



September 2011

# The Alliance

From **Your** Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority

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### What's In (The TDA) It For Me?

The sleeves are rolled up here at the TDA. Much has changed recently: new legislation, new board members, and new staff. Long planned initiatives and programs are moving out of the planning stages and into reality.

One thing remains unchanged: the TDA's commitment to the work of growing our tourism economy. What makes it all so exciting is that many more of the TDA's Internal Customers (such as yourself) will soon be able to see and experience more directly the positive effects of our long lived commitment.

Our biggest goal is to help you meet your own.

I could write a ten page essay on all you have to look forward to. For now, however, please look in your email inbox the first Thursday or Friday of each month for The Alliance eNewsletter. In it, we will share with you news from the TDA, what we are doing...and what is in it for you.

—Michelle Whitaker, TDA Executive Director

### The TDA's New Legislation: How Did It Happen — What Does It Mean?

In 1991, the NC House and Senate created the enabling legislation for our TDA. So twenty years later, why did we receive new legislation? The simplest answer is this: because the former legislation and its board appointment system no longer worked for our current needs.

When the TDA board went to work, it learned that if any changes are made to any county's occupancy tax legislation, then the revised legislation would also have to reflect NC's Uniform Guidelines for Occupancy Tax, enacted in 1997. In part, the guidelines provide uniformity in the areas of tax levy, administration, collection and more.

So this past June, when our new legislation passed into law, there were numerous changes to our organization and how we do business. What follows are a few highlights:

- Instead of the Chambers of Commerce and the EDC, the County Commissioners now appoint TDA board members.
- Instead of being due the 15th of every month, taxes are now due the 20th of every month.
- The net proceeds of the Occupancy Tax Collections must be divided between promotional and tourism-related expenditures - we will explore these more in future issues.
- To see the full uniform guidelines, go to : <http://www.ncttc.com/occ%20tax%20guidelines.htm>

### How To Receive Your TDA e-Newsletter: The Alliance

Go to [www.rutherfordtourism.com](http://www.rutherfordtourism.com) and click on the e-Newsletter button on the left hand side. Provide your details and then click the submit button at the bottom; it's that simple!

### Tourism Ambassador Class: October 25th 2011

Are you doing everything you can to encourage tourists to visit your resort, restaurant, or attraction? What could you do differently to encourage repeat visitors? The TDA is offering a Tourism Ambassador class for only \$15. Learn more about the Tourism Ambassador program and how you can become a designated visitor information storefront.

After taking this course, your business will receive visitor information, special signage and other web and print exposure from the TDA. The next class will be held Tuesday, October 25 - 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Carolina Properties, 2483 Memorial Hwy., Lake Lure.

Be a part of improving tourist services in Lake Lure and the Blue Ridge Foothills. For program details and to register, contact Jackie Wallace at 828-287-6113 or by email [jackie.wallace@rutherfordcountync.gov](mailto:jackie.wallace@rutherfordcountync.gov).



## From The Desk Of David Robinson, Internal Customer Services Manager

In the 1990s and early 2000s, a popular definition of customer service was; *Customer service is the sum total of what an organisation does to meet customer expectations and produce customer satisfaction.*

We are now in the latter end of 2011 and I believe the above statement can be amended to read as follows.

*Customer service is what an organisation does to anticipate and exceed customer expectations and produce customer satisfaction.*

Subtle changes? Yes. Relevant to the guests, customers and clients of an ever changing industry? Absolutely.

It is my intention to share with you a monthly Gem Thought about our industry. Something that is current, relevant, easy to understand and explain. Here is the thought for this month.

Profitability for today's hospitality and tourism industry is directly tied to customer satisfaction.

There will be a follow up to this next month. In the meantime, if you have any thoughts about customer service, or customer service experiences, please let me know and with your permission, we'll share them with your peers. Please feel free to send them to david.robinson@rutherfordcountync.gov.

## Check Your Listing

One of the goals we have at the TDA is to help you maximize your exposure and grow your business. One of the ways we do that is by listing your business via our web site at [www.rutherfordtourism.com](http://www.rutherfordtourism.com). Please check your listing once in a while, and if you need to make changes please let us know.

Updated photographs, listings, special offers, and promotions can all help get the attention of potential guests, customers, and clients.

## What is the Alliance?

The TDA Alliance will connect you to opportunities, information and networking for one of Rutherford County's biggest industries . tourism. If you are with an accommodation, attraction, restaurant, or if you are an event organizer, business owner, or government entity, you are automatically a member . no membership fee required.

You will receive the monthly Alliance eNewsletter and much more. Just make sure you sign up for the eNewsletter (directions above) to get in the loop!

## In Future Issues

Look for more information on, and stories about, these items in coming issues of The Alliance.

- New Staff Working For You
- Marketing & PR
- Internal Customer Services
- Visitor Services
- Industry News

## TDA Board Members (New as of July 1, 2011)

Jeff Bradley .  
County Cooperative Extension Exec. Dir. / Interest in Agri-tourism  
[Jeff\\_Bradley@ncsu.edu](mailto:Jeff_Bradley@ncsu.edu)

Dwayne Harris .  
Lake Lure area Rental Property Owner / Contractor  
[mountainhomes@nctv.com](mailto:mountainhomes@nctv.com)

Dan Hegeman . (1st Vice-Chair)  
Rutherfordton Lodging Property Owner & Operator  
[dhegeman@att.com](mailto:dhegeman@att.com)

Dawn Hemmelgarn .  
Forest City Lodging Property Owner & Operator  
[campingfanatics@bellsouth.net](mailto:campingfanatics@bellsouth.net)

Denise Holland .  
Asst. General Manager Forest City Owls . County Attraction  
[dholland@forestcitybaseball.com](mailto:dholland@forestcitybaseball.com)

Ann Washburn Hutchins .  
Manager Washburn General Store . County Attraction  
[annwhutchins@hotmail.com](mailto:annwhutchins@hotmail.com)

Sally Leshner . (Board Chair)  
Current EDC Board Member / Former Mayor of Rutherfordton  
[donaldtmdlesher@bellsouth.net](mailto:donaldtmdlesher@bellsouth.net)

Bob Singer .  
Rental Property Owner (Golden Valley & World's Edge)  
[bob@goldenvalleygetaways.com](mailto:bob@goldenvalleygetaways.com)

Lisa Sullivan .  
General Manager Canopy Ridge Farm . County Attraction  
[lisa@canopyridgefarm.com](mailto:lisa@canopyridgefarm.com)

Adrienne Wallace . (2nd Vice-Chair)  
Park Superintendent, Chimney Rock . County Attraction  
[adrienne.wallace@ncdenr.gov](mailto:adrienne.wallace@ncdenr.gov)

Paula Roach . (Ex-Officio Member)  
Interim County Finance Director .  
[Paula.Roach@rutherfordcountync.gov](mailto:Paula.Roach@rutherfordcountync.gov)

Eddie Holland . (Ex-Officio Member)  
Rutherford County Commissioner  
[Eddie.Holland@rutherfordcountync.gov](mailto:Eddie.Holland@rutherfordcountync.gov)

## TDA Staff

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Jackie Wallace . Administrative Assistant  
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Michelle Yelton . PR Representation From the McConnell Group  
[michelle@mcconnellgroup.biz](mailto:michelle@mcconnellgroup.biz)