



News Release: 3 August 2020

Media Contact:  
Franklin County Tourism  
(540) 8483-3030  
David.Rotenizer@FranklinCountyVA.gov

### **Franklin County Receives Virginia Tourism Corporation DMO WanderLove Recovery Grant for Tourism Marketing**

Franklin County Tourism has received \$10,000 from the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) DMO WanderLove Recovery Grant Program, a new grant made available to Virginia's Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) across the Commonwealth that have been heavily impacted by the novel coronavirus pandemic to fund recovery marketing initiatives. \$866,504 in marketing grant funds were awarded to 90 Destination Marketing Organizations as part of the DMO WanderLove Recovery Grant program.

As reported by David Rotenizer, county tourism director, "Franklin County Tourism, in a direct fun and exciting partnership with the Towns of Boones Mill and Rocky Mount, will use the VTC WanderLove grant funds to implement an innovative layering of the hub and spoke model of destination marketing. This is a road trip itinerary concept where the package is the marketing lure and our offerings are outstanding."

"While the foundation to WanderLove is based on a singular hub and spoke concept, we have expanded the concept by creating a geographic based county level approach. Rocky Mount, the county seat and geographically center, is naturally our hub. From here, we provide four spokes which also function respectably as hubs. Each of these possess their own set of six spokes respectively. The objective here is to provide a rich menu of offerings, that allows visitors to pick and choose the aspects that speak to them. However, to accommodate those seeking a less mentally demanding menu offering, we have two spokes created just for the task: One is a simple, relaxing, scenic drive route and the other is a duo of adrenaline pumping and extreme sport-based wake boarding opportunities."

"Ordinarily, the offering of such a diversity of opportunities to create personalized itineraries is a complex process. Fast forward with technology. The integration of cutting-edge GIS based technology, amplified with sharp digital imagery, and customized brief video clips, as well as some drone footage, tailored for this project will bring forth a new and exciting perspective to the magic that is Franklin County. The technology approach of story maps in tourism is an emerging concept and is sure to be a memorable aspect to the project, though the county was an early innovator when it partnered with Bedford County Tourism during a joint heritage tourism initiative in 2016."

Rotenizer noted, "By being awarded these grant funds, Franklin County is recognized as an ideal destination. To best capture and package our offerings, the marketing plan strived to ensure all area of the community were served by extending out into the county. Going a step further, two unique thematic based hub approaches were created based on scenic rides and drives throughout the county, such as the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail, and many of the county's designated scenic byways for bikes, cars, paddle and foot. Of great anticipation is a hub which

recognizes Franklin County as the Wake Board Capital of the East Coast due to the presence of two differing and unique forms of wake board adventures made available by the Smith Mountain Wake Company and the Black Water Junction Wake Park.”

As Virginia begins reopening, there is a lot of pent-up demand for leisure travel and people are seeking safe, close-to-home destinations that allow for social distancing and access to open spaces. With this in mind, the WanderLove campaign provides travel inspiration for road trips, outdoor recreation, hidden gems, small towns, and Virginia’s signature [LOVEworks program](#).

“Virginia tourism is a critical sector of our economy and has been heavily impacted by the coronavirus pandemic,” said Governor Ralph Northam. “Getting travelers back on the road and spending money in our cities and towns is one of the fastest ways to inject dollars back into our economy and our communities. The Virginia Tourism Corporation’s DMO WanderLove Recovery Grants gives localities the ability to market their destination as safe and welcoming when visitors are ready to resume travel.”

Tourism is one of the Commonwealth’s largest economic engines, with visitors to Franklin County spending more than \$116,691,785 in 2018, supporting 1,319 work opportunities and contributing \$7,929,546 in local and state tax revenue. The tourism and hospitality industries have also been among the hardest-hit by the pandemic, experiencing decreased revenue and job loss, along with the temporary closure of many tourism-related businesses. A revived tourism economy can help spur new economic activity and inject critical funds back into Virginia communities.

The Franklin County Tourism program is a service of the Office of Economic Development within County Administration under the direction of the Franklin County Board of Supervisors.

#### **About Virginia Tourism Corporation**

Virginia Tourism Corporation is the state agency charged with marketing the Commonwealth as a premier travel and film destination. In 2018, visitors to Virginia spent \$26 billion, which supported 234,000 work opportunities and contributed \$1.8 billion in state and local taxes. In 2019, Virginia is for Lovers celebrates its 50th anniversary. To learn more, visit [virginia.org](http://virginia.org)