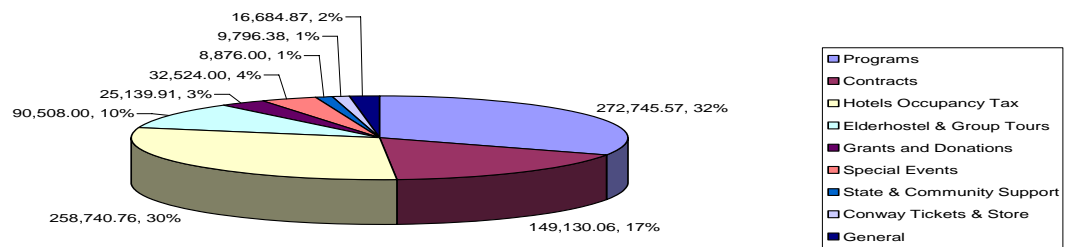
Legislative Actions

- Work in collaboration with RI tourism districts to maintain current form of tourism district management that supports local community input in decision-making
- Work in collaboration with Federal, state and local officials to secure reauthorization of the JHCBRVNHCC
- Contract a government affairs agent, using private funds, to assist in matters relating to state legislative affairs

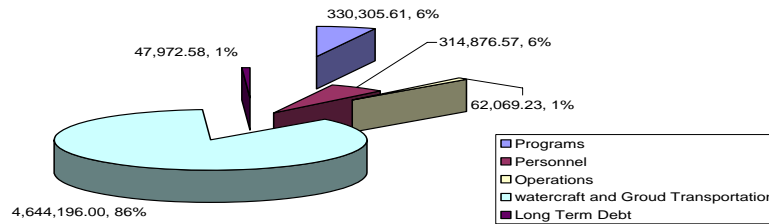


7. SOURCE AND USE OF FUNDS 2004- 2005

SOURCE OF FUNDS



USE OF FUNDS






8. STRATEGIC PLAN

The strategic plan is found in the attached report titled “Blackstone Valley Tourism Strategic Plan 2001”. This report was prepared for the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, and Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce.



8. STAFFS & HEADQUARTERS

STAFFS INFORMATION:

NAME/ E-MAIL ADDRESS/ POSITION	BRIEF INTRODUCTION
<p data-bbox="396 762 724 898"> Robert Billington bob@tourblackstone.com bvri@aol.com President </p>  A photograph of Robert Billington, the President of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. He is a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a yellow tie. He is smiling and holding a small brochure or card. The background shows a museum or gallery setting with various displays and paintings.	<p data-bbox="808 842 1425 1272"> Bob grew up in the Blackstone Valley. He founded the Tourism Council and has always been an entrepreneur. He takes special pride bringing tourism to America's first industrialized valley. He has always had an interest in riverfront development bringing a British Canal boat and British Double Decker bus to the Valley. His interest in community development, job creation, pride of place and education have all come together under the non-profit agency that he has lead for the past 20 years. </p>



Natalie Carter
natalie@tourblackstone.com
Director of Operations





Natalie is the Director of Operations. She insures that the business operations of the office and its staff run smoothly. She is also a grant writer for tourism projects. Natalie is also the Co-chair of the Blackstone Valley and Amber Valley compact, which maintains international relationships with the Amber Valley in England.

Lilly Kayamba
BVTCLilly@aol.com
Market Analyst
Group Tour Manager/ Elderhostel
Administrator



Lilly is our group tour manager, designing and promoting group tours of the Blackstone Valley to tour operators all over the United States. Lilly also develops and administrator's Rhode Island history, art and cultural programs for Elderhostel, the nations first and the world's largest, travel and education organization for adults 55 and older.



<p>Donna Houle donna@tourblackstone.com Special Projects Manager</p>  A portrait of Donna Houle, a woman with short brown hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt over a black top. She is standing in an office with a map on the wall behind her.	<p>Donna is the manager of Blackstone Valley Scenic Railway Tours, operating narrated train tours of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor for the past 17 years. Donna is involved in several special programs throughout the year. Manages the Council's Visual Library and is co-chairman of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Annual Meeting and Auction.</p>
<p>Olon Reeder olon@tourblackstone.com Public Affairs / Intergovernmental Relations</p>  A portrait of Olon Reeder, a man with glasses and a light blue suit jacket over a white shirt and tie. He is sitting at a desk in an office with a computer monitor and various items on the wall behind him.	<p>President / CEO of Reeder Associates, Olon works on location representing Tourism Council interests. Reeder Associates has been representing the Tourism Council since October 1992 dealing with media relations; promoting and publishing the region's social, cultural, historic and recreational events and activities; developing Tourism Council public relations strategy and related activities.</p>



Ramon Rodriguez
info@tourblackstone.com
River Engineer



Ramon wears many hats at the Tourism Council. He works as crew on the Blackstone Valley Explorer and as a captain on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat. He also maintains and repairs the boats and bus. Ramon also helps in the step up of all projects and events that the council holds.

Veronica Cadoppi
planning@aol.com
Tourism Planning Specialist



Veronica has an MBA from Johnson & Wales University in Hospitality and Tourism Planning. She is coordinator of the Footsteps in History program and is involved in several other riverfront projects in Central Falls and Pawtucket.



Patricia McAlpine
patti@tourblackstone.com
Blackstone River Education
Coordinator



Patricia coordinates all programs on the Blackstone Valley Explorer including the River Classrooms, Senior Groups, as well as working as the site coordinator for the Summer and Fall Public Tour Programs on the River. She also assists in a variety of other capacities including marketing and public relations and special events.

Kristin Zawistowski
bvtckristin@aol.com Program
Assistant



Kristin provides administrative support on a variety of projects including the 20th Anniversary Events and Dragonboat Race.



Lesley McLaughlin
Lesley@tourblackstone.com
Program Assistant



Lesley provides administrative & marketing support on a variety of projects including the Canoe trail, Travel Experiences and Tour Rhode Island.

Wendy Jencks
wendy@tourblackstone.com
Visitor Center Manager



Wendy is the Manager of the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center. She works on many visitor center projects. She also coordinates celebrations that are held here in the visitor center. Wendy is also in charge of distributing informational materials out into the valley.



Amanda Wood
amanda@tourblackstone.com
Office Manager/ Translator



Amanda is the Office Manager of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Among Amanda's many responsibilities she is our Spanish translator, coordinator of the Rhode Island Chinese dragon boat race and festival, and manager of the British Double Decker Bus and trolley. Amanda is also the manager for the Samuel Slater Canal Boat and handles all reservations for the Samuel Slater Bed & Breakfast as well as the British Tea Tours.



HEADQUARTERS:



Blackstone Valley Visitor Center 175 Main St, Pawtucket, RI 02860

Phone: 1-800-454-BVTC (2882)

Local: 401-724-2200

Fax: 401-724-1342

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The Center, in addition to housing the offices of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, acts as a one-stop information resource for visitors and residents alike. More than 300 brochure holders allow visitors to quickly pick up information on local businesses and organizations. More than 150 students from Johnson & Wales University intern at the Visitor Center throughout the year to sharpen their skills in the tourism and hospitality industry and serve the public.



Other informational and educational resources contained in the Center include:

- A hands-on relief map of the Blackstone River Valley watershed which informs visitors about how the valley came to be and the implications of its tremendous waterpower. This exhibit was designed with an emphasis on the sight-impaired, and as an educational tool for school children
- A kinetic sculpture with gears and symbols which will amuse and direct visitors to Valley sites highlighted thematically as heritage, nature, culture and recreation.
- A 1,000 square foot art gallery is available to exhibit the works of Rhode Island artists.
- A state-of-the-art theater, surrounded by a life size 360 degree photo mural of a mill interior, shows the award winning film, "Hidden in the Blackstone Valley," a film on the rise and fall of the American Industrial Revolution. The stunning light fixtures and 50 plush seats were rescued from the Leroy Theater and restored. There is additional seating for another 40 persons on carpeted terraced seating behind the theater chairs. The theater is available for use by local, state, and national organizations and businesses after 5 pm to hold meetings, lectures, and special musical performances.
- A museum shop, operated by the Slater Mill Historic Site, offers crafts from local artisans, a unique collection of books, specialty foods, and heritage products.
- A transportation center utilized by about 15,000 bus riders.