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History, honor hit home at Inn

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Monday, Oct 19 2009, 10:15 am

Cassie Tarpley

GROVER - A two-story white house in this tiny town named for a president recently joined winners from around the world recognized with BedandBreakfast.com Awards.

The Inn of the Patriots, barely two years old, earned the "Best Place to Enjoy History" designation from the online B&B directory and reservation network's fifth annual web-based awards.

"We're shocked to get this international award," said innkeeper Marti Mongiello. "I was walking out of the Mauney library when I got a notification. Wow! France, England, the Caribbean and then Grover."

Selection criteria for the Best of BedandBreakfast.com Awards included both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the independently posted reviews. According to the site, inngoes have submitted nearly 100,000 reviews since 2007. Theme categories reflect prevalent comments from each winner's reviews.

"It's awesome," Mongiello said. "Go, Cleveland County! We are the only county in the 16-county Metrolina region to win an award."

Pressing on with what naysayers thought an outrageous dream, Mongiello, himself with a storied history, including a stint as a White House chef, has one regret, he said.

"We don't have enough rooms and we have to turn people away."

The five-room inn, steeped in Revolutionary-era history, entertains visitors from the region, of course, "But people come here from London, Hungary, Japan..."

"So many people told me we couldn't do it," he said. "'That's like the worst town to do it in.' 'You should be doing that in Charlotte, where there's real people.' 'Why Grover?'"

"Why not?"

"This town is named after the president of the United States. We had a guy who lived here and went to New York and won the Pulitzer Prize ... It's been awesome to prove them all wrong."

"Our whole plan is built around bringing people to this county and getting them to spend their money."

Eric Goldreyer, CEO of BedandBreakfast.com, said, "Despite the worldwide recession, people are still traveling and want to go to places that offer the best value and experience."

State statistics show North Carolina the sixth most heavily traveled state by tourists. In a breakdown of heritage travelers, North Carolina ranks 10th.

"Heritage tourism offers us absolutely one of the greatest opportunities — still largely untapped — for economic development in Cleveland County," said Ted Alexander, mayor of Shelby and director of the Southwest Regional Office of Preservation North Carolina.

Mongiello says marketing is the key.

"All the stuff that's around here makes it easy ... regional attractions ... we're now constantly bragging about the Don Gibson Theater and the Earl Scruggs Center. We're also working on our new resort opening. It will be our own little world in 1780 — it's been nicknamed 'The Williamsburg of the South.' We'll fill up all the hotels in the area."

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"It really boils down to the matter of telling your story," Alexander said. "And the communities that are able to do that and do it well and make it fun are the ones that are going to succeed.
 "This is just an example of somebody who's been able to take advantage of that ... He's set an example of what can be done.
 "To get an award like that, it should make all Cleveland County proud," he said.

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abghty wrote:

The all new, "Cleveland Club," livermush sandwich was rolled out at the 2009 Livermush Festival! The sandwich uses top-secret ingredients that celebrate the foods, people, family and history of Cleveland County. It was created by my wife, Stormy, and I. Our goal in the world is to give our county some fame - just like the Philadelphia Cheese Steak, or Cincinnati Chili, etc... Try it at Carolina Crossing Restaurant in Grover, NC and tell us what you think! It is like a grilled cheese sandwich with livermush, bacon, ham and more in there - WOW, ya'll come on down and try it now!

10/25/2009 9:37 PM EDT

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