



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 8, 2008

Franklin County's Tourism and Special Events Manager is Now Deployed on Active Duty Status for the Virginia National Guard

County Names Interim Tourism & Special Events Manager

Franklin County is temporarily losing a key member of its Commerce & Leisure Services team as Debra Weir, Franklin County Tourism/Special Events Manager, has been activated by the Virginia National Guard. Her deployment began on February 8 and is scheduled to last just over one year.

"We are very proud of Debra's service to our country and wish her a safe and speedy return home at the end of her deployment. Debra's leadership, energy, and enthusiasm have moved our County's tourism program forward over the last two years. We applaud her commitment to national service and pray for her speedy return," Richard E. Huff, II County Administrator

Given the duration of Ms. Weir's deployment, the County elected to staff the Tourism/Special Events manager vacancy through the interim appointment of Michael Burnette.

Michael Burnette is a native of Patrick County, a 1992 graduate of Patrick County High School and a 1996 graduate of the University of Virginia (Double majored in Business Management and Marketing). He was hired by the County of Patrick as the Economic Development Director in the Office of Economic Development in 1996. Mr. Burnette worked as the County's Economic Development Director for approximately ten years where he successfully lead the community's recovery from numerous manufacturing plant closings brought on by NAFTA. During his tenure, he helped locate hundreds of new jobs to rural Patrick County, including many new companies to the area such as Results Stuart, Wal-Mart, and Stuart Forest Products. He was named Assistant County Administrator in early 2004 and then became Patrick County Administrator in February 2007.

Mr. Burnette has extensive experience in the tourism industry and in local government in general. As Assistant County Administrator, he created the County's first tourism department and helped to begin the Commonwealth of Virginia's official Covered Bridge Festival. He has a successful history of obtaining grant funding for numerous projects, managing a wide array of initiatives at the local government level, and creating strong partnerships between stakeholders throughout the community. Mr. Burnette is married with a five-year old daughter, Claire.

"We are pleased to bring someone with Michael's experience to our team. Michael's expertise and knowledge of the region's tourism market will enable Franklin County to continue the growth of its tourism and special events programs," Richard E. Huff, II County Administrator.

For More Information:
Scott D. Martin, Director
Franklin County Commerce & Leisure Services
540-263-0431
smartin@franklincountyva.org