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VISITOR CENTER NAMED “PLACE” TO BE THIS SUMMER

Uniontown, PA – Now in its second official season, the Fayette County Visitor Information Center has been selected as the next “Place” in the county Public Relations Initiative’s monthly “Faces and Places” series.

Last year, about 5,000 visitors checked in at the information center between May and October, seeking information on Fayette County’s many tourism offerings, from hiking to dining, history to architecture and more.

Fayette County Commissioner Chairman Vince Vicites said the visitor center has had a huge impact on local tourism efforts.

“The center provides maximum information to our tourists visiting the county and helps us attract more people to our world-class tourism sites,” Vicites said. “It also helps our tourism efforts by tracking what tourists are interested in visiting.”

Commissioner Dave Lohr said the center has “put a new face on tourism” in Fayette and helped improve the county’s visibility as a tourism destination.

“People driving on Route 40 see the visitors’ center and drop in,” Lohr said. “Maybe what they see leads them to take in one of the many activities we have to offer, or maybe they take information home to share with a friend. Either way, it’s helping to get the word out.”

Following a successful 2017 trial season, the Fayette County Visitor Information Center celebrated its official grand opening in spring 2018.

Located at 3738 National Pike in Farmington, the center was created through a cooperative effort by The County of Fayette, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, Fayette Chamber of Commerce and Nemaquin Woodlands Resort.

The planning process began in late 2016, at the same time as the change in hotel tax collection from 3 percent to 5 percent.

The former Joe Dagg’s hotdog stand was transformed to create the visitor center, which promotes both the county and region. It is staffed by Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau employees to assure one-on-one conversation and provide each visitor with a unique, personal experience.

In the 136 days comprising the 2018 inaugural season, visitor registration totaled 4,997 - but the actual number could be much higher, as not everyone formally checked in upon arrival.

The center's geographic reach also expanded from the 2017 trial run, as visitors from 46 of the 50 states stopped by. Topping the list were Pennsylvania (2,138 visitors), Ohio (711), Maryland (405), West Virginia (384) and Virginia (291).

This year, visitors can expect the same exemplary levels of knowledge and service when checking out the center. The addition of two new staff members will also enhance the visitor experience, according to Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau Director of Public Relations and Community Outreach Anna Weltz.

"What's important to remember is, travelers today want to pack as much into a weekend as they can, 'Maximizing the Micro,' so doing their homework in advance is critical," Weltz said. "But also, chatting with the locals when they arrive enables a truly personal touch to their travel plans."

Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau Director Ann Nemanic said "Maximizing the Micro" is one of many popular 2019 travel and tourism trends that "fits perfectly" for Fayette County visitors.

Trends such as family travel, instagram enticement, "My DNA & Me," "Dark Skies" and more can be kickstarted with a visit to the information center.

"From these trends, we can associate an entire host of tourism assets to each. For instance, for family travel, I could recommend the animal safari at Nemaocolin Woodlands Resort, cave excursion and round of putt-putt golf at Laurel Caverns, natural water slides at Ohiopyle State Park and more," Nemanic said. "If someone is exploring their ancestral roots for 'My DNA & Me' travel, our expert staff at the visitor center can direct them to local churches, historical societies and the county courthouse for records research."

As summer heats up, the Fayette County Visitor Information Center will continue playing a vital role in the county's overall tourism assets.

"Fayette County has much to offer in recreation from one end of our county to another," Commissioner Angela Zimmerlink said. "Take a trip to the mountains or stay close to your home communities - either way, there are plenty of activities, rain or shine."

Commissioner Vicites said he believes Fayette has the best recreational tourism in Pennsylvania.

"Fayette County has so much to offer, and tourists and local residents should take advantage of our wonderful venues and relaxed atmosphere," he said.

Commissioner Lohr said that wide range of attractions - from fairs and festivals to historic sites, state and county parks, hiking, biking, watersports and more - is what sets Fayette apart from other tourism destinations.

"There's really something for everyone. A family can come to Fayette and do things that meet everyone's needs without ever leaving the county," Lohr said. "What's really appealing is that you can come in for a week or a weekend and go from one activity to another without wasting your day standing in lines or spending a fortune."

As always, the Fayette County Visitor Information Center is also an excellent resource for locals looking to discover new amenities in their own communities.

“When you live somewhere, it’s easy to overlook what’s right under your nose,” Lohr said. “I would encourage everyone to take advantage of all Fayette has to offer.”

For more information and county event schedules, visit www.laurelhighlands.org, www.fayettechamber.com or www.nemacolin.com.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

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