



**NEW RIVER VALLEY
PLANNING DISTRICT
COMMISSION**

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New River Valley News & Views



“New River Valley HOME Consortium” in the Spotlight

June 30, 2008 marked the end of the New River Valley HOME Consortium’s first year of funding. The HOME Program, established in 1990 by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is the largest Federal block grant to State and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low to moderate-income households.

Funds are eligible for activities such as homeowner rehabilitation, new construction of single family or multi-family homes, acquisition of property, and demolition of substandard housing as well as architectural fees, feasibility studies, homebuyer’s counseling, and other finance-related costs. The HOME funds require a 25% non-federal match by the Consortium, a way of ensuring commitment from the localities.

In order to be eligible for this funding on a noncompetitive annual basis, the New River Valley has formed a Consortium comprised of the Counties of Montgomery, Giles, Pulaski, the City of Radford, and the Towns of Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Pulaski, Pearisburg, and Glen Lyn. This past May, Floyd County also joined the Consortium.

The Town of Blacksburg serves as the HUD-required Lead Entity for the HOME Program, assisted by the Planning District Commission to provide staff support for the members of the Consortium. The benefits to forming a

Consortium are having dedicated dollars towards housing in the region, a guaranteed sum of money for each locality to plan for housing projects, and demonstrating a cooperative effort among all the localities in the region to jointly address housing in the New River Valley.



HUD determines the annual allocation based on a formula that considers several factors, mainly population. The HOME Consortium Board is currently considering an allocation rotation system that will enable localities to take turns receiving a lump sum of funds. This system will allow each locality to plan in advance for projects of larger impact.

The HOME Consortium Board of Directors consists of two representatives from each of the five member localities and a non-voting Community Housing Development Organization member. This past year has been a continual learning experience for the Board and its staff: establishing by-laws and program guidelines, developing potential projects, and becoming familiar with the

HOME program overall. Despite having just joined the program, the Consortium was quick to identify projects that were ready to begin. During its inaugural year, the Consortium made funding commitments that will assist low and moderate income households in the New River Valley:

1. The demolition of a condemned dwelling in Blacksburg and replacement with an EarthCraft certified duplex,
2. The conversion of an abandoned commercial building in downtown Radford to a mixed-use building with eight one-bedroom apartments,
3. A sustainable housing development proposed by Community Housing Partners, and
4. Down payment assistance for two families in the Town of Blacksburg and one in Pulaski.

The Consortium is also in the process of reviewing applications for the rehabilitation of several homes in Pulaski.

The HOME Consortium will have its next Board meeting in August and currently meets every other month at the New River Valley Competitiveness Center.

For further information please contact Jennifer Wilsie at jwilsie@nrvdc.org, (540) 639-9313, ext. 204.

NRVPDC Updates

Pulaski County Comprehensive Plan Update

In July the Pulaski County Board of Supervisors adopted the Draper Planning Area, the fourth of five planning areas in the County. The Draper Planning Area is projected to have a 5% population growth, or 600 to 700 residents, by 2020. The area will continue to see an increase in residential development, and agriculture will remain a significant land use. The future land use vision for Draper is to establish a community downtown that will support assets such as the New River Trail, Claytor Lake and the New River.

In July the Planning Commission commenced work on their final planning area of the County, the Central Planning Area. This area encompasses both towns, Dublin and Pulaski. During the July meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed a series of maps detailing existing conditions, to include topography, land with improved value, prime agriculture soils, slopes greater than 15%, and existing land use. In the coming months, the Planning Commission will work on creating the future land use map and identifying transportation improvements. *For further information, please contact Kevin Byrd, AICP, at (540) 639-9313, ext. 210.*

Town of Pearisburg Local Planning Assistance

The Town of Pearisburg has been in the process of updating the Pearisburg Subdivision Ordinance since April. Meetings with the Pearisburg Planning Commission have resulted in a complete diagnostic rewrite of the ordinance using the 1994 Subdivision Ordinance Update as framework. Additionally, it was determined that a Charter Amendment would be necessary to bring the ordinance into compliance. Following completion of the Subdivision Ordinance Update, the Town's Zoning Ordinance is scheduled to be updated. *For further information, please contact Jack Whitmore at (540) 639-9313, ext. 259.*

Town of Rich Creek Local Planning Assistance

The Town of Rich Creek is well underway with their Transportation Enhancement Project to provide pedestrian improvements in downtown. The Town kicked off the project in May with a meeting between their Enhancement Committee, VDOT, the PDC,

and their consultant, Hill Studio, PC, in Roanoke. Since the kick-off meeting the consultant started the environmental review process, and contractors surveying the downtown project area are nearing completion. The next steps pertain to the environmental review process and beginning the conceptual renderings of improvements for public input. *For further information, please contact Kevin Byrd, AICP, at (540) 639-9313, ext. 210.*

Employment Mobility

Data collection for the Employment Mobility Study has netted approximately 450 surveys completed on-line and another 100 in hard copy format. Data collection is slated to end in August, and until that time the Planning District Commission is diligently contacting employers for their participation in the study. Most recently several local employers have partnered with the PDC to distribute electronic or hard copies of the survey to their employees, to include Radford University, New River Community College, Wolverine Advanced Materials, Main Street Radford, Echostar, and Xaloy.

The Planning District Commission is also surveying Park and Ride Lot users across the region as a part of the Employment Mobility Study. Andrew Gilmer, an intern with the Commission, is conducting in-person interviews at Park and Ride lots from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm four to five days per week. Surveys are being conducted in both formal lots established and maintained by VDOT and informal lots typically found along roadways at interchanges with I-81 or along Rt. 460. When a vehicle located in a park and ride lot is not occupied while Andrew is present to conduct the interview, a weather resistant bag is left on the vehicle containing information about the survey and where the on-line survey can be completed. Both the Employment Mobility Survey and the Park and Ride Lot Survey can be found on-line at www.nrvpdc.org. If you work or live in the New River Valley you are encouraged to complete the survey by August 29th. A stakeholders meeting is targeted for August to discuss preliminary findings. VDOT's Multimodal Planning Grant Program is providing funding for this effort. *For further information, please contact Kevin Byrd, AICP, at (540) 639-9313, ext. 210 or Jennifer Wilsie, at (540) 639-9313, ext. 204.*

Green Infrastructure

The second meeting of the Green Infrastructure Committee was held on July 31, 2008. Issues addressed at this meeting

included; approving a committee structure and operating procedures, and continuing the development of regional network design goals. These goals will guide the technical assessment to be completed in the coming months.

Network design goals describe the specific natural resources and qualities that are to be protected and enhanced through the Green Infrastructure planning process. The PDC will be working with local and state agencies and organizations to collect the data to inform the green infrastructure process. *For further information, please contact Regina Elsner at (540) 639-9313, ext. 205.*

Southern Rivers

The first Advisory Management Team meeting was held on July 9, 2008. This kickoff meeting provided participants an overview of the program, its funding, and the project approach the PDC and its consultant will be using. This Advisory Management Team will work with the PDC and the consultant to identify areas needing wastewater treatment services to improve water quality in the area.

A public informational meeting was held on July, 30, 2008 to get public comments on the program and proposed project approach. *For further information, please contact Regina Elsner at (540) 639-9313, ext. 205.*

Stormwater BMP Selection Software

On July 29, 2008 the PDC hosted a training session for local stormwater regulators, engineers, and developers on a new software produced to assist in the selection of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for stormwater. The Stormwater BMP selection software was developed by Virginia Tech's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Virginia Water Resources Research Center, and the Center for Geospatial Information Technology.

This software is designed to encourage property owner/engineer/local government coordination throughout the design, permitting, and construction process, while minimizing human bias and subjectivity in the selection of stormwater BMPs. *For further information, please contact Regina Elsner at (540) 639-9313, ext. 205.*

New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board (WIB)

◆ The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board is currently working with the Wythe County Board of Supervisors and the Wytheville Town Council in the development of a Comprehensive One Stop Center in Wytheville. This Center will house the Wythe County Department of Social Services as well as representation from the following agencies:

- ◆ Virginia Employment Commission
- ◆ State Department of Rehabilitative Services
- ◆ People Inc. of Southwest Virginia
- ◆ Wytheville Community College
- ◆ District III Governmental Cooperative
- ◆ Mt. Community Action Agency
- ◆ Goodwill Industries of the Valleys, Inc.
- ◆ Job Corps
- ◆ Mt. Rogers Regional Adult Education

This collaborative effort will result in a truly Comprehensive One-Stop Center where customers can access a wide array of workforce services at one location. It is envisioned that this Center could be operational by the fall of 2009 if approved by the Wythe County Board of Supervisors. This initiative is also being supported by the office of the Senior Advisor to the Governor for Workforce. The establishment of this Center will have a tremendous impact on local economic development efforts and initiatives as well as enhancing levels of customer service to both our job seekers and employers. *For further information, please contact Ronnie Martin at (540) 633-6764.*

Partners for Self-Sufficiency: Moving Clients From Public Assistance to World of Work

Partners for Self-Sufficiency (PSS) is instrumental in helping local Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) clients gain, maintain and enhance employment opportunities. The project was started approximately six years ago by the Institute for Policy and Governance and has helped hundreds of clients transition to the world of work. TANF recipients are a part of the Virginia Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW) program, which is operated in five local Departments of Social Services (Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski and Radford). In partnership with the

local Departments of Social Services, PSS staff members work to provide job skills training (résumé writing, interviewing, budgeting to determine income needs) and educational opportunities (community college training, obtaining licenses and certifications to enhance job advancement). TANF clients receive these services one-on-one, in a professional, supportive and empowering environment.

PSS also works more broadly throughout the community by engaging New River Valley employers in this self-sufficiency initiative and works closely with community agencies to identify and secure resources that ultimately help clients move off public assistance. A project manager, community liaison, five vocational specialists and several subject matter specialists, work together to help alleviate obstacles that cause significant barriers to employment and quality of life stressors for at-risk families. Common barriers include limited access to health care, complex medical diagnoses (both physical and mental), undependable and unavailable transportation, limited education and training, lack of child care and geographical proximity of jobs.

The successes facilitated by PSS help not only the New River Valley, but also contribute to the well-being of the Commonwealth in terms of economic indicators. Virginia's job entry rate in FY 2006 was 46.8 % (national average was 33.8%), ranking the State highest in the U.S. for TANF recipients in both FY 2005 and FY 2006. Our State's job retention rate was 72.61%, compared to 64.84% nationally, which ranked 2nd in the nation.

Collaboration and teamwork are tantamount to this effort and the results have been far-reaching throughout the New River Valley. Governor Tim Kaine recently said, "Virginia leads the nation in helping people transition away from public assistance and into the workforce because of our innovative programs and the dedication of our staff." All partners affiliated with the PSS project are crucial to its success and our work is showing tangible benefits for individuals and our broader community. For further information contact Sharon Williams at partners@vt.edu.

NRVPDC Commission Meeting Summary

June 26, 2008

Executive Director's Report

. Executive Order 69: Sub-Cabinet on Community Investment - Decisions on grants, loans, matching funds, and other discretionary funds will be evaluated with several principles in mind: 1)invest in innovation; 2)invest in the use of existing infrastructure; 3)invest in compact development; 4)protect and restore Virginia's natural resources; 5)conserve Virginia's limited natural resources; 6) invest in diverse housing opportunities; 7) invest in alternative transportation choices; and 8)take a long-term view to planning.

. Sustainability Workshop: Workshop held on May 29th and 30th, with 90 people in attendance, and a number of development regulations were identified as issues. Sites for review in light of EarthCraft Community Standards - Jack Wall's site in Floyd and Harding Avenue site adjacent to Blacksburg. Follow-up policy discussion to be held August 27th, 4-6:30 p.m.

. Floyd Downtown Revitalization: Facades, sidewalks, parking, lighting and public restrooms have been revitalized. The Farmer's Grocery renovated into 12 businesses which are all occupied.

. EDA: Assistant Secretary Baruah has been nominated to serve as Small Business Administrator. The PDC is working toward finalizing a Wireless Grant for \$2.5 million and an application authorization of Pulaski-Radford-Commerce Park water grant for \$3 million.

. Virginia Wind Energy Workshop: ARC, US Department of Energy, Wind Energy Assoc., VA Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, JMU, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, Central Shenandoah and NRV PDCs are co-sponsoring a workshop on September 11, 2008, 9:30 a.m. at the Greenfield Education & Training Center, Fincastle.

. Commission Meeting: The July Commission is being cancelled; however, a public input session on rural transportation and hot spot identification will be held on July 24th at the Competitiveness Center and Commissioners are asked to attend.

. Staff Changes: The PDC welcomes two new regional planners on board - Jack Whitmore and Christy Straight.



NRV Economic Indicators

Labor Force

The NRV's 3rd quarter wage data for 2006 and 2007 shows a decrease in average employment of 673 (0.99%) persons. The weekly wage increased (\$26) and the number of establishments increased (141 or 3.8%).

AVERAGE EMPLOYMENT

Jurisdiction	2006 3rd Qtr	2007 3rd Qtr
Floyd County	2,807	2,913
Giles County	5,071	4,922
Montgomery County	38,064	38,631
Pulaski County	15,318	14,260
Radford City	6,664	6,525
NRVPDC	67,924	67,251

Source: Virginia Employment Commission.

AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE

Jurisdiction	2006 3rd Qtr	2007 3rd Qtr
Floyd County	479	473
Giles County	597	582
Montgomery County	650	707
Pulaski County	677	648
Radford City	658	677
NRVPDC	646	672

Source: Virginia Employment Commission.

AVERAGE ESTABLISHMENTS

Jurisdiction	2006 3rd Qtr	2007 3rd Qtr
Floyd County	303	352
Giles County	325	345
Montgomery County	1,994	2,076
Pulaski County	708	708
Radford City	368	358
NRVPDC	3,698	3,839

Source: Virginia Employment Commission.

New Vehicle Registrations

Car and truck registrations increased throughout most of the District between the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2008. Montgomery County showed the largest increase in car registrations (105) and Floyd County showed the largest increase in truck registrations (11).

CAR REGISTRATIONS

Jurisdiction	1st Qtr 2008	2nd Qtr 2008
Floyd County	79	101
Giles County	79	120
Montgomery County	403	508
Pulaski County	165	201
Radford City	60	86
Total	786	1,016

Source: Virginia Automobile Dealers Association.

TRUCK REGISTRATIONS

Jurisdiction	1st Qtr 2008	2nd Qtr 2008
Floyd County	21	32
Giles County	32	30
Montgomery County	86	89
Pulaski County	49	30
Radford City	13	16
Total	201	197

Source: Virginia Automobile Dealers Association.

NEW PDC STAFF

The PDC welcomes John "Jack" Whitmore to its staff. Jack graduated in 2005 from Virginia Tech with a Bachelor's degree in Public and Urban Affairs. After graduation, Jack worked for the City of Brunswick, MD, as a Planner completing the 2007 Master Plan, and working in the fields of Public Works Administration, GIS Administration, and Development Review. Jack joined the PDC in early June and will be focusing on Local Planning Assistance and Transportation Planning. You may contact Jack at 540-693-9313, ext. 259 or by email at jwhitmore@nrvc.org.



Christy Straight joined the PDC on June 16, 2008. She will be the New River Valley RIDE Solutions coordinator in addition to working on Virginia's First and other regional projects. Born and raised in West

Virginia, Christy comes to the New River Valley by way of Seattle and the Roanoke Valley where she has worked for locally-owned engineering firms



as a marketing and sales coordinator. You may contact Christy at 540-693-9313, ext. 209 or by email at cstraight@nrvc.org.

Transportation News

Bikeway-Walkway Committee

The regional Bikeway-Walkway (BWWW) Committee met on July 15th and participated in a presentation by Mark Hufeisen, Manager of the New River Trail State Park. Mark shared trail construction advice and discussed trail ownership options, such as one option Pulaski County is pursuing for the New River Trail Extension from the Town of Pulaski to Randolph Park. The committee also discussed its role in updating the New River Valley Regional Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway Plan. The plan was last updated in 2000 and the committee will be dedicating time at each meeting to revise the document. The next BWWW Committee meeting will be held on September 16th at 8:30 am at the NRV Competitiveness Center in Fairlawn.

Rural Long Range Transportation Plan

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) met on July 15th to discuss the upcoming public input meeting seeking comments on the Rural Long Range Plan as the process moves forward. The meeting took place on July 24th from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm at the New River Valley Competitiveness Center in the Training Room. The public had the opportunity to comment on rural transportation projects and map products created through the plan development process. A list of 43 transportation hotspots identified for engineering studies and a map illustrating their location was available, along with a map of crash incidents, projected growth areas, and existing water and sewer infrastructure. The next TAC meeting will be September 16th at 1:30 pm at the New River Valley Competitiveness Center.

Public Mobility

The PDC was recently awarded funds by the Department of Rail and Public Transit (DRPT) to embark on a Mobility Manager Pilot Project. The initial scope of the project is to identify barriers between human service transportation providers and determining methods to address efficiency in the delivery of their services to multiple clients. The project will kick-off in October/November. For further information, please contact Kevin Byrd, AICP at (540) 639-9313 ext. 210.

August 2008

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Meetings

- Aug. 4-Narrows PC-6 p.m.
- Aug. 5-Blacksburg PC-7:30 p.m.
- Aug. 11-Pulaski Town PC-6 p.m.
- Aug. 12-Pulaski PC-7 p.m.;
- Aug. 13-Montgomery PC-7 p.m.; VFRIFA-4:30 p.m.
- Aug. 15-NRV Telecommunications- 1:30 p.m.
- Aug. 18-Radford PC-7 p.m.
- Aug. 19-Floyd PC-7p.m.
- Aug. 20-Montgomery PC-7 p.m.
- Aug. 21-Pearisburg PC- 7 p.m.
- Aug. 26-Giles PC-6:30 p.m.
- Aug. 28- NRVPCD Commission Mtg-6 p.m.

September 2008

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Meetings

- Sept. 1-Narrows PC-6 p.m.
- Sept. 2-Blacksburg PC-7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 8-Pulaski Town PC-6 p.m.
- Sept. 9-Pulaski PC-7 p.m.
- Sept. 10-VFRIFA-4:30 p.m.; Montgomery PC-7 p.m.
- Sept. 15-Radford PC-7 p.m.
- Sept. 16-BWWW-8:30 a.m.; TAC-1:30 p.m.; Floyd PC-7p.m.
- Sept. 17-Montgomery PC-7 p.m.
- Sept. 18-Pearisburg PC-7 p.m.
- Sept. 19-NRV Telecommunications- 1:30 p.m.
- Sept. 23-Giles PC-6:30 p.m.
- Sept. 25-NRVPCD Commission Mtg-6 p.m.



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NRVPDC Member Jurisdictions

Counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery,
Pulaski, and the City of Radford

Towns of Blacksburg, Christiansburg,
Floyd, Narrows, Pearisburg, Pulaski, and
Rich Creek

Radford University and Virginia Tech



David W. Rundgren, Executive Director
Jan R. Gilbertson, Newsletter Editor

Central Pulaski Transportation and Land Use Master Plan

This spring and summer were busy with work to identify transportation improvements in the Central Pulaski County area including the towns of Dublin and Pulaski. In the spring the stakeholder committee met monthly to review existing land use and demographic patterns. The following months included a review of the existing transportation network and identifying problem areas due to anticipated land use changes. The transportation consultants for this project, Anderson and Associates, and Draper Aden Associates, are utilizing demand models to understand how certain transportation improvements will affect traffic patterns. In conjunction with the consultant models, the PDC is projecting how the identified transportation improvements will impact land use. The July stakeholders meeting focused on alternative transportation which included public transit routes, park and ride lot locations, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and rail access. VDOT's Multimodal Planning Grant Program is providing funding for this effort. *For further information, please contact Kevin Byrd, AICP, at (540) 639-9313, ext. 210.*

THE COMPETITIVE EDGE

Official Publication of the New River Valley Competitiveness Center
A Small Business Incubator

Yolanda Y. Hunter, Incubator Manager

August - September 2008

From the Manager's Desk:

Two Important Words

There are two important words that are worth their weight in gold. Unfortunately, some business owners or marketers never say them to their clients or they don't speak them nearly enough. I guess you are wondering what those two words are. "Thank you!" When was the last time your customer heard you actually say thank you?

The reason I bring this up is because as business owners we get so busy trying to develop the company by growing the customer base, we fail to thank all of our customers for their business. So make it a point to send a short note or email and say "Thank you! I appreciate your business," a thank you with no ulterior motives and no sales pitches. A note that makes your customers feel important and that their business matters and is not being taken for granted. Maybe this will stir up the customer who has not purchased any of your services or products for some time.

This act of kindness and strategy will be worth its weight in gold!

Competitiveness Center Incubator Tenant Visits the UK

Northern Ireland Trip: A Journey into Business Future and Personal Past

When I was asked to represent my company, Smiling Bulldog Enterprises®, with a delegation from the New River Valley traveling to Northern Ireland, the answer "no" wasn't an option! While I did not have a passport, that small stumbling block was remedied by a call to Congressman Rick Boucher's office. With the help of his staff, my passport was processed and in my hands within two weeks.

The week-long trip turned out to be not just a business trip, but a real personal journey as well. I was able to make contacts and friends of a lifetime in a country that can truly claim an ancestral link to thousands of Southwest Virginia families including my own.

Supported by the New River Valley Economic Development Alliance and sponsored by LEDCOM (Larne Enterprise Development Company), our group arrived in Belfast, Northern Ireland on Saturday, June 21st. After flying through five time zones, the weekend was mostly a time of rest and opportunity to sightsee along the Northern Irish coast. A good thing too...on Monday, the director of LEDCOM, Ken Nelson, along with David Denny of the NRV Economic Development Alliance, had full schedules of appointments for us with diverse business representatives and entrepreneurs all over the area.

The real purpose of our trip could likely be called a trade mission. We were there to explore opportunities not only to market our products overseas, but to set up a true exchange of products, ideas, and even locations. LEDCOM is a leader in the Northern Ireland Enterprise system which supports and cultivates the growth of small business in that region of the British Isles. In less than twenty years, as a true business incubator, LEDCOM has sponsored over 500 small businesses growing in the process from one building to two business park complexes.

As a representative of Smiling Bulldog Enterprises®, my purpose was to propose potential sports-related items to marketing agents for both local soccer clubs and the national football association. Futbol, or soccer as we call it, is truly an international sport and fans are dedicated to their local clubs with the enthusiasm we have for our own high school football teams.

I actually represented a second company as well. Country Roads Collection™ will market theme-based home décor items using local artists' and photographers' work. The idea of using artistic works and photographs from Northern Ireland on various product lines was met with much enthusiasm and genuine interest among the people that I met.

If my purpose was to exchange business ideas and explore marketing opportunities in Northern Ireland, the third, less tangible, reason for my inclusion in the New River Valley delegation, has to do with a vision based on the history of Virginia, and certainly the entire United States.

In 2005, Delegate Benny Keister proposed the idea of promoting the Wilderness Road as a tourism initiative in Virginia. That idea was ultimately adopted and developed by the Virginia Tourism Authority and continues now under a non-profit group known as The Wilderness Road- Virginia's Heritage Migration Route. When St. Patrick's Day comes around each March, just about everyone wants to be a little bit "Irish". But the interesting thing is that while millions of Americans can claim Irish relatives, a good portion of that Irish background is Ulster-Scots- so named from the region of Northern Ireland from which the first immigration occurred from the early 1700's through about 1820. Those Scots-Irish ancestors were the ones who traveled the Wilderness Road prominently in this state to lands south and west. They brought their crafts, their culture, their music, their surnames that we claim as our own -especially in Southwest Virginia.

Several of my appointments were with representatives of the Ulster-Scots Agency along with people in the film industry and tourism centers who are excited about the cultivation of the links between the two continents. While many of us have spent countless hours discovering the lands from which our ancestors came, the Ulster-Scots are most interested to find where their ancestors went! The idea of a documentary that tells the story from both sides of the Atlantic was well received as was the development of "Sister Cities" along the Wilderness Road.

Northern Ireland was welcoming in so many ways: It is truly "emerald" in color (it stays green all year and a drive through the country looks like a backroads trip anywhere in the New River Valley), has a climate that could only be called "interesting", a friendly population that seems to genuinely like Americans and is a land filled with history that most of us could only read about a few years ago. Cities like Belfast seem dedicated to becoming a safe and visitor-friendly place with ancient buildings that are at home with modern hotels and restaurants. A side note that was really exciting- according to several sources- an American businessman and other investors are planning to rebuild the *Titanic*- in the Belfast berth where she was built nearly 100 years ago. The full-scale replica ship may never be launched, but she will be a destination nonetheless as a hotel, office complex and tourism center.

Companies like LEDCOM are leading the way to business and industrial development in Northern Ireland that will grow a dynamic and truly global-based economy in that region. It was quite an experience to be a part of this business trip- a journey of a lifetime for me and ultimately, for companies in the New River Valley.

Harriet Anderson
Smiling Bulldog Enterprises®, LLC

Zambia Delegates Visit the NRV Competitiveness Center

The New River Valley Competitiveness Center for the first time hosted delegates from Zambia and it was a pure delight. They were the most attentive, interested and educated delegates who represented vocational, technological, and entrepreneurial training; individuals who were fascinated with sharing best practices for small business incubators.

It was a week of intense meetings – the delegates met with incubator managers and representatives from New Century Venture Center, Salem, Virginia; the Jacksonville Center, Floyd, Virginia; and the Southwest Regional Enterprise Center at Crossroads Institute, Galax, Virginia; to gain understanding of managing an incubator. The Zambians had appointments with Woodwork Restoration & Remodeling and Trenia B and Company, Competitiveness Center graduates, to discuss the Center's role in their business development and success. Residing incubator tenants Safe Water, Luxine Inc., Signs Direct, and Smiling Bulldog Enterprises shared with the delegates the advantages and disadvantages of being located within a small business incubator while developing a startup business. Incubator Managers and representatives, incubator graduates and tenants, were content that the whole week was a success. This visit was worthwhile and could spawn at least one (if not more) business exchanges.



Meeting Rooms

Schedule your next business meeting or training event at the NRV Competitiveness Center. The Center offers the availability of conference and training space with seating capacity of 49 to 100 persons. To schedule a meeting, please call the Center office at 540-633-6730.

For Competitiveness Center information contact:
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