



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 3, 2021

NEW VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER OPENS DOORS IN CONNELLSVILLE

Uniontown, PA – Connellsville just got a little bit more welcoming, thanks to a new visitor information center greeting travelers coming through on the Yough River Trail, a part of the Great Allegheny Passage.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held Friday morning at Yough River Park to mark the center's official opening, with representatives from both the city and Fayette County on hand for the occasion.

"This is amazing. This is such a wonderful day for the city, our county," Connellsville Mayor Greg Lincoln said, offering thanks to the many people and organizations who worked together to make the center a reality.

The visitor center came about as a collaboration between the city, Fayette County Commissioners, Fayette County Chamber of Commerce, General Braddock Fish Club and GO Laurel Highlands, formerly known as the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau.

A storage space adjoining the park's concession stand was converted and will serve as a place for travelers who come through the park to stop for information on places to eat, stay and entertain themselves. The new center features a counter fronted by a stained glass mosaic representing the various activities people can engage in at the park, including biking, boating and fishing. The piece is made of materials from Youghiogheny Glass and was designed by well-known Pittsburgh artist Steve Sadvary.

Behind the counter is a large map of the area and a flatscreen television monitor that will play videos of the Laurel Highlands and Fayette County, said Ann Nemanic, executive director of GO Laurel Highlands. She said the monitor will be used during periods of inclement weather, when it will be tuned to the Weather Channel to keep travelers aware of conditions.

The center also offers brochures on many of the county's top tourism spots and features displays of some favorite local products, such as Colebrook Chocolates and wine from the Christian W. Klay Winery.

Fayette County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Muriel Nuttall said Yough River Park, with its hike and bike trail and river access, was a wonderful choice for a visitor information center.

"What more perfect place to have a visitor center where people can gather?" she said.

Nuttall added that the chamber is thrilled to be a part of the project.

"We are proud to be a team player and work with GO Laurel Highlands, our Commissioners, and with the city of Connellsville to make this great thing happen for Fayette County tourism," she said.

Sen. Pat Stefano (R-32) also highlighted the teamwork aspect and said the park is an "ideal spot."

"We have a wonderful story to tell, and we can tell it right as (travelers) pass by," he said.

County Commissioner Vincent Vicites said the goal was to "maximize tourism," and the new visitor center will do just that, capitalizing on a prime location and Connellsville's rich history.

"We need to promote that locally, but we also need to tell the people when they come through here what else there is in Fayette County," Vicites said.

County Commissioner Scott Dunn said Yough River Park attracts far more than just hikers and bikers. He noted that many people also fish and raft in the river.

"There's a lot of activity that goes on right here," he said. "I'm pretty proud of the work that's been done here."

Some of that fishing activity is sponsored by General Braddock Fish Club. The club stocked 800 trout in the Youghiogheny River prior to Friday's ribbon-cutting and will help man the concession stand.

"We are going to run the concession stand on weekends and holidays," club member Ron Haggerty said.

Haggerty said in addition to the typical drinks and snacks, the club also will sell fishing supplies, bait and ice.

"We'll have an air compressor people can use to inflate rafts for a donation to the club," he said.

"There's a lot of people who come down here in the summertime. It's amazing how many people use this park."

"This river, this trail, are a gem for our community," Rep. Ryan Warner (R-52) said. "It makes me proud to be part of this community, to see the good people working to make this place great."

County Commissioner Dave Lohr also expressed his pride in the community and the county. He said travelers are quickly becoming aware of everything the Connellsville area has going for it.

"There is so much to offer in this city, and it's getting out there," he said. "Fayette County is the best place in the state of Pennsylvania. I keep telling Harrisburg and everyone else that same story, and here's another part of it."

The visitor information center will be open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends in April and May before expanding to daily operations in the summer.

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

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This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) and Hotel Tax Grants in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.

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