

SEPTEMBER 2020**HIGHLIGHTS**

CHAMBER'S RETAIL ROUNDTABLE LEADS VILLAGE LIGHTS FESTIVAL, FALL DECORATING CONTEST AND BLOOMING DAFFODIL PROJECT – In October, in partnership with Zoller Hardware, Cashier's Farmers Market and Cashiers Area retailers and other businesses, the Chamber will kick off three seasonal promotions that include: Village Lights – a village core decorating and retail initiative that includes bulk/discounted purchase of holiday lights for storefronts and a “sip and stroll” experience after the traditional tree lighting; Fall Decorating Contest – a bulk purchase and distribution of an “autumn décor starter kit” of straw, corn stalks, mums and pumpkins and prizes to be awarded; and, Blooming Daffodils, a continuation and expansion of last year's very successful (but little seen given the COVID lockdown) volume purchase and cultivation of daffodil patches throughout the village core to give dramatic visual cues that spring has arrived. Bulbs must be planted in October for March flowers. The Chamber's Retail Roundtable promotes collaborative efforts to present a welcoming, coordinated shopping, dining, walking and sight-seeing experience in South Jackson County.



VISITOR CENTER OPERATES WITH “NEW NORMAL” PROTOCOLS – The Cashiers Area Visitor Center operated by the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce continues to welcome a steady stream of visitors at its “take out” window on the front porch. Guest inquiries continue to focus on outdoor recreational opportunities – questions about waterfalls, access, directions and more – and community-related activities impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. Masked staff also offer assistance outside and a public sanitizer station is available for guests. In addition, staff has been diligent in cleaning and restocking all public kiosks located in high traffic areas in South Jackson County.



SILVER RUN FALLS & RHODES OVERLOOK SAFETY CONCERNS – In response to escalating safety concerns, board directors of both JCTDA and Cashiers Area Chamber have submitted a formal request to the Jackson County Commissioners and County Manager to contact appropriate authorities to address conditions at Silver Run Falls (NC 107 South) and Rhodes Overlook/Bear Shadow (US64 West at the Jackson/Macon County line). Visitor congestion and roadway blockages have been the subject of discussion in the past which have included NCDOT pull offs and the possibility of an added/alternative viewing area in the case of the Bear Shadow site. As recently as this week, JCTDA Board Member and Chamber Director Kathy Korb has witnessed in excess of 25 cars at Silver Run, including families with young children walking next to the highway while high speed traffic passed. Efforts will continue to address both of these significant issues to ensure the safety of our visitors and residents who enjoy these sites.

CASHIERS AREA EVENT SCHEDULING – Given the state and recommend constraints on large gatherings, the Village Green and Cashiers Area non-profits have cancelled or postponed major activities (Note: The Annual Cashiers Leaf Festival, held every year on the second weekend of October, still to be determined as of press time). Many organizations have reconfigured experiences to online or smaller, socially-distanced experiences. The Cashiers Historical Society's Designer Showhouse which typically draws 4,000+ attendees from across the Southeast, converted to a virtual tour. Information on online participation levels is not yet available.

CASHIERS/GLENVILLE/SAPPHIRE VALLEY VISITOR ACTIVITY – Based on observation and anecdotal reports, the area's population and vehicular traffic are at all-time highs for the fall season. Many second homeowners have sought refuge in the rural, mountain destination, often while their children "attend" online classes and many professionals continue to work from home. Enhanced broadband access via Northland's upgraded infrastructure and Balsam West's continued fiber optic installations is providing unprecedented opportunities to leverage technology in the area and support longer-stays or often permanent transitions. Retailers have reported record sales and while restaurants must adhere to capacity limits, many have converted to outside seating and takeout services to maintain sales and/or mitigate losses. All indications are that these part-time residents or short-term visitors will remain through early fall and possibly to the holidays.

OTHER

- The Cashiers Area Chamber offers free wifi high-speed internet access and people are frequently parked at the visitor center to take advantage of the service.
- Visitor Center landscaping and other general maintenance have been done in the last six weeks.
- The Chamber is promoting National Women-Owned Small Business Month in October to celebrate local women-owned enterprises and promote their continued success.
- Chamber manages Cashiers Crossroads banner stand to promote event updates, walkability and pedestrian safety, general safety awareness, and gracious hospitality.
- Greeted walk in visitors, responding to inquiries and providing destination information.

- Fulfilled telephone, email and written destination information requests (individual, small weddings and other groups).
- Reviewed and submitted TDA invoices for payment.
- Distributed Play On NC Mountains and Cashiers Area visitor guides.