

**GRAHAM REVITALIZATION ECONOMIC ACTION TEAM
BIMONTHLY GREAT MEETING
STECOAH VALLEY CENTER
MAY 16, 2013**

Welcome/Introductions

- A. Rick Davis, Executive Director welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- B. Rick Davis also recognized Beth Fields, Stecoah Valley Center Host and Ken Maxwell from Frontier Communications for sponsoring lunch.
- C. Claudia Burchfield sent her regrets for not being able to attend today's meeting.
- D. Ken Maxwell gave an update on the progress Frontier has made with the high speed internet and broadband. In January 2013 Panther Creek and Tuskegee started receiving service. Mr. Maxwell credited much of the success of the high speed internet to the Connect America Fund. Mr. Maxwell introduced Chris Williams, tech support that covers Bryson City, Andrews, Murphy and Graham County. Twenty seven new sites have been added since 2010.

General Items

- A. Approval of the minutes and agenda:** The minutes were approved with a motion from Beth Fields and a second by David Dodson. The agenda was approved with a motion from Beverley Whitehead and a second by Rodney Anderson.
- B. Guest Speaker, Susannah Gebhart of the Appalachian Food Storybank:** The Appalachian Food Storybank was started approximately three years ago as a collection of stories from people in the Appalachian region and ways to preserve and prepare food. The Appalachian Food Storybank started through Susannah's work at Slow Food Asheville. The project mission is to promote and preserve the food culture of the Appalachian region. People are nominated by friends, family or someone in the community to record stories. The stories are archived for educational purposes. The Appalachian Food Storybank may be contacted at www.appalachianfoodstorybank.org and click on the contact link. The Appalachian Food Storybank needs interviewers and training could be arranged to be conducted at Stecoah Valley and fund raising could be arranged for equipment.
- C. Tonja Wilson Snider:** Tonja with the NC REAL Entrepreneurship discussed a \$100,000 grant that she secured to train science and math teachers to use hands on activity based things, a youth summer camp, train staff and walk through business plan. The grant is for three counties including Cherokee and Graham.
- D. Committee Reports (see attached)**

Adjourned

GREAT Committee Reports

Education and Workforce Development Committee

The GREAT Education and Workforce Development Committee met on Monday afternoon at Robbinsville High School.

- Lisa Keener, TCCC representative spoke about two new programs (Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts), which are being considered as possible course offerings for high school students. She also shared a RES PTO update. Approximately \$370 in tips was earned at a PTO hosted pancake breakfast for the mini-cooper car club.
- Graham County Schools received an ARC grant which will provide refurbished laptops for all students in grades 7 – 12 for the 2013-2014 school year.
- NCDOT will be building a walk-way from the high school to Sweetwater Road as well as a 4 ft. bridge connector. The estimated cost of this project is \$140,000 and the only NCDOT stipulation is that Graham County Schools maintain this walk-way once the project is completed. This will greatly improve the safety of our students as many of them walk to and from school.
- News regarding the 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant which was applied for should be received by June 2013. This is a four year grant for after-school programs in the amount of approximately \$1.2 million dollars.
- Work on the newly renovated Youth Development Center should be completed soon. We invite everyone to drive by the old Health Department building and see the progress being made on this project.
- RHS has five Foods II-Enterprise students (Jordan Halovsky, Cole Husky, Savanna Gladden, Jordan Pavelka, and Shelby Hyde) who earned ServSafe credentials in Ms. Pam Knott's class this semester. ServSafe is one of the most comprehensive programs administered by the National Restaurant Association. It offers food safety training needed to meet industry standards and is recognized as a credential in the restaurant and child care industry in all 50 states.
- The second house being built by Mr. Rick Parham's carpentry classes is progressing quickly. The siding and insulation were completed this week. This semester's students (Jesse Aldridge, Cameron Anderson, Isaac McGuire, and BJ Riddle) have roofed the house, built two porches, completed several cosmetic touches, picked up rocks, and sewed grass. The house is expected to be completed by the end of the year.
- Two Automotive Technology students in Mr. Dale Wiggins's class qualified to participate in the AAA Ford Auto Skills competition at the Charlotte Motor Speedway on May 4, 2013. These students (Ty Crisp and Kennedy Guy) placed ninth in the state competition and each received a \$1,000 scholarship to attend the University of Northern Ohio if they choose to attend the automotive program offered there when they graduate from RHS.

Health and Social Committee

The committee is working on several projects.

- We have a meeting with the Farmer's Markets tomorrow on working with them on distributing vendor supplies and helping with media.
- Two proposals for the Santeetlah Trail and the Robbinsville Greenway with Community Transformation Grant Project have been submitted.
- The County commissioners have been approached to consider a Tobacco Free Parks and Recreation. This did not receive a second on the motion for support.
- Work is continuing on finishing the Community Health Improvement Plan with Access to Care and Physical Fitness as the two main goals.
- A request to Community Transformation Grant Project for physical activity equipment for the county recreation and school programs has been made.
- Seven thousand (\$7,000) worth of rubber mulch on the county playground has been placed.

Leadership and Government Committee

The Youth Council has decided to help with the Stanley Young America Park. The project will consist of putting in an outdoor climbing wall with some picnic tables and a large grill at the pavilion area. They need \$2000 more dollars to complete their project how they want it done.

Recreation, Natural Resources and Water Quality Committee

- Lake Santeetlah Clean Up - With the help of Brookfield Renewables a small GREAT work crew gathered 1000 pounds of trash off the lake.
- Clean Sweep - Under the leadership of Lisa Russo, 100 bags of trash was picked up off the roadside during the Clean Sweep effort.
- Bike Trail Brush Clearing - Bike trail champion Jason Sawyer organized a crew of GREAT members to clear brush and small trees off of one mile of the trail. Only one mile of the trail remains to be cleared to open the trail. The health department is working on a grant to provide signage for the trail.
- Recycling - The first stage of the recycling project is completed with all recycling locations open and operational. Five full page, full color newspaper ads have been scheduled and a mass mailing of brochures will go out next week. With GREAT's help the county has received another grant for approx. \$24,000 to build a special transfer station to handle recyclable material. Construction should begin in July or August.
- Lake Santeetlah Water Quality Testing- The Town of Lake Santeetlah continues to move forward with their plan for water quality monitoring on the lake. GREAT contacted the State Water Quality Agency and was able to forward 9 months of past water testing data from the old Robbinsville sewage treatment plant to use as a baseline for future testing.

Revitalization and Infrastructure Committee

The GREAT Revitalization and Infrastructure Committee and the Town of Robbinsville have been busy executing the \$100,000 North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center's Implementation Grant to the Town.

- Wi-Fi has been installed on the bypass and the program has been expanded to Olde Towne.
- Business Improvement Cost-Share Program – Eleven businesses have applied for funding for store-front improvements on the bypass and in Olde Towne. Nine projects have been funded.
- Streetscape Improvements -The Committee collaborated with the Southwestern Commission and Kolstec Planning to create the US 129 Bypass Streetscape Plan. The Plan was designed to meet with the approval of the Town of Robbinsville and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and was adopted by both entities in March 2013.
- The Town of Robbinsville Website is complete.
- The events coordinator has created new activities in Robbinsville to include story-telling and a children's fishing tournament with plans to expand this year's Heritage Festival into one of the best ever.
- The Committee in conjunction with the Town of Robbinsville Maintenance Department, the Graham County Sheriff's Department Inmate Program and other organizations including Beta Sigma Phi, Stecoah Valley Center, Taylor's Greenhouse, Graham County Health Department, Edward Jones and GREAT along with business owners and other individuals are in the process of creating the various pocket parks by planting trees, shrubs and plants. Benches and waste receptacles will soon be positioned. The paving process should be complete by mid-June 2013 and electronic crosswalk signals have been installed at three locations on the Bypass. The electronic signals will be equipped with audible signals for visually impaired individuals. Another crosswalk will be positioned at the mid-point of the Village Shopping Center crossing over to the El Pacifico Mexican Restaurant to ease crossing of the street. Islands will also be installed in this area to slow traffic and to encourage more shopping along this strip.

**GREAT Tourism and Mountain Culture
Committee Report
May 16, 2013**

- Committee has had three meetings on March 19, April 16 and May 14, 2013.
- The majority of our activities and work have been on the first Visitor Profile Study conducted in Graham County. The purpose of the survey is to collect detailed information from visitors to Graham County and to use the collected data to create and implement a Comprehensive Tourism Plan for Graham County. This initiative is in partnership with Graham County Government, Graham County Travel & Tourism, the Graham County Chamber of Commerce and the Towns of Robbinsville, Lake Santeetlah and Fontana Dam.
- Over the last few months, GREAT has also worked on tourism development by hosting a group from Nova Scotia who represent a collaborative tourism initiative called Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.
- GREAT, Stecoah Valley Cultural Arts Center and the Proctor Revival Project partnered to present a “Singing Convention” at Stecoah Valley Center in April. Dr. Will Peebles of Western Carolina University presented a lesson on shape note singing, an Appalachian tradition of learning music by special shapes of notes.
- Stecoah Valley Center Update:
 1. The Center received a grant of \$10,000 from the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area to implement our “Mountain Music Mobile Marketing” project. This project is to upgrade the Center’s website to a mobile site responsive to smart phones, tablets and PC’s. In addition, funds will be used to upgrade the room behind the stage to an upgraded visitor center including an interpretive viewing area for Graham County events and happenings.
 2. The Center is most excited about being on the Blue Ridge Music Trail and its potential economic impact for Graham County. This initiative is partnership between the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area and the North Carolina Arts Council. The BRMT guidebook is now on sale through UNC Press.
 3. Our Appalachian Evening concert series is booked and tickets are on sale now. This is the 13th Season of presenting high quality mountain music.
 4. Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation has awarded the Center a grant for \$25,000 for the Artisans Gallery to be used to develop an online market/store which will increase regional awareness of the Gallery and Graham County’s artisans.

Updated 2013 Visitor Profile Study (VPS) Program Calendar

| Term | Month | Project Progress | Data |
|--------------------------------|----------|--|------|
| Spring 2013 | Jan 2013 | -Ongoing marketing efforts to recruit participating communities | No |
| | Feb 2013 | -Ongoing marketing efforts to recruit participating communities | No |
| | Mar 2013 | - Begin 2013 VPS (all participating counties have committed to project) - Meeting with all participating counties - Local contacts identify email collection sites and strategy - Finalize survey and site specific questions | No |
| | Apr 2013 | - Sites begin collecting email addresses | Yes |
| | May 2013 | - Survey goes live | Yes |
| | Jun 2013 | | Yes |
| 1 st Summer Session | Jul 2013 | | Yes |
| 2 nd Summer Session | Aug 2013 | - Mid-project conference call with all participating counties | Yes |
| | Sep 2013 | | Yes |
| Fall 2013 | Oct 2013 | | Yes |
| | Nov 2013 | - 1 st half reports sent | Yes |
| | Dec 2013 | - Sites stop collecting email addresses | No |
| | Jan 2014 | - Follow up and closure of VPS 2013 | No |
| Spring 2014 | Feb 2014 | - Conduct presentations to VPS 2013 counties - 2 nd half and Annual reports sent - Complete reports sent | No |