25th Anniversary



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Burrillville Redevelopment Agency



96 Pascoag Main Street with retail space for rent



Historic Mill 4, Stillwater Weaving Mill to become mixed income apartments with office space apartments with office space

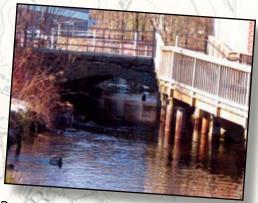
C xplore the Town of Burrillville. Nestled in Rhode Island's northwest corner, Burrillville offers endless outdoor recreation along with ample retail opportunities in unique village centers. Freshly rehabbed historic main street retail space is available.

Contact

Mike Wood Town Manager 105 Harrisville Main Street Harrisville, RI 02830 401-568-4300-115 • manager@burrillville.org www.burrillville.org



Chums a local hardware store after renewal



Pascoag Riverwalk runs right through the heart of Pascoag Main Street.







A 25 Gear Experience

Our Purpose

POLAR EXPRESS

Over the years, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council has created, hosted, promoted, produced and managed innumerable events, programs, projects and functions, always with an eye toward sustainablity - to repair, heal, and make sustainable for tomorrow the resorces of today. We aim to educate, enlighten and entertain; to bring out the best in the Valley, its people and communities. In doing so, we become better able to build, balance, and husband our economies, in order to proudly share this place of scenic beauty, diverse culture, and distinctly significant history with friends, family, and visitors from all over our shrinking globe. Here are some accomplishments of the preceding year, none of which would have been possible without your support.

Blackstone Culinaria-

The Secret Inaredient Food Tour Summer 2010 R

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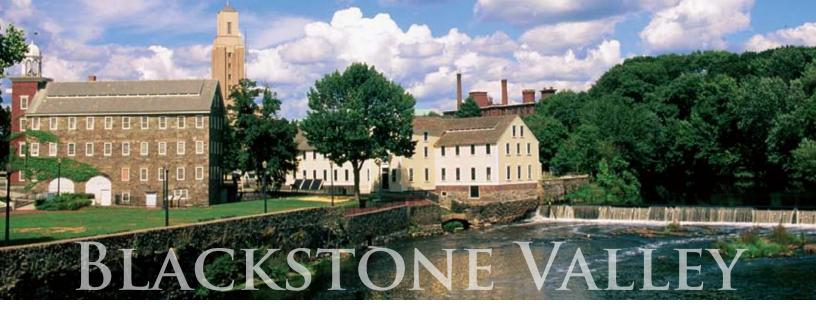


ALL NATURAL BLACKSTONE

RIVER VALLEY

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A place is more than a chunk of real estate or a dot on a map. Without culture, lore, history, and natural beauty a place doesn't really exist. It's nowhere.

The Blackstone Valley has all that in spades. Only there was a time when people seemed to forget, even some people who called the Valley home. A few decades ago, you could say the region was suffering a hangover, the result of a long party called the Industrial Revolution. The mills that once employed so many stood vacant, the jobs shipped overseas. The Blackstone River, the power source for the factories, was polluted by the waste they had produced and choked with litter and trash. Downtowns turned to ghost towns as residents moved to the suburbs and did their shopping at malls.

And that's what gave birth to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. A handful of true believers, led by Bob Billington, the agency's founder and long-time director, set out to change the region's future by inviting tourists to come visit. At the same time, they hoped to renew a sense of pride among those who call the region home. They wanted folks to remember the struggles and triumphs of their immigrant grandparents who worked the mills, to once again see the river as a rushing, roaring, natural waterway, and to view the countryside as something more than future space for more sprawl.

"We wanted to let the world know what the Blackstone Valley is all about," says David Balfour, who chairs the tourism council's board of directors.



WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

Any history professor worth his tweed coat can tell you about the Valley and the crucial role the region played in America's growth. In 1790 a British engineer named Samuel Slater stepped onto a dock in Providence. He carried in his head the plans necessary for building a hydro-powered textile mill. Writing down those details would have been dangerous, because Britain -- the only nation with such factories -- had made it a crime to take the technology out of the country.

The young man had no trouble finding backers and partners. By 1793 they had a mill up and running at Pawtucket Falls, with machines turning out cloth around the clock. Soon there were hundreds more up and down the river, from Worcester to Providence, all powered by the force of its fast-moving waters. Immigrants came to provide the labor -- thousands and then tens of thousands every year -- settling into company housing around the factories.

The Blackstone Valley helped make America the world's industrial powerhouse for a century and a half. By the mid-1900s, however, the glory was fading fast. Looking to exploit cheaper labor, mill owners moved their operations south or abroad. When World War II ended, so did the last great production push, and the Valley began to sag.



THE QUEST BEGINS

When Bob Billington launched the tourism council back in 1985, the Reagan go-go years were in full swing, but somehow the Valley got left out. There were jobs aplenty in the Boston suburbs, but that could be an hour's drive for some area residents. Nonetheless, necessity pushed many to make the long commute.

Billington was then working at his family's giftware business. Ever the organizer, he'd convinced other area manufacturers to form an association of factory outlet retailers. They put out a brochure and spent some cash on advertising, and soon shoppers were showing up. When Billington found himself fielding questions from



the visitors about restaurants and Rhode Island attractions, the light bulb flashed on again: Promoting the Blackstone Valley as a destination could be a real boon to the region's sluggish economy. He talked with friends and some movers and shakers, and the tourism council was born, right on the kitchen table of his Cumberland home.

The state's Division of Tourism offered a matching

grant to get the enterprise running, but with the stipulation that local communities kick in the same amount. In the months that followed, Billington spoke to more than a hundred groups, from Rotary Clubs and Kiwanis to town boards. Everywhere, the response was the same: snickers, guffaws, even belly laughs. Locals couldn't believe anyone would want to visit their humdrum hometowns.

The night he made a pitch to the North Smithfield Town Council still sticks in his mind. "They told me, There's no tourism here," he says. "They threw me out."

But within a few days Town Council member Ken Bianchi rang him up. He worked for the state's Department of Economic Development, and he'd discussed Billington's sales pitch at his office. The planners agreed the effort sounded worthwhile. He encouraged the young man to meet with town officials again.

So Billington went back. And they gave him the money.

PAYING THE BILLS

In 1986 a tourism council board of directors formed, and they hired Billington as the agency's fulltime director. Of course, getting money to run the operation was his job. The freshly-passed state tax on hotel rooms provided some cash for tourism groups, but for several years that amounted to no more than a few hundred dollars. Eventually Billington wrangled \$10,000 in job-training funds from the state's Department of Employment and Training.

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Early on, Billington found rallying support sometimes remained an uphill battle. When he showed his face at meetings of the Governor's Advisory Council on Tourism, some members from the state's beach towns were bemused. And when he surveyed members of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, none showed any interest in tourism.

The top boosters proved to be companies that saw no direct gain from bringing tourists to the region, like Amica Insurance, Fidelity Investments, and Credit Union Central Falls. "These people were convinced that first and foremost tourism is good for the community," Billington says. "The primary beneficiary is the local community."

Billington also gives a nod to Rick Alger, former mayor of Cumberland, who helped the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council win recognition as a non-profit educational corporation, a designation that made the organization eligible for certain grants.



SOME STRONG PARTNERS

Fortunately, there were others with the same goals and the same drive.

When the environmental movement took root in the early 1970s, local eco-activists looked to their own backyard. With help from the National Guard, they organized clean-ups of the Blackstone River in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Over the years volunteers have hauled many tons of garbage from the river's shores.

And in 1985, Rhode Island Senator John Chaffee authored legislation to create the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor, which follows the river in two states. That brought the National Park Service to region to help the states, the municipalities, and non-profit groups establish parks, museums, and bike paths. Ask almost anyone involved in civic affairs, and you'll hear how the Corridor team has strived mightily to bring about a change of direction in the Valley.

ROLLING ON A RIVER

Northern Rhode Island has no mountains, no ocean beaches, and nothing that's the biggest, the highest, the oldest, or superlative in any other way. It does have history, but so does the rest of New England. As Billington and his colleagues discovered, it's the once-shunned Blackstone River that makes the region a unique destination. Get a bunch of school kids off their bus onto a riverboat, and their field trip becomes a real adventure.

The council's first watercraft was the Blackstone Valley Tourism One, a Navy surplus inflatable raft. In 1989 Billington invited news reporters and public officials aboard for river tours that revealed the Blackstone's shores were on the way to becoming a surprisingly beautiful urban wilderness.





A year later Warren boat builder Luther Blount leased the tourism council a glass-bottom water bus originally built for tourist trips in tropical climes. Cynics suggested the river tourists would have a great view of sunken shopping carts and discarded automotive parts. But the tours proved to be a huge success, drawing more than 300 passengers on busy weekends.

That prompted the tourism council to launch a fundraising campaign to purchase a riverboat of their own. In 1993 the Blackstone Valley Explorer began plying the waters. To date, more than 300,000 visitors have climbed aboard.

"The Explorer really made our reputation," says Billington. "I've always called it 'the Convincer.' We've taken everybody on that boat -- our mayors and town administrators, all the members of the congressional delegation, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, everyone. It convinces them the river has something to offer."

To mark the new millennium, the tourism council acquired yet another vessel, an English canal boat dubbed the Samuel Slater, the only one of its kind in the country. It's a covered water craft that can be used for tea tours, corporate charters, birthday cruises, and even as a floating bed and breakfast.

The tourism council's efforts have also inspired people to explore the river and its tributaries on their own. On any sunny weekend there's no shortage of kayaks and canoes on the water, frequently traveling routes developed and promoted by the tourism council. The area's waterways now teem with wildlife. Birdwatchers spot hawks, blue herons, mergansers, wood ducks, and mallards. In the early morning you might see deer wandering the water's edge, or a raccoon washing a soon-to-be-devoured crayfish. Pollution and litter have not entirely disappeared, but neither have the volunteers and the agencies working to make the river more pristine. Through the years the tourism council has worked with a hundred organizations on clean-up drives. A 2003 group effort saw 3,000 tires hauled from the river's shores.

THEY COME BY LAND

In the early years the tourism council developed motor coach tours, run by Conway Bus Service and other companies. Other ventures met with up-and-down success. A British model double-decker bus was a hit, but unfortunately the insurance costs were too high. The Blackstone Valley Trolley, however, was a huge success, running profitably with the help of Conway for nearly a decade.

Trips aboard the Providence & Worcester Railroad have won a following. Residents and visitors alike have enjoyed fall foliage tours and Christmas excursions inspired by Rhode Island author and illustrator Chris Van Allsburg's Polar Express. The tourism council also created self-guided tour brochures and maps -- dubbed DeTours -- for those who prefer to explore by car or bike.

Some distinguished visitors found their way to the region. They've included the mayor and other dignitaries from Belper, England, the center of that country's 18th-century textile industry. The visitors indicated they've forgiven runaway son Samuel Slater. And in 1994 President Bill Clinton and then-First Lady Hillary Clinton helped celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of Slater's Mill. Billington visited the White House as well, discussing tourism and economic development with the president. Congressman Patrick Kennedy helped arrange the tête-à-tête.

Today the BVTC team are using their expertise to promote a new economic concept -- Sustainable Tourism -- that encourages development of the hospitality industry while respecting local culture and the environment. The council is now part of the Global Sustainable Tourism Alliance, established by the United Nations.

- John Larrabee









TOURING THE VALLEY

A history of the BVTC would not be complete without a look at the communities along the river. Let's take a little ride.

* *In Woonsocket*, many credit the tourism council with encouraging residents to open the Museum of Work and Culture, where visitors and locals alike learn about the trials and successes of immigrant mill workers. "When the city and the Rhode Island Historical Society established the museum back in 1987, Bob Billington was very much involved," recalls Ray Bacon, now the museum's co-director.

* *In North Smithfield*, Ruth Pacheco tells how the tourism council helped brain storm activities that boost community spirit. "We were looking for a unique way to celebrate New Year 2000," says the owner of Hi-on-a-Hill Herb Farm. "Bob suggested a town-wide photograph. We rang the old mill bell at precisely 12 noon, and several hundred people gathered on the steps of the Congregational Church."

* *In Burrillville,* Town Planner Tom Kravitz raves about the tourism council's Culinaria Food Tours, which take visitors to an area restaurant -- like Thai Time in his town -- to enjoy a meal and learn something about the region's rich ethnic diversity. "They've certainly had a positive influence here," Kravitz says. "And not only with restaurant promotions."

* *Glocester* business woman Rose LaVoie thanks the council for bringing crowds of visitors to town and directing them to local establishments. "They've had farm tours and they've brought folks to Brown & Hopkins, our country store and the nation's oldest," she says. "They've done wonders for the state's northeast corner."

* *In Smithfield*, folks talk about the BVTC's work to promote the Smith-Appleby House Museum, one of the few 17th-century stone-ender homes left in the region. "We're mainly a volunteer organization," says Maggie Botelho, the museum's treasurer, "so their efforts are a big plus."

* *In Lincoln*, the tourism council is a top promoter of Hearthside House, a 19th-century stone mansion turned museum and one of the state's architectural treasures. "The council put together a self-guided tour -- the Great Road DeTour -- that's really made this a destination," says Kathy Hartley, president of Friends of Hearthside.



* *In Central Falls*, state Senator Betty Crowley points out how the tourism council is reminding people there's more to their community than bricks and pavement. "The Sunday afternoon river tour on the Explorer is a great trip," she says. "They take you to areas that almost seem like wilderness. For awhile you forget you're surrounded by a city."

* Mike Cassidy, recently retired as Pawtucket's city planner, has followed the council's efforts since day one. "I remember how people laughed when Bob Billington said he was going to put a boat on the river," he recalls. "Now it's a huge success."

* *In Cumberland*, folks are excited about plans to revitalize Broad Street, a three-mile thoroughfare that also extends into Pawtucket and Central Falls. The tourism council has teamed up with a other organizations to boost businesses, add landscaping, and hold celebrations and events.

It's just one way the BVTC has helped the region's economy grow, says David Balfour, a lifelong Cumberland resident. "Tourism was once something this area ignored, but it's no longer forgotten," he says. "It's a major industry."

And he's quick to point out the economic benefits stretch way beyond luring visitors to the region. Rhode Island is working hard to develop a new economy, based on such industries as financial services, health care, high technology, and biotechnology. The Knowledge Economy, planners call it. To bring those companies to the state, executives must be convinced this is a location educated, affluent employees would want to call home. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and its partners have transformed the region into exactly that sort of place.

"Do you think for a minute," Balfour asks, "that a major company would ask their employees to live here if it was not the kind of place they'd want to visit? Would a company like Fidelity move here, and ask their workers to move, if the Blackstone were still seen as a dirty, polluted river? I don't think so."

Awards & Recognitions

Invited and attended the WTAT Summit in Beijing, China with Louis Yip in May as the winner of the 2008 World Travel and Tourism Award.

Accepted as a member of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

The Governor's Regional Tourism Award was presented to The Gamm Theatre of Pawtucket commemorating 25 years of excellence in the theater.

First Annual Rhode Island Sustainable AWARD (ARISTA) presented to The Fort Adams Trust by Blackstone Valley Tourism Council

Events

Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament at Crystal Lake, Burrillville sponsored by Navigant Credit Union.

First Annual Cherry Blossom Festival, May Breakfast, and 5K Road Race held along Roosevelt Avenue, Central Falls.

Celebrated 150th Anniversary Visit to Woonsocket by train by Abraham Lincoln.

Blackstone Valley Culinaria - Secret Ingredient Food Tours with weekly events held at ethnic restaurants throughout the Valley to highlight local cuisine.

11th Annual Chinese Dragonboat Races and Taiwan Day Festival sponsored and co-ordinated by Tourism Council.

Annual Fall Foliage Train trip to Putnam, CT took place in October.

Blackstone Valley Polar Express sponsored by Navigant Credit Union attracted over 3,000 participants.

In Your Own Backyard bus tours continued to showcase hidden gems in the Blackstone Valley.

Participated in the *First Annual* North Smithfield Pumpkin Festival.

Involved in the restoration of the Smithfield Union Meeting House.



Hosted Board of Directors of Chocolate Preservation Society of America for four days in the Blackstone Valley.

Hosted world winners from ASHOKA Change Makers Geotourism Challenge Competition who participated in exploring the Blackstone River Valley as part of the BVTC Sustainable Laboratory.

Attended Changemaker Conference in Washington, D.C. and hosted conference in the Blackstone Valley.

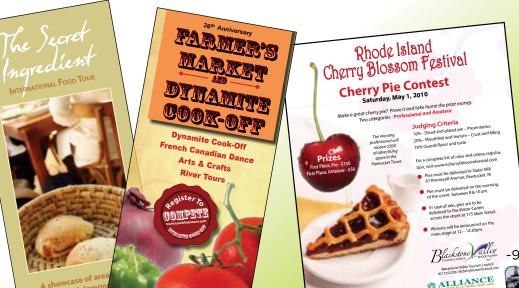
Co-ordinated *French Meat Pie Bake-Off* at French Farmer's Market in Woonsocket.

Collaborated with the Glocester Heritage Society to raise money for the Dorr Rebellion Museum.

Created guided *Bicycle Tours of the Blackstone Valley* from Pawtucket to Lincoln.

Hosted Jim Leach, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, as part of Mr. Leach's 50 state visit to promote cultural programming.

Attended the 15th Annual Discover New England Tourism Summit and International Marketplace held in Newport.



Promotion & Publicity

EventsBlackstone.com continues allowing non-profit organizations to directly input their own events and attractions.

Partnered with AAA and *The Woonsocket Call* in an ad campaign promoting all Rhode Island attractions.

Rhode Island Family Guy Tour featured on New York 1 with host Val D'elia.

Anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's Visit to Rhode Island featured in *AAA magazine, Lincoln Forum*, and the *Boston Globe*.

Fall Foliage train trip featured in Yankee Magazine.

Bob Billington did several earned media interviews amd appearances to promote Sustainable Tourism Development programs. Local coverage included articles in the *Providence Journal, Pawtucket Times, Providence Business News,* and on-air coverage on WJAR-TV 10 and WPRO radio news.

Blackstone Culinaria - The Secret Ingredient Food Tour received extensive coverage in local media including the Providence Journal, Pawtucket Times, The Woonsocket Call, The Valley Breeze, the Attleboro Sun- Chronicle and Golocalprov.com

Programs

Free Sundays on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in Central Falls funded by Citizen's Bank.

Tour Rhode Island – There's No Place Like Home, the state-wide event, was managed by the Tourism Council.

Co-ordinated Footsteps in History event in October.

Co-ordinating the *Table for Two* program which promotes outside dining along Broad Street in Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Cumberland.

Created and developed the Rhode Island Family Guy tour in partnership with Quahog.org

Created Roosevelt Avenue Cultural Mile tour.



Visitor Centers

Welcomed over 80,000 visitors to Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket including visitors from overseas, school groups, and tourists.

Instituted flatscreen advertising program at the Route 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln. and welcomed 360,000 visitors during the last 12 months.

Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratories

Presented Sustainable Tourism Development Conference in January 2010 with guest speaker Costas Christ to develop planning and strategy for the next generation of tourism in Rhode Island emphasizing sustainable resources.

Presented Responsible Tourism Conference May, 2010 with guest speaker Martha Honey who spoke about using tourism development to benefit conservation and the community.



Regional Planning

Broad Street Regeneration Initiative strives to revitalize the corridor thru historic restoration community beautification projects in collaboration with local business owners under the direction of Andrew Pierson .

Participated in long-range planning session for Tourism Cares.

Co-ordinated Riverusers Conference in September.

Worked with all tourism districts and RIEDC on a five-year strategic plan.

Worked with Tom Kravitz, Burrillville Town Planner on plan for the Burrillville bike path.

Hosted a national group of educational tour planners attending the 2010 Education Travel Conference in RI, who volunteered in a community service project with BVTC's Broad Street Initiative.

Community Projects

Electronic recycling programs held monthly in co-operation with Indie Recycle.

Buy Local of the Blackstone Valley Merchants Association served hot cider at the Blackstone Valley Polar Express.

Participated with Joe Garlick of WNDC with a VISTA community project.

Through its urban outreach efforts, BVTC worked closely with tourism partners and communities in assisting the US Commerce Department in getting actve participation in the 2010 national census. Co-hosted presentation on the history of the William Wheat Chocolate Factory, which was located in present day Central Falls circa 1782, and considerd to be one of America's earliest confection mills.

On-Going Work

Continuing the discussion of sustainable tourism in Rhode Island



Grants

Led Blackstone Valley partnership to write HUD grant raising \$10,000 to create Sustainable Tourism effort in the Blackstone Valley.

Received a grant for and co-ordinated the efforts for the Roger Williams – William Blackstone Trail for the striping of a safe bikeway until the construction of the permanent bike path is completed.

The Next Generation of Leaders

Myles Ellison and Caitlin Amos are VISTA volunteers working on the Broad Street Initiative in the communities of Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Cumberland.

2010 William Blackstone Society Honorees





John Gregory

Rick Greenwood

William Blackstone Society Members

The William Blackstone Society is made up of people who have spent much of their lives making a difference in the Blackstone River Valley. The Society nominates and chooses its members each year from a wide list of nominees in the Blackstone Valley. This year we are pleased to welcome John Gregory and Rick Greenwood into this esteemed group of Blackstone Valley place-makers.

David Balfour Robert Billington, Ed. D. Luther Blount * Michael Cassidy John Chan Gary Furtado Wilfrid Gates David Gulvin * Donna Houle Clinton Johnson * Betty Johnson * Al Klyberg Rose Lavoie Louise Lind * David Macauley Patrick Malone, Ph.D. Carol Metivier Robert Metivier Ben Mondor Dana Newbrook Joseph H. O'Donnell, Jr.* Leonard Panaggio Thomas Shanahan Rose Lavoie Tom Ward John A. Worsley, Ph.D. Robert Conway Peter Conway Helen Moroney

* Deceased

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Najwa Murphy, General Manager, Hampton Inn Judy Fishback, Vice-President, Controller Navigant Credit Union Len Clingham, Esq. *

* deceased

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Barbara Leach Kim Pohlson

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Lori Shaken Eric Sioblom Michael Moriarty Gerry Noel Helen Carney Carol Majeau Jim Wilbour Donna Longo-Kumes

Tourism Council Websites

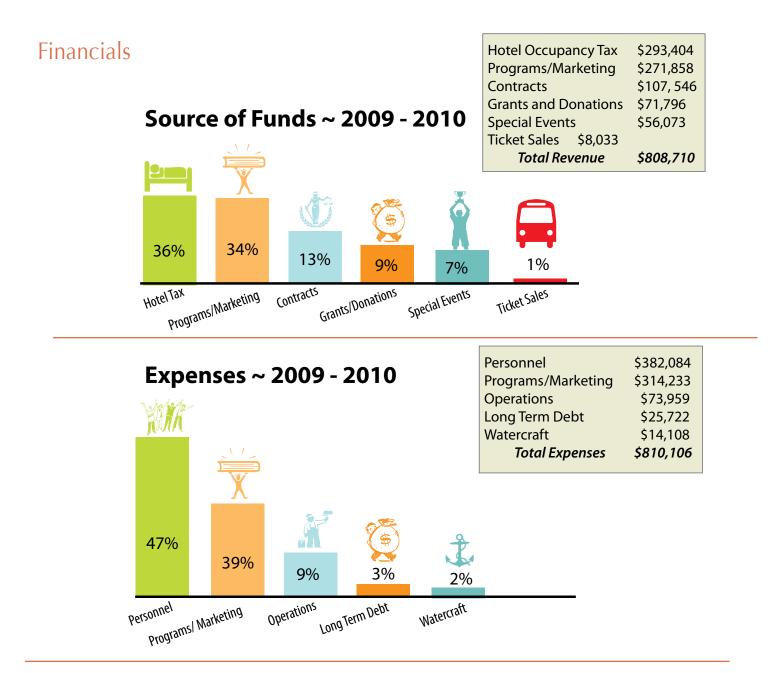
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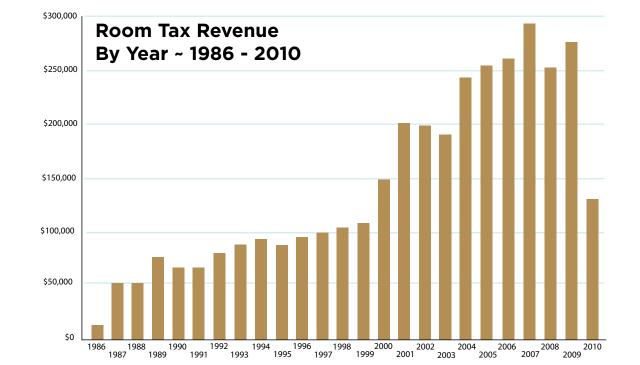


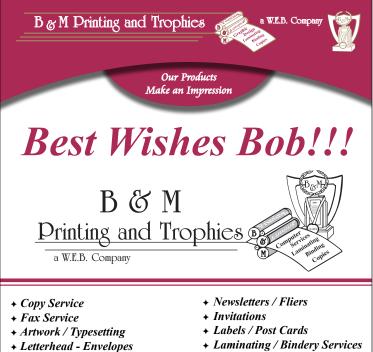












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Many thanks to Bob Billington and the **Blackstone Valley Tourism Council** for 25 wonderful years of service







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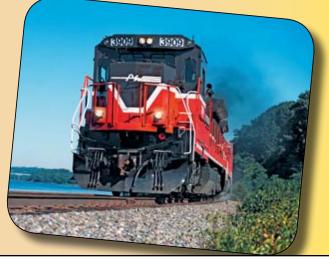
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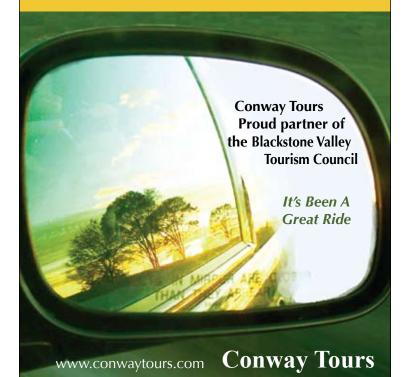
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Congratulations!

Bob Billington, Dave Balfour, and the entire Board and great staff of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for 25 outstanding years!







NEWSPAPERS

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To the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council



Thank you for 25 years of service, dedication, creativity to our wonderful Blackstone River Valley!

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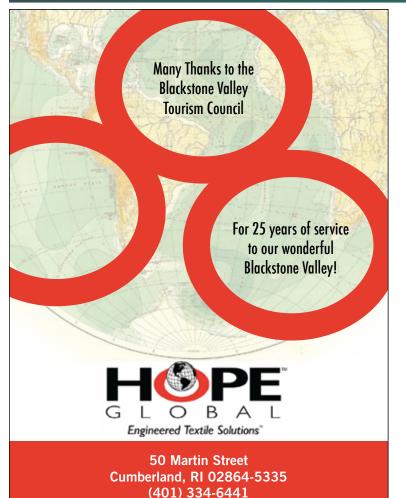
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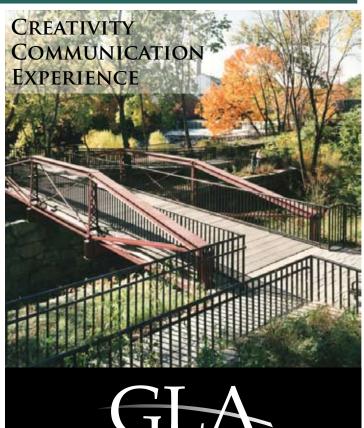
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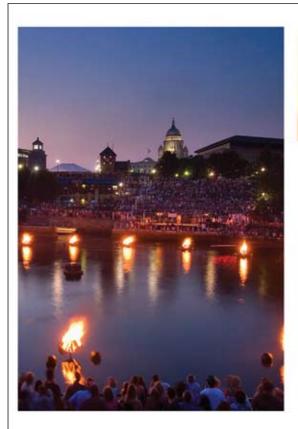




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