

NEWS RELEASE



*Where the Sun Rises
on the Smokies*

HAYWOOD COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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HAYWOOD COUNTY TOURISM CONTINUES CLIMB DURING FALL MONTHS

*Occupancy Tax Figures Up 22 Percent in November,
Reach Double Digits in Four of First Five Months in 07-08*

HAYWOOD COUNTY, N.C. (January 14, 2008)—The tourism industry in Haywood County continued to experience significant growth during the fall season, according to figures released this week by the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority, which reveal a 16-percent increase in occupancy tax dollars collected in the first five months of the 2007-08 fiscal year compared to the same period the previous year.

“We are all really encouraged by the way this fiscal year has started,” said Scotty Medford Ellis, executive director of the Haywood County TDA, adding that four of the first five months grew by double-digit percentages. “We are continuing to push forward with our aggressive marketing of the county and the wonderful assets and opportunities it affords visitors.”

Revenue from the collection of occupancy tax dollars increased considerably—producing record highs—during September, October and November, compared to the same months in 2006. November figures grew 22 percent, while occupancy tax dollars collected for October amounted to about \$110,000 (the first time October experienced a six-figure total in the Haywood County TDA’s 25-year history)—a 10-percent rise over October 2006. September numbers increased a solid 8 percent.

Occupancy tax dollars—a 3-percent fee collected by accommodations from their guests—is the key statistic in measuring tourism growth. The collection of an additional 1 percent that resulted from legislation in Raleigh late last year took effect on January 1, 2008.

The successful fall months follow an impressive start to the 2007-08 fiscal year. Occupancy tax dollars grew 13 percent in July and 37 percent in August when compared to those months in 2006. During the last 10 years, occupancy tax collections in July, August, September, October, and November grew 44, 32, 70, 41, and 91 percent, respectively.

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The unprecedented success since July can be attributed to several factors, starting with an intuitive, aggressive marketing plan during the last two years, Ellis said.

“Tourism is always heavily dependent on weather, and the weather during summer and fall was ideal for travelers and vacationers,” Ellis said.

Along with the marketing plan and great weather, an extended leaf-looking season, family-friendly attractions like Ghost Town in the Sky, motorcycle-oriented attractions such as Wheels Through Time Museum and the Blue Ridge Parkway, and a wide selection of accommodations all played a role in bringing more people to Haywood County during the fall months than ever before.

The opening of Cataloochee Ski Area in early November—one of the first in the Southeast to do so—also contributed greatly to tourism growth in November, Ellis said.

“We certainly hope the trend continues through the winter months,” she said.

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