

# TODAY Tourism



## TOURISM BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS AND BRAND THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

The Tourism Council of Frederick County is tweeting, friending, posting, and updating away on popular social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. While terms like “tweeps” and “tweets” sound silly and even a little frivolous, they are anything but. For Tourism, integrating social media into marketing and branding efforts over the summer was a strategic and measured effort.

Destination marketing organizations are increasingly using social media to promote their product. “Social media allows us to connect with others, build our brand, and encourage visits to Frederick County,” says TCFC Executive Director John Fieseler. “It is an excellent complement to our overall advertising and marketing efforts, and allows us to connect directly to those who are seeking timely information.” Currently, Tourism is focusing social media efforts on two primary platforms, Facebook and Twitter.

Facebook is an online social networking site that connects people not only with each other but also with organizations, causes, and interests. While people can become Facebook “friends” with each other, organizations can attract “fans” by setting up a Fan Page. Tourism’s page on Facebook was established this summer and has attracted more than 175 fans. The page has photos, links to information, and updates. Fans can receive updates, engage in discussions, or post their

favorite Frederick-area photos on the page as well. “It’s a great way for people who love Frederick County to share their favorite spots, great shots, and tips for travelers,” says Chris Haugh, Scenic Byway and Special Projects Manager who is administering the site. “It helps people feel more connected to Frederick County, whether they’re residents or visitors.” Currently, you have to have a Facebook account to become a fan of Tourism’s page and participate in the online discussions.

Twitter is a microblog that allows an organization, business, or person to post timely information, events, activities, or news – all in 140 characters or less. These short posts allow “followers” (as they’re called on Twitter) to glimpse into the daily routine of an organization or person and get first-hand updates. Tourism launched the @tourfrederickmd account in July and has attracted more than 600 followers. Administered by Michelle Kershner, Grants and Communications Specialist, this account is tweeting general tourism-related information, events, and attractions. The @grouptourfred account was most recently launched, providing information related to group tours, weddings, meetings, reunions, and other group-related travel. Tiffany Ahalt, Tourism Marketing Manager, is tweeting from this account.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

The time has come for my last President's Message. My term as president of this wonderful organization will end this year.

The past two years have been a truly wonderful experience. The day Mike Henningsen passed the gavel on to me I thought to myself, "What the heck have I gotten myself into?" No, not really. I was honored and privileged to be a small part in leading this great organization.

Over the past two years, things have changed at the Tourism Council. We had our 1,000,000th visitor to the Visitors Center—and we have continued to give back to the community via our TRIPP (Tourism Reinvestment in Promotion and Product) program. For FY10 alone, we awarded \$200,000 in grants to local non-profits who help bring tourists to Frederick County via programs they offer. This was a tough year, with 35 applicants requesting more than \$590,000 total. We will keep doing our best to give back to the community.

I have watched as our dream of a new Visitor Center started to unfold. We purchased this "cute little fixer-upper" on East Street and asked the current tenants (a couple of cats, ground hogs and spiders) to leave as we began to plan the renovations. Looking back on what Mike Irons and the building committee have gone through to get us as far as they have, I think they might have found it easier to get Ty Pennington from "Extreme Makeover: Tourism Edition" to come do the job. If all goes well, we expect to start renovation and construction later this year. (Sure, this happens after I step down, so George Wunderlich, the next president, can take all the credit!) My kudos to Mike Irons and the committee for all their hard work in keeping this dream alive!

And I cannot thank enough John Fieseler, Patsy Ensminger, and the entire Tourism Council staff for the fantastic job they do. They make the president's job easy. They point me in the right direction, tell me what to say and tell me when to be quiet! And they do it in such a manner that I think I did it all by myself! We have a terrific staff that deserves a big "THANK YOU" from everyone involved with tourism in Frederick County.

Last but not least, I want to thank you, the members of the Tourism Council, for all your support to our organization. In my opinion, we are looked to as the standard bearer for tourism in this state. This is due to your participation and the staff's success in showing the rest of Maryland how tourism can benefit everyone. Keep up the good work and I look forward to working with each and every one of you well into the future!

— Randy McClement



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The Tourism Council is a non-profit organization. Membership is open to all parties interested in undertaking a joint effort to promote the growth of travel to Frederick County, MD.

TOURISM COUNCIL  
OF FREDERICK COUNTY, INC.  
19 E. Church Street • Frederick, MD 21701  
301-600-4047 • fax 301-600-4044  
[www.fredericktourism.org](http://www.fredericktourism.org)

EDITOR  
MARLENE ENGLAND

GRAPHIC DESIGN  
JEAN PETERSON DESIGN



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## **TOURISM BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS AND BRAND THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA**

“If you’re not participating in social media, you’re missing a golden opportunity to connect with others,” says Kershner. Fans and followers can include colleagues, competitors, writers and bloggers, potential visitors, and supporters. While many think social media is reserved for those in their teens and early twenties, recent reports say it just isn’t so. According to a recent *New York Times* article, “Who’s Driving Twitter’s Popularity? Not Teens,” almost everyone under 35 uses social networks, but the growth of these networks over the last year has come from older adults. The article sites that the use of social networking by people aged 35 to 54 grew 60 percent in the last year.

“Best practices are still evolving for how destination marketing organizations make use of social media,” says Ahalt. “We’re finding our connections on Twitter include not only potential visitors, but writers, editors, bloggers, and people within the travel industry as well. Some tweets are like mini press releases; they’re interesting to visitors but also newsworthy,” explains Fieseler. Twitter is such a new application that its uses for the industry are still evolving, he says. “We’re learning and observing how others use this application, but having our foot in the door now is advantageous.”

Tourism looks forward to welcoming its members on Twitter and Facebook and connecting with them online. “We’re hoping to see more members leveraging social media for marketing, but we definitely encourage them to do their homework and develop a strategy before jumping on board,” says Fieseler.

### **READY TO GET SOCIAL? HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:**

- Develop a plan. Look at your existing advertising, public relations, and branding efforts and decide where social media can enhance your efforts. Remember who your audience is and what your goals are with each message. While posts on Twitter may seem spontaneous and random, a plan will help you focus your messages.
- Is it really free? Yes, sort of. While there is no charge to sign up for an account and post updates on Facebook and Twitter, it would be misleading to call it “free,” says Fieseler. It takes time, planning, and resources to successfully use these online tools.
- Remember to keep it social and be yourself. It’s important when posting that you don’t forget the “social” part of social media. The benefit of these applications is that you can interact directly with followers or fans. Don’t just push out information; remember to engage your audience. You can still do this while remaining professional.
- Watch and learn. Search for businesses similar to yours on social media applications and read blogs about how to leverage social media for your business. It’s also valuable to follow conversations and other sites before starting to post your own updates.
- Be Tourism’s friend or follower! Connecting with each other is key. Drop us a note if you are on Twitter or Facebook. Frederick-area Twitter users, for example, already take their connections offline by meeting in person for “Tweetups.” It’s a great opportunity to share experiences, enhance relationships, and learn from other users. By building relationships with each other online and off, we can better promote and strengthen our overall product, Frederick County.

### **Related Articles**

“Who’s Driving Twitter’s Popularity? Not Teens”  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/26/technology/internet/26twitter.html>

“Marketing Small Businesses with Twitter”  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/23/business/smallbusiness/23twitter.html>

## **BOARD RETREAT**



From the foothills of Sugarloaf to the solemn graves at Antietam, Tourism’s board and staff embarked on a day-long retreat to experience the Frederick region’s rich Civil War history and sites, all of which are also significant attractions to visitors. The 90-mile historic and scenic driving tour followed the route of Robert E. Lee’s September 1862 Maryland Campaign. Part of the Civil War Trails program, the trek included Monocacy Aqueduct, Monocacy National Battlefield, Washington Monument Park, Fox’s Gap, and Antietam, with breakfast at The Courtyard and lunch at The Main Cup in Middletown. Above, the group stops at the Monocacy Aqueduct to learn the significance of bridges and boundary lines during the Civil War.

## **MARK YOUR CALENDAR**



Tourism Council of Frederick County  
Annual Membership Breakfast  
Thursday, October 22, 2009  
8 – 9:30 a.m.  
Ceresville Mansion  
8529 Liberty Road in Frederick

Look for your personal invitation in the mail. Hope to see you there!

## FIRE AND MILITIA DAYS

More than 500 people enjoyed the Salute to Frederick Fire Company Militia Units on August 8 and 9. Kicking off Frederick County's Civil War Sesquicentennial Commemorations, this event was a salute to the role of local fire company militia in quelling John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859. The Brown raid is considered to have ignited a spark that exploded into the Civil War.

Ten pieces of antique fire apparatus were on display along Carroll Creek. The weekend also included programs, lectures, living history interpretations, and exhibits hosted by the Frederick County Fire and Rescue Museum, the Maryland Room of Frederick County Public Libraries, and the National Museum of Civil War Medicine.



## THE FISCAL YEAR IN REVIEW

**M**ore visitors, individually spending less per transaction. That may sum up the fiscal year that recently ended. While reports on many other measures of the economic impact of tourism in Frederick County for FY09 will be some time in coming, we do know that there were 3.3 percent more hotel rooms utilized by overnight visitors to the county than in FY08.

According to Smith Travel Research, there were 495,181 room nights sold in the 12 months ending in June 2009, up 3.3 percent from FY08. Total Frederick County hotel revenue hit \$41-million for the first time in FY08, up 1.3 percent. The recession impacted the local lodging market primarily by driving down the average daily rate. The average rate was \$82.93, a decrease of 1.9 percent from FY08. Hotel occupancy was up 3.3 percent to 65.1 percent for FY09.

Anecdotally, we hear from many of our member retailers that they are seeing more customers in their shops, and more transactions, but that the average transaction value is down. Of course, the economic downturn is not hitting everyone the same. Restaurants are being impacted differently. We're aware that some businesses are thriving, while others are in "survival mode," just trying to hang on and get through it.

"We'd like to think that the number of visitors we're seeing during this slowdown bodes well for the future," says TCFC Executive Director John Fieseler, adding that the Frederick Visitor Center has seen an average increase of 7 percent more visitors compared to last calendar year, with July showing the largest increase in visitors at 14 percent. "Economic downturns are an opportunity to increase market share, even if spending per transaction is down. More visitors discovering what we offer should position us well when the economy improves."

## POTENTIAL VISITORS SEEKING INFORMATION

A positive indicator looking forward is the number of individuals asking to be sent information about visiting, and lately we've been setting records for these inquiries. A total of 47,066 *Destination Frederick County* visitor guides/fulfillment kits were requested by telephone and mail as the result of ads placed by the Tourism Council during FY09, up from the 46,583 requested in FY08.

- 39,807 *Destination Frederick County* visitor guides/fulfillment kits were requested by telephone and mail as the result of destination ads placed by the Tourism Council with assistance from a MD Tourism Development Board grant during FY09, up from 39,530 in FY08.
- 6,865 requests were fulfilled with information about Frederick County in response to ads placed by the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area with FY09 grant funds from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority.
- 394 additional inquiries resulted from ads promoting the Catoctin Mountain National Scenic Byway through Frederick County, with the assistance of a grant from the National Scenic Byways program.

## DESTINATION DISTRIBUTION

Thanks to all our members that distribute the *Destination Frederick County* visitor guide. Congratulations to the top distributors for FY09:

### Top 10 Members

Catoctin Mountain Orchard - 4,245 copies  
Mountain Gate Restaurant - 3,680  
Barbara Fritchie Restaurant - 2,480  
Brewer's Alley Restaurant - 2,335  
Seton Shrine - 1,890  
Prime Outlets - 1,500  
Cozy - 990  
Emporium Antiques - 915  
Market Bagel & Deli - 780  
Hood College - 620

### Top 5 Welcome Centers

US 15 Mason Dixon - 1,960 copies  
Arundel Mills - 1,090  
MD House Travel Center - 1,090  
Chesapeake House - 830  
Youghiogheny Center - 700



Robby Burton of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine (foreground) and Megan Goerner of C&O Canal National Historic Park talk at the August 18 Teacher Open House.

## TEACHERS LISTEN AND LEARN AT OPEN HOUSE

Private and public school teachers and home school educators from Frederick County recently joined representatives of the Frederick Historic Sites Consortium and the Newspapers-in-Education program at *The Frederick News-Post* headquarters for a Teacher Open House.

Tours of the press were offered, as well as a dozen museum displays and hands-on demonstrations to promote local opportunities for field trips, in-class programs, online lesson plans, and traveling trunks for classroom use. Several door prizes, including a \$100 field trip voucher sponsored by *The Frederick News-Post*, were awarded. Angela Chase, a substitute teacher in the business departments of Gov. Thomas Johnson High School and Linganore High School, won free admission for one class to the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, which is the home of the Letterman Institute for Leadership Training. T.J. High business students will soon be learning lessons in management at the museum.

## GET IT DOWNTOWN

Downtown Frederick Partnership is planning to launch Shop Frederick: Get It Downtown, a “shop local” campaign, in early November. The purpose of the campaign is to encourage more local residents and visitors to support the 200-plus merchants, restaurants, and other businesses in Downtown Frederick. For more information, visit [downtownfrederick.org](http://downtownfrederick.org).



## TADD PROFESSIONALS ENJOY TASTE OF FREDERICK

This summer, Frederick hosted a state-wide TADD (Tourism, Arts, and Downtown Development) meeting for 35 professionals. At the meeting, attendees experienced a taste of Frederick by taking a restaurant tour. Guests sampled dishes that ranged from innovative to ethnic and learned what it takes to become a dining destination from Frederick restaurant chefs, owners, and managers.



TADD meeting attendees and Volt co-owner and Chef Bryan Voltaggio turn their attention to his business partner, Hilda Staples (not pictured), who addressed the group on the importance of Volt’s partnership with local farms. Voltaggio is one of the stars of Bravo’s *Top Chef Season 6* series, helping to put Frederick on the map as a culinary destination. In the show, he vies with others for the title of “Top Chef,” with the interesting twist of competing head-to-head with his brother Michael, also an accomplished chef.

## BYWAY ADVISORY MEETING



A recent meeting of the Catoctin Mountain National Scenic Byway Advisory Committee was held at FEMA's National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, also home of the National Firefighters Memorial Foundation. During a tour of the site, the group paused for a moment of silence at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Park to remember the heroic men and women who lost their lives in the line of duty.

## HOSPITALITY TRAINING



The Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership recently launched an initiative to train thousands of frontline hospitality staff within the National Heritage Area. The program is designed to enhance visitor experience and increase tourism by making every visitor experience more special and providing visitors ample reason to enjoy the entire area, stay longer, and make return visits. Shown here is the first class of Certified Tourism Ambassadors to complete the frontline hospitality training. Among the graduates are Sharon Bear, Kathy Crone, Jennifer Alcorn, and John Fieseler.

## CONGRATULATIONS, MASTER DOCENTS

**T**hirteen docents from six local heritage organizations were recognized as Master Docents at the annual Docent Recognition Party this summer. The event, which took place at the Thurmont Regional Library and included a Roy Rogers picnic donated by the Plamondon Companies, featured remarks by Tourism Council board member and Frederick County Public Libraries director Darrell Batson. The new Master Docents are Dan Cornell and Kathy Donatucci from The Children's Museum of Rose Hill Manor Park; Dick Basford from the Historical

Society of Frederick County/Museum of Frederick County History; Liz Lipke from the Maryland Room of the C. Burr Artz Public Library; Olivia Tubergen from the Middletown Valley Historical Society; Joe Berman, Robert Burton, Susan Rosenvold, and Barry Thompson from the National Museum of Civil War Medicine; and Sister Joan Angermaier, D.C., Sister Helen Gertrude Carroll, D.C., Sister Rita Joyce DiNardo, D.C., and Ernest "Buck" Wagaman from the National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR ABA 2010 MARKETPLACE

As many as 600 volunteers are needed to welcome more than 3,500 travel industry professionals for the American Bus Association 2010 Marketplace. The event will be held at Gaylord National at National Harbor, Maryland, from January 14 through 20.

Volunteers will be asked to welcome delegates; assist with the dine-around event, sightseeing tours, and evening networking events; staff the hospitality desk; and host the booth of Maryland/DC/Virginia at Gaylord National and more.

Volunteer registration has already begun. Contact Margie Long at [2010abahostcityvolunteer@gmail.com](mailto:2010abahostcityvolunteer@gmail.com) or 301-490-1333 to get on the schedule.

Training will be provided and you must be available to attend one of the trainings at Gaylord National on December 18 or January 6 or 8. Volunteers will have several parking/transportation options, including free parking near Gaylord National, reduced parking rates of \$12 per day at Gaylord, or Metrorail transportation to Branch Avenue and then a Metro bus to Gaylord-Route NH1.

For more information about ABA Marketplace, visit [buses.org/marketplace](http://buses.org/marketplace).



## BYWAY BITS

**T**ourism's Scenic Byway & Special Projects Manager Chris Haugh recently attended the 2009 National Scenic Byways Conference held in Denver, Colorado. The bi-annual gathering of byway leaders and roadway marketers, planners and professionals was last held in Baltimore in 2007.

More than 500 participants from 125 designated national byways were on hand to learn and network through interactive classroom workshops, field workshops, best practice sessions, roundtable discussions, and research sessions. Maryland's Scenic Byways were well represented at the conference by a delegation that also included Adele Air (MD Historic National Road-All-American Road), Jennie Schmidt

(Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway), Amanda Fenstermaker (Harriet Tubman State Scenic Byway), and Marci Ross (Assistant Director, Tourism Development/MD Office of Tourism Development).

A key draw of the conference is the inclusion of mobile field workshops. Haugh and fellow Maryland byway manager Jennie Schmidt traveled the "Peaks to Peaks" Scenic Byway. This historic route follows the course of a tourist highway built following WWI, with spectacular views of the Rocky Mountains, byway resources, and mountain towns such as Estes Park, Central City, Allenspark and Nederland, an old mining town and home to a mining museum.



Chris Haugh and Jennie Schmidt at the Nederland Mining Museum, in front of the largest operating steam shovel in the country—the Bucyrus Model 50B, the only one of its kind still in existence.

## A SAINTLY CELEBRATION

Approximately 2,650 people spent the weekend of July 31 touring and viewing special archival exhibits as part of the celebration commemorating the 200 years of history and charity begun by Mother Seton. Events, held at the National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg, included an evening concert in the Basilica with period music that Mother Seton had enjoyed. Selections were performed by talented musicians from across the country.



Shown in the photo at left is Sister Alice Ann O'Neill, S.C., a cellist from the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. Also pictured are (left to right): Philip Amalong, pianist; Jeffrey Howard, violinist; and Susan Shull Murphy, soprano. Additional musicians were Sister Brenda Fritz, D.C., pianist; Patricia Keating-Severinsen and Claire Marie Moblard, organists; and Byron Stay, trumpeter.

## KUDOS!

Tourism's Marketing Manager Tiffany Ahalt was recognized as a Destination Champion at the annual convention of Destination Marketing Association International in Atlanta this summer.

Nancy Poss was recently named as Thurmont's new Main Street manager.

The Maryland Restaurant Association awarded Cafe 611 in Frederick the Restaurant Neighbor Award, which honors restaurants that excel in community service and aims to inspire other restaurateurs to get or stay involved in their communities.

Internationally-renowned historian, banjo maker, and executive director of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine George Wunderlich received a 2009 Achievement in Living Traditions in the Arts (ALTA) Award from Maryland Traditions, a cooperative program of the Maryland Historical Trust and the Maryland State Arts Council. The award was presented in recognition of Wunderlich's contribution to folk life and living traditions in Maryland. Wunderlich is an internationally acclaimed builder of minstrel era (mid-1800s) banjos and is the leading expert on Baltimore banjo maker William Boucher, the world's first commercial banjo maker.

The Mother Seton School in Emmitsburg was designated a Maryland Green School this summer.

Black Ankle Vineyards' Crumbling Rock 2007 won the Governor's Cup for the second year in a row.

Tourism Council's Past President Michael Henningsen, Director of Hotel Operations for Plamondon Hospitality Partners, recently marked his 10-year anniversary with the company.

Cathy Beeler, Chief, Resource Education and Visitor Services for Monocacy National Battlefield, was recently named National Coordinator for the Civil War Sesquicentennial for the National Park Service.



**TOURISM COUNCIL STAFF**

JOHN FIESELER  
Executive Director

PATSY ENSMINGER  
Operations Manager

CHRIS HAUGH  
Scenic Byway &  
Special Projects Manager

MICHELLE KERSHNER  
Grants & Communication Specialist

ELIZABETH SHATTO  
Historic Sites Coordinator

TIFFANY AHALT  
Tourism Marketing Manager

• VISITOR CENTER STAFF •

JANET HOUCK  
Supervisor

CHAN KETCHUM

DAVID PEARSON

PEGGY ALLEY

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

**Art Tree**

115A East Patrick Street  
Frederick, MD 21701  
301-624-0001

Contact: Kim Grinev  
arttreestudio.com

**Black Ankle Vineyards**

14463 Black Ankle Road  
Mt. Airy, MD 21771  
301-829-3338

Contact: Ed & Sarah Boyce  
blackankle.com

**BTI Whitewater**

10985 Harpers Ferry Road  
Purcellville, VA 20132  
800-836-9911

Contact: Jess Boxell  
btiwhitewater.com

**Olde Towne Tavern**

325 N. Market Street  
Frederick, MD 21701  
301-695-1454

Contact: Ernie Payne  
ottfrederick.com

**Pizzeria Mangia e Bevi**

8927-J Fingerboard Road  
Frederick, MD 21704  
301-874-0338

Contact: Mary Cinquepalmi  
mangiaebevi.us

**Zoe's Chocolate Co.**

121A N. Market Street  
Frederick, MD 21701  
301-694-5882

Contact: Zoe Tsoukatos  
zoeschocolate.com

