

THE FIRST

40

YEARS

The Introduction of
Sustainable Tourism Development in
America's First Industrial Landscape



Blackstone Valley
TOURISM COUNCIL

1985 - 2024

The Introduction of Sustainable Tourism Development into America's First Industrial Landscape 1983 - 2024

Table of Contents

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Board of Directors	page 2
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Current Staff	page 3
Introduction	page 4
Accomplishments by Year	page 7
Council Awards and Recognition	page 107
BVTC Train Trips – 1989 to 2024	page 109
Polar Express Train Trips – 2000 to 2024	page 110
BVTC Total Expenses – 1987 to 2023 (FY)	page 111
RI Lodging Tax Annual Totals – 9/1986 to 10/2024	page 112
List of Supporters, Volunteers, Friends and Staff	page 113

The Introduction of Sustainable Tourism Development into America's First Industrial Landscape 1983 - 2024



Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Board of Directors 2025

Dave Richards, Chairman
Barry Mechanic, Vice Chairman
Judy Fischbach, Treasurer
Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane, Secretary
Mark Brodeur
Lee Eskilsen
Michelle Keach
Oscar Mejias
Louis Yip

Publication Team: Nick Barrett, Sue Brescia, Natalie Carter, Donna Houle,
Wendy Jencks, Joan Loos and Olon Reeder

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Staff – 2025

Nick Barrett
Ryan Bassett
Robert Billington
Sue Brescia
Natalie Carter
Dawn Carvalho
Capt. Bob Dombrowski
Donna Houle
Wendy Jencks
Julia Kaplin
Mike Lafond
Joan Loos
Steve Maciel
Laura McNamara
Amanda Mograss
Ray Pelletier
Capt. Matt Prendergast
Jeff Rand
James Toomey
Rachael Trowbridge
Capt. Joe Walkden
Amanda Wood
Deb Yorke

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council representing:

**Burrillville, Central Falls, Cumberland, East Providence, Gloucester, Lincoln,
Pawtucket, North Smithfield, Smithfield and Woonsocket**

History of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council

Introduction

In the beginning, or as we like to call it, the mid 1980s, Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley offered little in the way of attracting visitors to the region. Sure, we had a couple of major attractions and a rich industrial heritage (being home to our country's Industrial Revolution is no small thing), but they came with a regional economy on the decline, some of Rhode Island's poorest communities, and an extremely polluted industrial river, whose only message to visitors was, "approach at your own risk." Today, thanks to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and many partners, the Blackstone Valley is considered one of Rhode Island's most significant visitor destinations, and a region where even our poorest communities have become more attractive places to live and work. Home to some of Rhode Island's most visited attractions and only national park, the Blackstone Valley, through its many historic sites and museums, is THE place to relive our great industrial heritage. It is a major arts destination and location of some of our state's finest, most unique dining establishments. Its many parks, farms and open spaces containing miles of waterways, hiking trails, bike paths, and abundance of wildlife and fall foliage make it one of the state's outdoor recreational hotspots. At the heart of that renaissance is the Blackstone River, which is now a haven for boaters, wildlife watchers, and fishermen.

Since its creation in 1985, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council has been a leader in transforming Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley into an internationally-recognized visitor destination — a strong, vibrant region for visitors and residents alike. Working in conjunction with local communities, state and federal governments, and like-minded nonprofits and businesses, the Council has not only increased the number of visitors and enhanced their experiences, but strengthened the region's economy, created a stronger, cleaner environment, and improved the quality of life for Blackstone Valley residents.

With no mansions or ocean beaches, the Council built on many of the assets existing in the region prior to the Council's creation: a rich, cultural heritage and historic legacy, ethnic diversity, the Blackstone River, parks and recreational facilities, existing attractions such as the Pawtucket Red Sox, Twin River, Slater Mill, and a number of other historical attractions. Our success has been built upon the belief that healthy, vibrant and unique communities become stronger visitor destinations since proud residents, after all, are more likely to encourage people to visit their hometowns.

The Council's work involves creating positive change with regard to community values by developing and promoting coordinated, responsible and sustainable tourism in Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley communities. It is unique among Rhode Island's regional tourism councils in its use of sustainable tourism principles to improve quality of life, preserve the region's history, build a stronger, cleaner environment, and celebrate our cultural heritage – all of which contribute to making the region a stronger destination for visitors and home for residents.

These overarching missions are met through direct approaches including:

- 1) social justice & voice,
- 2) youth, adult & elder education,
- 3) urban planning & design,
- 4) community development,
- 5) disaster resiliency,
- 6) event & festival programming,
- 7) support of local entrepreneurs,
- 8) the arts & creative development, and
- 9) promotional support.

Sustainable development demands that we improve our lifestyle and the quality of a region while preserving and building on the region's environment and natural resources, culture and heritage, health and safety needs, and other positive components. To be sustainable, a community must strive to: avoid decreasing biodiversity, avoid consuming resources faster than they are renewed, recycle and reuse virtually all materials, and rely primarily on resources of its own region. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council believes that the use of sustainable tourism principles has played an important role in building a stronger region for residents and visitors by improving upon environmental quality, cultural appreciation and interpretation, historical preservation, and overall quality of life. Through its Blackstone River and environmental cleanup efforts and education programs, the Council has become one of the most stalwart environmental educators and patrons of the region.

As you might expect, trying to turn a region with so many drawbacks into a visitor destination was not easy. While it was at the heart of the Industrial Revolution, in the mid 80s, when it came to booming economics, it was on the outside looking in. Robert Billington got the idea when a Factory Outlet Association he created in 1984 attracted shoppers to the region who, he thought, might also be interested in local restaurants and attractions. The Rhode Island Division of Tourism offered a matching grant to begin the effort, stipulating that local communities contribute the same amount. Setting out to convince local government and civic groups, the only question was whether he would be met with a snicker, guffaw, or the all too frequent belly laugh. He persevered, however, and each community eventually met the matching grant, with many more groups and individuals coming over to his side during the next few years.

In 1985, the Tourism Council was born with Billington elected President. Rallying support in the early years among local and statewide agencies and tourism directors was difficult. But with the help of several corporations and businesses that recognized the real value of tourism to the region's residents, and the National Guard and Heritage Corridor promoting environmental cleanup and other projects, he convinced many supporters to come aboard. With the purchase of the 49-passenger *Blackstone Valley Explorer* riverboat and public river tours came the dawn of the Blackstone River being the centerpiece of efforts to attract visitors to the region and build up the pride and spirit of those living and working here.

The Council has worked and partnered with local communities, planning and development groups, foundations, environmental and river cleanup groups, nonprofits, state, local and federal governments, and businesses to carry out its mission. It has worked closely with the State Tourism Division and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, in addition to international communities and entities in the United Kingdom, Brazil, Colombia, Canada and Taiwan. The broad partnerships, in conjunction with the Council's three decades of experience, have meant there is an unparalleled capacity for regional sustainable development.

How did it begin? The following tells the story of establishing a tourism industry in the Blackstone River Valley:

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Timeline

1983

- Robert Billington formed the Blackstone Valley Factory Outlet Association in March, and the kick-off was held on June 1 at the Slater Mill Historic Site. "For years, people with money in their pockets have been zipping along Interstate 95 in Rhode Island and just driving by us", explained Robert Billington, owner of a small factory in the state's severely depressed and idle Blackstone Valley. "It's time to tell them to stop."
- The Blackstone Valley became a part of the Americana Trail established by Bristol County Development Council of Massachusetts. The trail goes from Mystic, Connecticut to Plymouth, Massachusetts.
- A Conference on Tourism was organized by Governor Garraghy and held at the Biltmore Plaza. Governor Garraghy invited 500 tourism professionals to attend the first Governor's Conference on Tourism.
- Fifty thousand Blackstone Valley Factory Outlet brochures were produced and distributed nationally.
- An article by reporter Karen Hupp in The Evening Times suggested to Mayor Kinch that it's time to think about tourism in Pawtucket. The reporter suggested the mayor consider a riverboat, shops and condominiums, travel brochures promoting restaurants and places of interest and, of course, the Slater Mill.
- A 15-division Oktoberfest Parade was held in Pawtucket and a crowd of 30,000 attended.
- The Cumberland Conservation Commission took preliminary steps to obtain sponsorship of a project to develop a linear park on the Cumberland side of the Blackstone River. Land was recently acquired by the town of Lincoln.
- The City of Central Falls contributed \$600 to promote factory outlets and local businesses.

1984

- The Northgate Tollhouse in Lincoln is proposed as a site for a new Tourism Info Center for the Blackstone Valley per Ed McDermott, President of the Blackstone Valley Historical Society.
- A beautifully-designed four-page ad promoting the Blackstone Valley was featured in Yankee Magazine's *Travel Guide to New England*.
- U.S. Senator Claiborne Pell took a forty-mile ride on the Providence & Worcester Railroad with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to view possibilities for a linear park and a bike path from Providence to Massachusetts.
- Candidate for Lt. Governor Frank Licht made a pitch for a more comprehensive focus on state tourism in Rhode Island and complimented the efforts of the Blackstone Valley Factory Outlet Association and the Rhode Island Hospitality Association.
- The Blackstone Valley Factory Outlet Association planned to produce additional guides to include restaurants and places of interest in the Blackstone Valley.
- Rep. Mabel Anderson represented Pawtucket at the second Governor's Conference on Tourism at Bryant College.
- Robert Billington and the Blackstone Valley Factory Outlet Association were praised by Thomas McCaghren, Public Information Officer for the State of Rhode Island, at a meeting at the Slater Mill Historic Site. Referring to the formation of the Factory Outlet Association and the new idea of a Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Mr. McCaghren stated, "Bob Billington had a dream and look what he's doing with it...." Robert Billington asked that the cities and towns in the Blackstone Valley contribute between \$1,800 - \$4,500 to benefit the formation of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.

1985

- Robert Billington founded the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The Council was headquartered at the Northgate Tollhouse in Lincoln. No contributions were received yet from the local cities and towns in the Blackstone Valley.
- The Blackstone River Valley became nationally significant as a U. S. Heritage Corridor with the support of Rhode Island and Massachusetts.
- The *Blackstone Valley Historic Sites* brochure was published.
- Six communities in the Blackstone Valley approved the Tourism Council to promote tourism on their behalf: Pawtucket, Woonsocket, Cumberland, Lincoln, North Smithfield, Central Falls.
- Grants and donations of \$10,000 were raised by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council to attract tourists to the region.
- The Blackstone Valley was featured in an expanded promotion in the 1985-1986 Official Guide to Southeastern New England.
- Ed McDermott, a member of the Board of Directors of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, received a State Recognition Award at a Tourism Week luncheon sponsored by the Department of Economic Development.
- Federal legislation was recently filed to designate the Blackstone River and Canal from Worcester to Providence as a National Heritage Corridor.
- The Blackstone Valley slogan was announced: *The Fiber That Wove America's Spirit*.
- Blackstone Valley was featured in *Americana Trail Magazine*.
- Blackstone Valley was featured in *Yankee Magazine* in an article about factory outlet shopping.
- The Tourism Council was featured at the Big E in Springfield, MA.
- The Tourism Council published *Summer in the Valley and Northern Rhode Island*.
- A 16-page Blackstone Valley Visitor Guide was published by Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and hailed by Tourism Director David Diprete as a great cooperative undertaking. The guide was developed by Ed McDermott of the Blackstone Valley Historical Society and David W. Balfour of the Rhode Island Hospitality Association with assistance from travel/tourism students from the Sawyer School of Business in Pawtucket.
- Yankee Magazine highlighted the Blackstone Valley in an 11-page feature story complete with text and many beautiful color photos.
- The Tourism Council published the *Blackstone Valley Fall Foliage Guide*.
- Annual revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$7,550 in 1985.

1986

- Robert Billington was hired as the first full-time Director of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- The Board of Directors was elected to the Tourism Council.
- A total of \$5,000 was raised from local Chambers of Commerce, Blackstone Valley cities and towns and private individuals and matched by the Rhode Island State Department of Economic Development.
- A celebration was held at Northgate Tollhouse in Lincoln to commemorate the formation of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The celebration included guest speakers and over 20 exhibitors from the Blackstone Valley and music by Pendragon.
- A \$5,000 legislative grant was presented to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council by the Rhode Island State Senate
- The Federal government authorizes the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.
- The Rhode Island General Assembly approved the first hotel room tax. In September, 4 percent of hotel and motel room surcharge was added to the state's existing 6 percent sales tax. Half of the new tax, or two percent of room charges, is being turned over to one of the six new regional tourism organizations to finance promotions.
- The Tourism Council received \$10,000 in job training funds from the Rhode Island Department of Employment and Training.
- The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, city officials and a large group of volunteers under the OSCAR Riverbank Rescue Project (Ocean State Cleanup and Recycling) held a large clean-up of the Blackstone River in September.
- Former Cumberland Mayor Rick Alger helped the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council apply for 501(c)3 status as a non-profit educational corporation.
- The Tourism Council published *Holidays in Pawtucket* and *Christmas in the Valley* brochures
- The Tourism Council published a *Blackstone Valley Historic Mills* brochure.
- Over 4,000 tourism information packets were sent out.
- Robert Billington and other representatives from the Tourism Council volunteered at the "Big E" in Springfield, Massachusetts.
- The Tourism Council partnered with the National Guard to remove trash from the Blackstone River.
- Robert Billington attended the Rhode Island Bed and Breakfast Conference.
- Interns from Sawyer School worked at the Tourism Council in 1986.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$9,250 in 1986.

1987

- A ribbon-cutting ceremony and reception was held to commemorate the Tourism Council's new headquarters at Northgate Tollhouse on April 6.
- *Blackstone Valley Banner Tours* was published, highlighting 24 sites in the nine Blackstone Valley communities, with a \$2,500 grant from National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- The first nine interns from Johnson & Wales Department of Travel and Tourism worked with the Tourism Council to develop familiarization tours, prepare bus tour packages, and uncover leads for travel writers.
- Mail inquiries from 6,000 customers were fulfilled.
- The Tourism Council published the *Blackstone Valley Passport* Sample Tour Packet, *Springtime in the Blackstone Valley*, *Blackstone Valley Summer Events*, and *Christmas in the Valley* brochure.
- American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) trade magazine *Travel News* highlighted Blackstone Valley in a 2-page color spread.
- The second edition of the *Blackstone Valley Tourism Guide* was published.
- Culminating a three-year effort, the Town of Smithfield signed on to support the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. All eight cities and towns were represented by the Tourism Council.
- The *Blackstone Valley Restaurants* listing was published.
- *Blackstone Valley Group Planning Guide* was published for trade use only.
- Robert Billington met with over 50 group tour planners at the second annual New England Marketplace on Cape Cod.
- The Tourism Council advertised in *Travel Holiday*, *Yankee Travel Guide*, *ASTA Travel news*, *The Americana Trail*, and *Country Living Magazine*.
- Ed McDermott from the Blackstone Valley Historical Society led a group of volunteers fulfilling visitor information packets
- Travel writers from the *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, *RI Magazine*, *The Original New England Guide*, and *Yankee Magazine* were invited to join familiarization tours of the Blackstone Valley along with touring consultants, and motorcoach tour operators.
- The Tourism Council received a \$1,000 grant from the RI Department of Economic Development to purchase a computer for the office.
- The Tourism Council displayed at the second annual Worcester Travel Show sponsored by the Worcester Telegram & Gazette.
- *Blackstone Valley's Historic Mills, A Self-Guided Tour in and Around Pawtucket and Central Falls* was published with a grant from Rapid Printing and the RI Council for the Humanities.
- Robert Billington met the Prime Minister of Tourism from the Government of Madeira.
- The Tourism Council worked with Channel 6 on a video of the Blackstone Valley.
- The Tourism Council published the *Summer in the Valley and Northern Rhode Island* event calendar.
- *A Christmas in Pawtucket* brochure was printed.
- Full-page ads ran in *Yankee Travel Guide* and *Travel Holiday* magazine.
- Robert Billington taught a class at the Learning Connection on a *Blackstone Valley Shopping Excursion*.
- *Christmas at the Park* was celebrated at Slater Park in Pawtucket in cooperation with Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and City of Pawtucket.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$58,243 in 1987.

1988

- The slogan "*Destination Blackstone River Valley – Something New, Something Different*" was launched.
- Eighteen itineraries were developed for groups to tour Blackstone Valley.
- The annual meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was held at The Comfort Inn in Pawtucket.
- Over twenty bus tours of the Blackstone Valley were scheduled with Conway Bus Tours and other bus companies highlighting the area as a tourism destination.
- Staff fulfilled 10,000 mail requests for information on the Blackstone Valley.
- The Tourism Council published a *Fall Foliage* brochure, an 85-mile driving tour of the Blackstone Valley and *Holidays in the Country Blackstone Valley Rhode Island* brochure.
- Robert Billington was sworn in as a Commissioner of Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.
- The Tourism Council published three different *Woonsocket Walking Tour Guides*.
- Financial support was provided by the Greater Woonsocket Chamber of Commerce, Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, Slater Companies, Pawtucket Red Sox, Blackstone Valley Historical Society and Conway Bus Service.
- Pawtucket and Cumberland were featured in this spring's *Yankee Travel Guide*.
- The Tourism Council published its first full-color brochure featuring Blackstone Valley.
- The Tourism Council advertised in *Yankee Travel Guide, The Original New England Guide, Bon Appétit, South Coastal New England, Americana Trail, and Travel Holiday*.
- New brochures were published: *Landmarks in Pawtucket, Factory Outlet Tour Guide, and Christmas in the Valley 1988*.
- A Familiarization Tour of The Blackstone Valley was developed by Johnson & Wales interns. Tour leaders from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont and Newport were introduced to the Blackstone Valley.
- Robert Billington attended the National Conference on Historic Canals in Morris, Illinois.
- The Tourism Council welcomed the first convention to the Blackstone Valley, The Society for Preservation of Old Mills (SPOOM). The three-day convention with 200 attendees was headquartered at the Comfort Inn, Pawtucket.
- The Tourism Council partnered with The Learning Connection to offer three tours: A Fall Foliage Tour of the Blackstone Valley, A Factory Outlet Tour and a Blackstone River Towpath Tour.
- Stories about the Blackstone Valley appeared in newspapers in Buffalo (New York), Hartford, New Haven and New London (Connecticut), and Boston and Springfield (Massachusetts).
- The Blackstone Valley Traveling Exhibit represented Rhode Island at the nation's largest film show in California. Members of the Rhode Island Film Commission brought the exhibit to show producers and directors possible movie locations in Rhode Island and the Blackstone Valley.

- The Tourism Council Traveling Exhibit was also featured at the Bristol County Development Council Marketplace in March and the Pennsylvania Bus Association Marketplace in April.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$57,710 for 1988.
- Twenty-three busloads of visitors toured the Blackstone Valley for one-day tours in 1988.

1989

- The Blackstone Valley Traveling Exhibit was featured at the Power Expo staged by the Providence Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor received federal funding.
- Chariot World Travel of Boston attended a seven-hour familiarization tour of the Blackstone Valley.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism One, 16-foot rubber raft secured through Navy surplus, was launched.
- State VIP's and journalists got a first look at a surprisingly scenic river that had been shunned for decades.
- The first part-time staffer coordinated educational tours of the Blackstone Valley including eight interpretive canoe trips, four interpretive bus tours and two train excursions in cooperation with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and the National Park Service.
- The first Fall Foliage map of the Blackstone Valley was published.
- Gail Antunes of Cumberland was commissioned to make the official Rhode Island State Quilt. Robert Billington of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council coordinated the project for the State Department of Economic Development.
- The first Travel Experiences trade show was held at the Lincoln Greyhound Park in conjunction with Conway Tours. This international marketing exposition attracted 400 travel planners and over 50 attractions from the East Coast.
- An eight-foot tall William Blackstone character appeared at special events and parades, including the Providence Quintessential Expo, the Pennsylvania Bus Association Trade Show, the Rhode Island Leukemia Society Luncheon, the Newport Winter Carnival, the South Coastal New England Marketplace in Galilee, the Pawtucket St. Patrick's Day Parade, the Pawtucket Autumnfest Parade and the Oktoberfest Parade in Woonsocket.
- The Council's Traveling Trade Show Exhibit was featured at the Providence Convention and Visitor Bureau trade show in January.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council won the Best of Show award for their tourism exhibit at the South Coastal New England Trade Show in April in Galilee.
- The Tourism Council published the *Blackstone Valley Fresh Water Guide* that highlights areas to swim, water ski, fish or launch boats or canoes in the Blackstone Valley.
- Leonard Panaggio of Newport was inducted into the William Blackstone Society at the annual dinner in June.
- Chicken family-style dinners were featured in Yankee Magazine.
- Development began on the long-range *Regional Comprehensive Tourism Plan*.
- Five pairs of interns from Johnson & Wales and Bryant College prepared a familiarization tour of the Blackstone Valley for group tour leaders. They also developed another "fam" tour to train people who run restaurants, hotels, and historical sites of interest in the Blackstone Valley.
- The Rhode Island Preservation Commission charged the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council with studying historic sites throughout Rhode Island with an eye toward fully developing their tourism potential.
- The AAA of South-Central New England held their annual dinner in April at Twelve Acres in Smithfield. Robert Billington gave a talk on the Blackstone Valley.

- Robert Billington represented the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission in Washington, DC in March and met with Senator Claiborne Pell and Senator John Chafee about appropriating more money to the National Heritage Corridor.
- In June, Robert Billington attended a conference in St. Paul, Minnesota sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- Robert Billington attended the second annual Canal Conference in eastern Pennsylvania in September.
- The Tourism Council published a *Restaurant Guide to the Blackstone Valley* covering all nine cities and towns.
- Six locations in the Diamond Hill area of Cumberland joined together to offer a one-day tour called Country Crossroads, including Phantom Farm, Diamond Hill Vineyard, The Granary, Daze-End Herb Farm, Calico Shack, and With Heart and Hand. Other tours were held throughout the year.
- A new brochure, *Blackstone Valley Historic Mills*, placed among the top four trade show pieces entered in the competition of the New England Travel and Tourism Research Association in Boston.
- The *Guide to the Ocean State* featured the Blackstone Valley in 1989.
- The Tourism Council published *A Guide to Factory Outlets* in Blackstone Valley.
- The Tourism Council received a grant of \$4,800 to have Louis Lind, a freelance writer who was a reporter for the Woonsocket Call for 25 years, research and write a brochure on Rev. William Blackstone.
- The Tourism Council assisted Smith-Appleby House in publishing a new four-color brochure.
- The Tourism Council supplied photos of Smithfield to Almac's of Smithfield to be used for promotional purposes. Other Blackstone Valley photos have been featured in the *Original New England Guide*, *New England Getaways Magazine*, and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management.
- The new *Christmas in the Valley* brochure increased attendance at the Blackstone Valley Historical Society Festival of the Trees, Christmas in the Park, the historic Daggett House, the Loeff Carousel, and the Smith-Appleby House in Smithfield.
- The Tourism Council published the *Fall Foliage Travel Guide to Blackstone Valley*.
- Annual revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$102,729 in 1989.
- The Tourism Council published its first comprehensive *Blackstone Valley Visitor Map*.
- Two train trips from Valley Falls to Worcester roundtrip on Providence & Worcester Railroad sold out for October 14 and 15.
- Robert Billington traveled to Washington, DC with a contingent of local officials to speak to Rhode Island and Massachusetts representatives about the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.

1990

- A postage stamp featuring the Slater Mill and commemorating 200 years of statehood for Rhode Island was issued this year at the Slater Mill.
- *The Fiber That Wove America's Spirit*, the Blackstone Valley's first promotional videotape, was produced. The video included our new theme song, *The Working River*, written and performed by Pendragon.
- The Rhode Island State quilt was created by Gail Antunes of Cumberland. Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was one of the sponsoring agencies.
- The Tourism Council received a \$400 grant from the Rhode Island Arts and Tourism Commission to distribute its promotional video and companion music tape.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council received a \$1,000 check from Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc. from profits from the first Travel Experiences Trade Show.
- The recently published *Blackstone Valley Map* highlighted local resources, points of interest, events, city streets, fishing spots and hiking trails.
- Project ZAP planned the clean up the Blackstone Valley on Earth Day in April
- Twenty-passenger glass-bottom boat cruises of the Pawtucket River were launched in cooperation with Luther Blount of Blount Marine to test the viability of a permanent boat on the Blackstone River.
- Over 350 people went on the historically-themed narrated cruises of the Pawtucket River. Betty Johnson and Jim Wheaton prepared the historical script for celebrity tour guides. Many local businesses helped defray costs and made the tours possible.
- The Tourism Council launched a three-year "Let's Build a Boat" campaign to raise \$50,000 to build the 49-foot *Blackstone Valley Explorer* riverboat, designed by Luther Blount of Blount Marine, Warren, Rhode Island.
- The Tourism Council started selling "Golden Hammer" pins as part of the "Build the Boat" campaign to help defray building costs of the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- The first working boat on the Blackstone River since 1848 was launched. Blackstone Valley Tourism I allowed the Tourism Council to easily take the government's decision-makers as well as travel writers to some of the most scenic sights in the Valley.
- A donation from the Blackstone Valley Historical Society was received to help with production costs of a new brochure about Rev. William Blackstone, written by Louis Lind and illustrated by Rae White.
- Hundreds of hours were spent working on a cultural heritage and land management plan for the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission.
- Our eight-foot tall mascot, the Rev. William Blackstone, made 24 public appearances, including parades and festivals.
- A contract with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission to research the marketing possibilities of 50 sites around the state was completed.
- The Tourism Council received publicity in countless newspaper articles and several local, regional and national magazines.
- The Tourism Council continued to coordinate "A Taste of the Blackstone Valley" bus tours for tour groups.
- The Tourism Council published a *Christmas in the Valley* brochure.
- *A Walking Tour of Pawtucket* brochure and a *Freshwater Recreation Guide to the Blackstone Valley* were produced.

- Fall Foliage Train trips in October on the Providence & Worcester Railroad produced by Blackstone Valley Tourism Council were a sell-out. Two train tours were held in October.
- Getaway Tours of Connecticut booked twelve one-day tours, Conway Bus Co. did a record number of one-day tours and groups booked overnight tours for 1991.
- A beautiful Rhode Island state quilt by fiber artist Gail Antunes which took over 2,000 hours to make, embarked on a tour of libraries, museums, and other sites in Rhode Island, which was coordinated by the Tourism Council.
- The Tourism Council worked with local city and town planners in the Blackstone Valley as they prepared their community comprehensive plan.
- Robert Billington worked with United Artists of Taunton to produce a half-hour TV special on the Blackstone Valley.
- Blackstone Valley was featured in the Boston Globe and Yankee Magazine.
- Holly Begley of the Slater Mill and Janice O'Donnell of the Children's Museum were invited to the White House by First Lady Barbara Bush to receive general operating support awards.
- Out-of-state buses from New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut brought visitors to the Blackstone Valley
- The Tourism Council sold baseball caps and T-shirts with the Blackstone River Valley logo along with *The Fiber that Wove Americas Spirit* and *The Working River* music cassette by Pendragon.
- Blackstone Valley's chicken-family-style dinners were highlighted in *Yankee Magazine*
- The Tourism Council coordinated a *Working River* fundraiser at Slater Mill. The new video, *The Fiber that Wove Americas Spirit*, was shown and Pendragon performed songs from their new music cassette, *The Working River*.
- The Tourism Council was advertised in *Yankee Magazine*, *Yankee Magazine Travel Guide*, *the Original New England Guide*, *New England Group Tour Magazine*, *New England Travel Tour Guide* and *VISTAS* published by the *Pennsylvania Bus Association*.
- Robert Billington spoke to over 30 groups about tourism in the Blackstone Valley this year.
- Over 27 group tours visited the Blackstone Valley in 1990.
- A grant of \$4,800 was received from the Rhode Island Foundation.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council produced the first map of the Valley designed by Accuarts of Providence.
- The Tourism Council participated in the Groden Center/Mazda Bike Race.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$110,182 for 1990.

1991

- The Tourism Council moved its headquarters to larger office space at the Blackstone Valley Electric Company building on Route 116 in Lincoln, RI.
- Gov. Bruce Sundlun took a fundraising tour on the Blackstone River and donated toward the Council's fundraising efforts to build a riverboat for touring the different sections of the Blackstone River.
- Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission approved \$250,000 in funding to the Visitor's Center in Pawtucket.
- Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission approved a \$10,000 grant and a \$25,000 grant for the construction of the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- Sixteen fall foliage riverboat rides were held, leaving from the Pawtucket Harbor.
- The first "Turn It Around With Tourism" teleconference was held at Bryant College in conjunction with South County Tourism, RI Division of Tourism, Johnson and Wales University, University of Rhode Island, Bryant College, and the Small Business Development Center.
- A comprehensive 23-town event collection and event calendar project was developed under contract with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission.
- Two public motorcoach tours of the National Heritage Corridor were organized in November.
- The Tourism Council offered four train excursions through the Blackstone Valley on the Providence & Worcester Railroad.
- The Tourism Council sponsored the first annual Blackstone Valley Christmas Craft Fair at the offices of Blackstone Valley Electric Company.
- The Tourism Council coordinated the first annual "Santa on the River" event, bringing Santa into the Valley by boat on the Pawtucket River.
- Robert Billington attended the Bristol County Travel Development Council travel show in Hyannis, Massachusetts and the Pennsylvania Bus Association travel show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.
- The Rhode Island Foundation awarded a grant to Louise Lind to do research on the Rev. William Blackstone.
- *Something New – Something Different* was the new message from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- *Destination Blackstone River Valley* was put on banners and the new theme was: *Visit My Home – Blackstone River Valley*.
- Congressman Jack Reed, Congressman Ron Machtley, Senator Claiborne Pell, and Senator John Chafee accepted our request to be honorary chairmen of the "Build the Boat Campaign".
- The first International Steamboat Muster was planned for August 21-23 in Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council published a brochure written by Louis Lind called *William Blackstone, Sage of the Wilderness*.
- A new six-panel, four-color promotional brochure was developed by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Four Fall Foliage train trips on the Providence & Worcester Railroad were held in October.
- The song *The Working River* won second runner up in the Best Local Song category in the Celtic/Irish category of the Boston Music Awards. The song was commissioned by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and was written by Mary Lee Drouin and performed by the musical group Pendragon.

- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council celebrated their annual meeting at their new offices at the Blackstone Valley Electric Company in Lincoln in September. Luther Blount was inducted into the William Blackstone Society and Betty Johnson, James Wheaton, Denise Panichas, and Ben Mondor were also honored. Governor Sundlun was the honored guest culminating in a ribbon-cutting ceremony.
- Glass bottom boat tours leaving from the former Parent's Marina were added to the events for Oktoberfest in Pawtucket.
- Governor Bruce Sundlun took a tour on the Blackstone River with Rhode Island officials between the Ashton and Albion Dams in October.
- Two motorcoach tours of the Blackstone Valley were planned for October. The historically-narrated tours were led by a National Park Service Ranger.
- A conference on rural tourism called *Turn It Around With Tourism* was held in November at Bryant College and was shared at locations in 44 states by a satellite hook-up from Bryant College.
- The Blackstone River Valley Crafts Fair was held in December at the Blackstone Valley Electric Company auditorium.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council published a *Christmas in the Valley* brochure.
- Santa arrived by boat at Parent's Marina off School St. in Pawtucket and traveled to City Hall in downtown Pawtucket followed by a fleet of decorated cars. The new event was sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- The U. S. Senate approved \$2.55 million dollars for the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor. The funding is for the Interior Appropriations Bill for FY 1992 to highlight the area's role in the American Industrial Revolution.
- The Cumberland Town Council awarded \$8,000 to Largess Forestry to start trimming trees in the 2-acre Valley Falls Heritage Park on Broad Street, Valley Falls. The finished park will cost approximately \$800,000.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Pawtucket Preservation Society sponsored Pawtucket Harbor River Cruises in June on a glass-bottom boat provided by Luther Blount of Blount Marine. Celebrity tour guides led the tours.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council hosted state tourism officials who went on a Whistlestop Tour and luncheon at Lincoln Greyhound Park in May as part of National Tourism Week.
- The Cumberland Recreation Department and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council sponsored a tour of the Monastery Grounds in Cumberland in June.
- The Cumberland Company was awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission to create a series of projects based on the history of the Blackstone Valley.
- The new Cumberland Company Theater at The Monastery was christened as the Billington Theater in July.
- U. S. Senator Pell visited the Valley Falls Heritage Park with town officials.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$109,596 in 1991.

1992

- A *Regional Comprehensive Tourism Guide* for the Blackstone Valley was published.
- *Events of the Week*, a regular media release, was sent to over 300 media outlets.
- The Tourism Council organized the *Comeback Coalition*, a group that would galvanize over four dozen nonprofit and for-profit organizations to work together to re-make the image of Pawtucket.
- The Steamboat Muster was the focal point of the *Comeback Coalition*.
- The First Annual International Steamboat Muster was held August 21-23 in Pawtucket, co-coordinated by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The Muster attracted 20 steamboats from the United States and Canada and also included a Civil War Encampment, a Captain's Dinner, music, entertainment, dancing, costumed participants, a free concert by the U. S. Navy 18-piece Navy Show Band, the Pawtucket Rangers Fife and Drum Corps, exhibits at the Pawtucket Children's Museum and steamboat-themed movies at the Pawtucket Library.
- The Rhode Island Department of Economic Development, statewide regional tourism councils, and Lt. Governor Roger Begin worked together on the development of a Visitor Signage program.
- In March, Mayor Robert Metivier of Pawtucket negotiated a letter of intent for the City of Pawtucket to purchase the former Peerless building in Pawtucket for \$625,000 from Fleet National Bank with the plan to turn it into a Blackstone Valley Visitor Center for the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor.
- The City of Pawtucket awarded a \$250,000 grant from Blackstone River Valley Heritage Corridor Commission to open a Visitor Center at the former Peerless building on Main Street.
- The Tourism Council began the first internship program with Bryant College.
- The process of working with RIDEM, RIDOT, and FHA to re-open the I-295 Information Centers under the jurisdiction of the BVTC began.
- The Tourism Council began the first full-time internship program with Sawyer School.
- The Johnson and Wales senior marketing class was involved in event planning for 1993.
- The Tourism Council promoted the Blackstone Valley Region at the Pennsylvania Bus Association Group Leader Show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.
- The second official Blackstone River Valley, RI map was produced.
- The Tourism Council presented Blackstone riverboat tours on a glass-bottomed boat owned by Luther Blount of Blount Marine in Warren. Partners included the Town of Cumberland, Citizen's Bank, Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, and the Cumberland Company for the Performing Arts. The first day of tours was a floating planning session with Governor Sundlun and 180 public officials from Rhode Island. The Cumberland Company performed on the banks of the Blackstone River. Twenty-seven riverboat tours on the glass-bottom boat were held over the three-day period.
- The Tourism Council worked to secure a Lincoln-Mercury car commercial for filming at Lincoln Woods State Park.
- The Tourism Council participated in the Blackstone Valley Exposition '92 at Lincoln Mall presented by Cumberland Company for the Performing Arts.

- The second Annual *Turn it Around With Tourism Conference*, a national network teleconference devoted to the organization of rural tourism initiatives, was held at Bryant College and organized by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Over 700 people attended the *Travel Experiences Trade Show* at Lincoln Greyhound Park for group tour planners in October.
- Work was begun with Smithfield, Glocester, and Burrillville to expand the National Heritage Corridor boundaries.
- The Tourism Council developed and coordinated a work/education program called the Youth Tourism Development Team for economically disadvantaged youth for the Northern Rhode Island Private Industry Council.
- The Valley Falls Heritage Park, designed by Gates, Leighton & Associates, was financed by a \$400,000 grant from the Department of Environmental Management. an amount matched by town funds. Thus far, only a portion of the 2.3 acres have been developed. The Tourism Council assisted in the dedication of the Valley Falls Heritage Park, a 2.3 acre site of a 19th century textile mill which was developed with local, state and federal funding.
- The Tourism Council coordinated three motorcoach tours of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor that were open to the public. The tours ran from the Slater Mill in Pawtucket to Waters Farm in Sutton, Massachusetts, and included dinner at Wright's Dairy Farm.
- Robert Billington attended a tourism conference in Kansas City, MO on new economic options for rural America.
- A Russian TV crew visited Slater Mill, the Pawtucket Red Sox and Jaswell Farm.
- The Tourism Council published a comprehensive *Calendar of Events*
- Edward S. Foss of M&F Case Co. and David Gulvin, President of Blackstone Valley Electric Company were named recipients of the 1992 Governor's Tourism Award for the Blackstone Valley. They were presented with the award at the Rhode Island State Tourism Luncheon in May.
- The Citizens Bank Environmental Fund awarded a grant of \$1,000 to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council towards building the 49-passenger riverboat, the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- Gov. Bruce Sundlun was one of many state and local officials who took a tour of the Blackstone Valley on a glass-bottomed boat owned by Luther Blount.
- A delegation from Ocean State Power of Burrillville visited Blount Marine of Warren to check on the construction progress of the new boat, the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. Ocean State Power contributed \$5,000 of the \$80,000 cost of building the boat which will travel on the Blackstone River.
- The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission awarded The Friends of the Blackstone a \$10,000 grant to go towards river exploration and clean-up. John Marsland, President of the group, said the grant would be used towards the purchase of 12 canoes, a canoe trailer, life preservers, paddles and liability insurance.
- The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission set aside \$1.6 million dollars to develop tourism in the area including \$650,000 to develop visitor centers in Woonsocket and Pawtucket.
- David H. Gulvin, President of the Blackstone Valley Electric Company, was inducted into the William Blackstone Society at the Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. James Kugler and John Marsland, co-founders of Friends of the Blackstone, received recognition as did Edna

Kent, past president of the Gloucester Heritage Society. Special Recognition Awards were presented to the Rhode Island Private Industry Council for its support of the Youth Tourism Development Team. George Beaubien of Woonsocket received an award for his group's work for the betterment of Woonsocket. Marcia Green of the Pawtucket Times received a Pursuit of Excellence Award for reporting on tourism. The City of Pawtucket received an award for working with the Comeback Coalition and the International Steamboat Muster.

- Two fall riverboat tours leaving from School Street in Pawtucket were held as part of Oktoberfest in Pawtucket. Horse-drawn hayrides were also offered.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council offered a *Fall Foliage Guide* listing different ways to enjoy the fall foliage season in the Blackstone Valley.
- Forty-nine young members of the Northern Rhode Island Private Industry Council Summer Youth Employment Council participated in transforming the old State Pier in Pawtucket for the International Steamboat Muster which was held in August.
- The Tourism Council has plans to build a 49-passenger river boat. Golden Hammer Pins were sold for \$10 and included a free ride on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. On the drawing board at Blount Marine in Warren is a fiberglass-type boat, 32½ feet long, and nearly 13 feet wide with seating for 44 adults or 65 schoolchildren. It will be accessible to the handicapped. Construction was scheduled to begin as soon as the fundraising drive showed signs of being successful.
- Four Fall Foliage Train trips on the Providence & Worcester Railroad leaving from Cumberland were held in October.
- An excellent series of articles by Betty Johnson and James Wheaton on the history of steamboating in Pawtucket were featured in the Pawtucket Times during the month of August.
- The 2nd Annual Christmas in the Valley Arts and Crafts Show was held at the Blackstone Valley Electric Company in Lincoln in November.
- Santa Claus arrived at the State Pier by riverboat in December and over 500 people lined the Pier to welcome him.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$128,013 for 1992.

1993

- A year-long celebration was planned to mark the 200th anniversary of Slater Mill.
- *Experience the Making of America* logo was designed by Gates Leighton Associates of East Providence to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the Slater Mill.
- The name *Blackstone Valley Explorer* was chosen from 150 entries by the public as the new name of the riverboat being built by Luther Blount of Blount Marine of Warren, RI.
- Golden Hammer pins were sold to support construction of the 49-passenger riverboat, the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- The New England Labor History Conference was held at Woonsocket City Hall in April 1993, co-sponsored by Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor and other Valley organizations. Over 150 people attended the Conference.
- In June, Robert Billington took Woonsocket city officials on a tour of the Blackstone River in Woonsocket on an inflatable boat.
- In January, Ocean State Power of Burrillville gave a \$5,000 donation towards construction of the 49-passenger riverboat, the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. Dozens of businesses worked to match the grant funds provided by the National Heritage Corridor Commission. By November, the \$35,000 match was completed.
- An official Laying of the Keel was held in March for the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*, the new 49-passenger riverboat being built by Blount Marine of Warren for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- A preview of the 21.5-mile bike path from Uxbridge, MA to Roger Williams Park was held in June.
- The 49-passenger *Blackstone Valley Explorer*, the first riverboat on the Blackstone River in 170 years, was launched. The first tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* left from Pawtucket Harbor. The Explorer then moved to Cumberland and then Woonsocket for tours
- Senator Pell and Governor Sundlun rode on the *Explorer* in Valley Falls.
- Representatives from the Amber Valley in England attended the Bicentennial Celebration in October of the American Industrial Revolution in the Blackstone Valley including Charles Cutting, Mayor of Amber Valley and his wife Jenny Cutting, former Mayor of Ripley.
- *Yankee Magazine* featured an 18-page color story on the Blackstone Valley.
- A Rubber Ducky Race was held in the Blackstone River. Over 900 rubber ducks were dumped into the river from the John Street Bridge, raising funds for the Blackstone Valley.
- Organized the *Making of America Celebration Tour* visiting the nine cities and towns in the Blackstone Valley to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Slater Mill. An official delegation from the Amber Valley were honored guests on the tour.
- Published Fall *Foliage Guide to the Blackstone Valley*.
- Blackstone Valley was featured in the Sunday edition of The Boston Globe.
- Fleet Bank donates \$15,000 towards Celebration Tour of the Blackstone Valley

- A 30'x70' sandy cove was developed at the site of the State Pier in Pawtucket. Work is being done by local youths participating in a Northern RI Private Industry Council program overseen by the Tourism Council.
- A cruise on the Vista Jubilee of Blount Marine in Warren leaving from the State Pier in Pawtucket is a highlight of the 2nd International Steamboat Muster in October.
- South County Tourism and Blackstone Valley Tourism organized a Rhode Island Bed and Breakfast Bus Tour that toured bed and breakfasts in Newport and South County.
- The Rhode Island Quilt, designed and made by Cumberland resident Gail Antunes, was on display at the White House over Christmas
- Robert Billington attended the National Tour Association convention in Atlantic City, NJ for the first time.
- Robert Billington announced that he will seek Federal money under the National Highway Transportation Act of 1991 to build a boat landing at Pawtucket Pier for a future water shuttle from Pawtucket to Providence.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council showcased the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* at the RI Convention Center grand opening.
- Tourism Council coordinated meetings with the RI Transportation Enhancement Advisory Committee on how to spend \$3 million dollars each year for the next five years through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1992.
- Tourism Council scheduled a seminar on "How to Start a Bed and Breakfast" at the King's Inn in Lincoln.
- Musical group Pendragon and Mark Joel Levitt performed his new play 'Allison and the Blackstone" at Slater Mill to mark the 200th Anniversary.
- The Tourism Council organized a motorcoach tour in May of the Blackstone Valley which included a tour of the Slater Mill and a chicken family-style dinner at Wright's.
- A Civil War encampment was held at Chase Farm in May and co-sponsored by the Tourism Council and the Committee to Keep Lincoln Rural.
- Development of the Valley Falls Heritage Park on Broad Street, Central Falls should be completed by the end of 1993. Completed development will include picnic tables, historical signage, and re-location of the Stillwater Bridge from Smithfield.
- Tourism Council offered the video "The Fiber That Wove America's Spirit" to organizations in the area to showcase historic sites, cultural attractions and history of the Blackstone Valley.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council sponsored the Rhode Island Tourism Unity Luncheon in May at King's Inn in Lincoln in Celebration of National Tourism Week.
- The first full-colored oversized postcard of the Blackstone Valley was available.
- A new Blackstone River Valley Guide will be published four times a year in the Rhode Island Vacation Planner in partnership with the Tourism Council and the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce.
- A series of self-guided tours were available from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Tours included: The Heritage Tour, The Shoppers Tour, The Industry Tour, and the Church Tour.
- Sally Bruckshaw, marketing development officer for the Borough Council in the Amber Valley in England, visited the Blackstone Valley in June of 1993
- The 225th Anniversary of Samuel Slater's birthday was celebrated at the Slater Mill in June as part of the 200th anniversary of the Birthplace of the

American Industrial Revolution.

- Blackstone Canal Conservancy group was started by Val Stegemoen.
- Robert Billington and other officials discussed the idea of having a toy museum in the former Peerless Department store in cooperation with Hasbro and calling it America's Toy Museum.
- The Tourism Council sold Golden Hammer pins for \$10 to fund a 49-passenger riverboat for tours on the Blackstone River.
- The Cumberland Company officially opened the new Blackstone River Theater in Central Falls in July.
- The Tourism Council sold a *Fantastic Things to Do* coupon book as part of a creative fund-raising effort to raise money for the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- The Tourism Council was awarded a \$40,000 loan through the RI Department of Economic Development to use towards paying for the construction of the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- Santa Claus arrived at the School Street Pier by boat on his way to light the Christmas tree at Pawtucket City Hall. The Tourism Council arranged his visit and also organized a contest for decorated boats to accompany him up the Pawtucket River. Residents were also encouraged to decorate their cars and prizes were awarded.
- Seventy exhibitors attended the Travel Experiences Expo at Lincoln Park.
- The Blackstone Valley was the location for the League of Rhode Island Historical Societies day-long event in October.
- Three fall foliage train trips on the Providence & Worcester Railroad were held in October. The tours were also sponsored by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.
- Rhode Island and New England Products were featured at Harrod's Department Store in London and in Harrod's Christmas catalog. Products featured included Monet jewelry, A.T. Cross pens and Hasbro toys as part of a Christmas in New England theme for 1993.
- Motorcoach tours of the Blackstone Valley and *Explorer* boat tours were planned for September, sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Blackstone Canal Conservancy.
- Peter Conway and Conway Tours of Cumberland were featured in the November issue of *Destinations* Magazine.
- Area youth recruited through the Northern Rhode Island Private Industry Council were hired for summer jobs to clean up the State Pier in Pawtucket prior to the Pawtucket Steamboat Muster in August.
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* was featured in *Destinations* Magazine in November 1993.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$171,858 for 1993.

1994

- The Blackstone Valley/Amber Valley Compact was signed in Belper, England. A delegation from Blackstone Valley traveled to Amber Valley to celebrate the signing and participated in a "twinning ceremony" with Belper, England.
- The RiverClassroom program on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* offered history, ecology and wildlife education to students. The Pawtucket Credit Union sponsored the first RiverClassroom on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- While visiting the Blackstone Valley in November, President Bill Clinton was presented with a PawSox hat and a key to the City of Pawtucket by Mayor Bob Metivier along with other mementos of his visit. Robert Billington presented the President with a framed photo of Slater Mill and a Mill Folks doll made by Park Ranger Suzanne Buchanan. The President also visited the Portuguese Social Club in Pawtucket.
- Factory tours in the Blackstone Valley were planned for Tourism Week in May.
- An episode of *Entertainment Tonight* was filmed in Pawtucket with Mayor Bob Metivier referencing a comment that was made by a character on the TV show *Nurses*. The script was written by Rhode Island native Danny Smith, and he admitted he was only poking fun at the City of Pawtucket.
- Landscape architects Gates, Leighton & Associates of East Providence received an American Society of Landscape Architects Award for an 18-month \$50,000 project that showed how the area could be enhanced by future development in Pawtucket, Woonsocket and the small mill villages that make up the Blackstone Valley.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council introduced their first postcard available to visitors. The color postcard showed the new 49-passenger riverboat, the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*, which began its first season of operation in the spring.
- The RI Rivers Council, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, and the Friends of the Blackstone held a regional meeting to seek public input on the policies and classifications plan for the Blackstone, Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck Rivers.
- The Pawtucket Riverfront Development Commission held its first meeting on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority finalized plans to have a satellite office with a waiting room for bus patrons at the Peerless Building at 175 Main Street, Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council co-sponsored a celebration of President Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Mall over President's Day weekend in February.
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* offered tours this year leaving from Valley Falls, Uxbridge, Echo Lake in Burrillville, Cumberland, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket.
- Konica cameras were donated to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council by Konica Imaging Business Products for a photography contest sponsored by the Tourism Council.
- Sheila Disarro was hired as a RiverClassroom ecologist on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* with a \$12,500 grant from the Narragansett Bay Commission.
- Local author Louise Lind published her first book *William Blackstone, Sage of the Wilderness*.
- A year-long series of events celebrating William Blackstone was planned by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor started a television series about the history of the Blackstone Valley which aired monthly on cable

- television. The series was hosted by National Park Service Ranger Chuck Arning.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council joined the American Bus Association, one of the largest tour and travel organizations, to give the Blackstone Valley wider exposure to hundreds of destination marketing organizations.
 - Mary Lou Moran joined the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council as a group tour coordinator.
 - The Blackstone River National Heritage Corridor committed \$8,000 to do a study on the pedestrian and vehicular traffic on Roosevelt Avenue in downtown Pawtucket near the newly-proposed Visitors Center.
 - The 3rd Annual International Steamboat Muster was held in August at the pier on School Street. Highlights of the Steamboat Muster included a concert by the U. S. Navy Band, a Civil War and Boy Scout Encampment, a rowboat regatta, pony rides, and steamboat demonstrations. There were also boat tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* and a dinner cruise to Narragansett Bay on the Bay Queen.
 - The Tourism Council hosted officials from Amber Valley with BBC and TCI documentaries planned.
 - Historic Celebration Bus Tours were planned to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of Slater Mill. Motorcoaches traveled to all 9 communities in the Blackstone Valley in October.
 - *Explorer* tours featured Haunted River Tours in October.
 - Fleet Bank gave a \$14,000 donation to the Tourism Council to promote the *Experience the Making of America* motorcoach tour.
 - Cyril Maskery, President of the Belper Historical Society, and his wife visited the Blackstone Valley in September to meet with Mayor Bob Metivier and members of the community.
 - Mayor John Nelson and his wife Maureen of Belper, England visited Blackstone Valley in October to strengthen ties between Belper and Blackstone Valley.
 - Sally Bruckshaw, a tourism officer for the Amber Valley, and her husband visited Pawtucket in June at the invitation of Robert Billington.
 - Sally Bruckshaw visited Blackstone Valley in October to promote Amber Valley at the Travel Experiences Trade Show at Lincoln Park.
 - A tour was developed of Slater Mill Pond for the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* to leave from the dock at Slater Mill.
 - *A Christmas in the Valley* brochure was printed
 - The Niagara Prince, 175-foot-long cruise ship built by Blount Marine of Warren made its maiden voyage from Warren to the pier in Pawtucket before being sent to the Erie Canal.
 - The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council hosted the National Trust for Historic Preservation Tour in the fall as part of the Trust's 48th National Preservation Conference from October 26-30. The tour included a tour of the Slater Mill led by author David Macaulay, and also included a tour on the 49-passenger riverboat, the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
 - John DeVillare, a regional administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, visited the Blackstone Valley and took a ride on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
 - Robert Billington, along with Mayor Tom Lazieh of Central Falls, Pawtucket Mayor Robert Metivier, Lincoln Town Administrator Burt Stallwood, and Smithfield Town Administrator Gloria Nerny, traveled to the Amber Valley in England from June 8-13 to learn more about the birthplace of Samuel Slater and to cement the twinning relationship between the Amber Valley and the Blackstone Valley.
 - Ocean State Charities Trust awarded the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council a grant for \$2,500 to develop study materials for the River Studies program on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.

- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* welcomed its 10,000th passenger in June.
- A new tour of the Blackstone River on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*, "Ghosts Along the Blackstone", was developed by Norm Beauregard of the Cumberland Company. The tour picks up passengers in Woonsocket above the Thundermist Dam.
- Blackstone Valley was featured in the media for many different ways to enjoy fall foliage: by car, by train, by foot, by air, by riverboat and by canoe.
- A new handicapped access ramp was installed on banks of Blackstone River near Slater Mill Historic Site
- The Tourism Council's RiverClassroom River Studies Program was held every Saturday at 9am on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. The environmental river studies featured hands-on activities and discussion of the ecosystem and qualities of the Blackstone River.
- The Tourism Council received a \$12,000 grant from the Narragansett Bay Commission for the RiverClassroom program.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism received \$10,000 from the RI State Senate and an additional \$5,000 from the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act for new docks in Pawtucket for the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- Valley residents welcomed Santa as he arrived by boat at the Pawtucket Pier, off School Street. Then a motorcade of cars traveled to the historic Looff Carousel at Slater Park for Christmas at the Park.
- The Champlin Foundation awarded more than \$130,000 to the Old Slater Mill for restoration and repairs per Robert Billington, acting President of the Old Slater Mill Association.
- The Senate gave final approval to a bill that provided \$1.05 million to cover expenses of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* ran boat trips on the Narrow River in South County this year. Tours also took place on the Pawtucket, Providence, Seekonk, and Blackstone Rivers.
- In 1994 the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* hosted 237 school tours, 100 ecology tours, 137 historical tours, 333 public tours, 80 group tours, 14 charters, and 60 entertainment tours.
- The Blackstone River Theatre on Broad Street in Central Falls, formerly the home of the Cumberland Company, was re-opened as a musical venue by Russell Gussetti of Pendragon.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council organized a series of tours to local businesses to commemorate National Tourism Week (May 1 thru May 7).
- The Amber Valley of England was featured at the Travel Experiences Trade Show which was held at Lincoln Greyhound Park in Lincoln in October.
- Robert Billington proposed an idea for two water shuttles to go between Pawtucket and Providence to help reduce traffic congestion on Route 95.
- Approximately 25,000 people attended Oktoberfest held on Roosevelt Avenue and grounds of the Slater Mill in October.
- U.S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt met with Robert Billington of the Tourism Council and other officials. Secretary Babbitt took a ride on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. He also had a tour of the area on a Conway bus and was given the key to the City of Central Falls.
- Robert Billington, along with Heritage Corridor Park Ranger Suzanne Buchanan and State Tourism Director David DePetrillo, met Massachusetts Tourism Director Abbie Goodman at the Massachusetts/Rhode Island border on the Blackstone Valley Bike Path. The meeting was held to show continued support of the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor.

- Robert Billington was named the Clemente Narcisse Greater Pawtucket Citizen of the Year for 1994 by the Kiwanis Club of Cumberland.
- *Blackstone Valley Explorer* set a new record with 23,949 passengers in 1994. Since it's launching in 1993 the *Explorer* has carried 29,849 passengers
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$301,069 for 1994.

1995

- The Blackstone Valley's first trolley in 60 years was purchased in partnership with Conway/Grayline.
- The River Classroom program was developed that offered students rides on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* along with lessons in the history of the Blackstone River, ecology and wildlife.
- Robert Billington was elected President of the Old Slater Mill Association in February 1995.
- Edwin Bearss, a National Park Service Chief Historian, spoke at the Blackstone Valley Electric Company auditorium in February 1995 on the Civil War and President Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Bearss is the author of 12 books on the Civil War.
- A Civil War Expo was held at the Lincoln Mall in February. Robert Hunt Rhodes, whose memoirs were quoted extensively in Ken Burns Civil War series *The Civil War*, attended and sold copies of his book.
- A Mardi Gras celebration including the crowning of the Mardi Gras Queen, a dinner, a fashion show and activities for children was held in Woonsocket in February.
- William J. Brew III of Narragansett was appointed as the agency's new River Studies Program ecologist in April.
- As part of its 10th anniversary celebration the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is publishing a Blackstone Valley Visitor's Resource Guide
- The City of Woonsocket was awarded a \$350,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop a museum devoted to the history of labor in the Blackstone Valley.
- William Blackstone, the first settler of the Blackstone Valley, was honored at the Old Slater Mill on May 5, the 400th Anniversary of his birth. Relatives Elizabeth Blackstone and Dr. Robert Blackstone from Sacramento, California, direct descendants of Blackstone, attended the dinner. A series of events honoring the Rev. Blackstone were held throughout the day.
- A photo contest in honor of William Blackstone's 400th Birthday was held in the Blackstone Valley. The theme of the contest was to highlight children and families enjoying the cultural, historical, natural, educational, recreational or commercial sites in the Blackstone Valley.
- An event was held on March 6 at the Blackstone Monument in Valley Falls to mark William Blackstone's 400th birthday. Rev. Jeffrey Jencks of St. John's Episcopal Church offered a prayer. Many of Blackstone's descendants were present.
- Robert Billington of the Tourism Council and the Pawtucket Rotary Club formulated ideas to develop America's Toy Museum of the World to be based at the former Peerless Building in Pawtucket.
- Lincoln Almond was inaugurated as Rhode Island's Governor in January and he said he "was proud to say I'm from Central Falls."
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was represented at the RI State House at festivities honoring Governor Almond's Inauguration as Governor. Information about the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* was passed out at the celebration which was open to the public.
- The Blackstone Valley started having a nationwide audience. The Arts and Entertainment Network picked up videos which were locally produced by the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor and featured them on the History Channel.

- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council announced its first International Trade mission to Montreal. Anne Conway and Mary Lou Morrisette Moran represented the Blackstone Valley and met with 200 Canadian travel agents.
- A fanciful map showcasing the voyage of the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* up and down the Blackstone River was designed by Neville Lassotovitch, a Barrington-based artist and graphic designer.
- A new book, *Belper, Looking Into the Past*, by Audrey Barrass, went on sale recently at the offices of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Belper, England and Pawtucket, Rhode Island are twin cities.
- Robert Billington attended the Rhode Island White House Conference on Tourism held at the Radisson Airport Hotel in April 1995. The Conference preceded the White House Conference on Tourism which was held in Washington, DC in October 1995 at the White House. Robert Billington was chosen to attend the White House Conference in D.C. as a delegate from Rhode Island.
- A Blackstone River Festival was held on May 19-22, 1995 on the banks of the Blackstone River in the Central Falls/Valley Falls area. Highlights included all-day paddling skills classes, an evening concert of sea shanties with the Wickford Express, *Allison and the Blackstone*, storytelling by Marc Levitt, with music by Pendragon, *Blackstone Valley Explorer* riverboat rides and free walking tours and storytelling at the Blackstone Heritage Park.
- The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor celebrated its 10-year anniversary in March at the Woonsocket Depot.
- Citizens Bank presented a \$3,000 check to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for disadvantaged youth to take part in the ecological/cultural boat excursions on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- An adventurous journey called Dinosaur Discovery Tours led by Dinosaur Detective Dick Drake (Bob Calvert) and his assistant explorer, Sir Oliver Ellsworth Worthington, were held in May on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* leaving from the dock in Central Falls.
- Students studying ecology boarded the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* to study the ecology of the Blackstone River. The boat was recently reconstructed to allow access under low bridges.
- A series of public hearings were held in the Blackstone Valley in May 1995 about the proposed 22-mile Blackstone Valley Bike Path which will connect to the 14.5-mile East Bay Bike Path.
- Plans were made to have the former Peerless Building on Main Street in Pawtucket be the new home of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The Planning Department of the City of Pawtucket had offices on the 3rd floor. The Pawtucket Rotary Club planned to develop a Toy Museum on the 1st floor along with a Visitor Center for the National Park Service.
- Free boat tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* leaving from Central Falls were offered to Central Falls city residents as part of the city's Centennial Celebration.
- The City of Central Falls, the Lincoln Public Works Department and the Department of Environmental Management cleaned up the Blackstone Canal for public recreational use.
- Robert Billington, Director of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, announced the city's worst-kept secret, the filming of the movie *American Buffalo* by Pawtucket native, Director Michael Corrente. The movie, starring Dustin Hoffman, was scheduled to film in the Pawtucket area very soon. It's estimated that the filming of *American Buffalo* by Pawtucket native

Michael Corrente would bring in approximately \$1 million dollars to the local economy. Dennis Franz and Dustin Hoffman would star in the movie.

- Eighty-four-year-old Mr. Savastano cast a metal image of a buffalo which will be the centerpiece of the Pawtucket Walk of Fame on Exchange Street in Pawtucket in front of the newly-named Riverside Diner. Mr. Savastano has been casting images in metal for 60 years and was asked to work on the project by Leo Leclerc, a Board member of the Tourism Council. Mr. Savastano also made a buffalo pin which will be on sale at Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Director Michael Corrente, as well as Dustin Hoffman, Dennis Franz and Sean Nelson, stars of the film *American Buffalo*, put their hands into cement at the newly-created Pawtucket Hall of Fame on Exchange St., Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council offered walking tours of the set and location where the movie *American Buffalo* was filmed. Tours are \$2 per person and the six-passenger bicycle was available for rent.
- The Tenth Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was held at the King's Inn in Lincoln in September. Louise Lind and the late Clinton Johnson were named to the William Blackstone Society by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Shining Star Award winners included Paul Prachniak, Bob Schultz, Janice Kissinger, Gene Conway, John Lefrancois, Jack Lawhead, Helen Moroney, Barbara Kissick, the Franco-American Jubilé, and the Civil War Encampment in Lincoln.
- A western-style barbeque dinner cruise was held on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. The tours departed from the docks located on Broad St, Central Falls.
- The Tourism Council sponsored a Fall Foliage Train Trip on the Providence & Worcester Railroad round-trip from Cumberland to Worcester in October.
- Attendees at the annual Tourism Unity Luncheon at the Westin Hotel were treated to a special video presentation by Michael Corrente on *American Buffalo*. It was announced that tourists spent a total of \$1.47 billion dollars in Rhode Island in 1994.
- Pat Salisbury of Rapid Printing received the Blackstone Valley Tourism Award at the annual Tourism Unity Luncheon held at the Westin Hotel in May.
- Robert Billington was appointed by President Clinton to the White House Conference for Travel and Tourism which will be held on October 30-31 in Washington, DC.
- John Nelson, the Mayor of Belper, England visited the Slater Mill and the Blackstone Valley in September. Mayor Nelson and his wife were guests of the Tourism Council on the Providence & Worcester Railroad on the fall train trip to Worcester sponsored by the Tourism Council.
- British officials from the Amber Valley in England were featured at the Travel Experiences 1995 Travel and Tourism Exposition at Lincoln Park in October.
- Representatives from the Blackstone Valley, including Council President Robert Billington and local mayors, visited the Amber Valley in England from June 7-13 to foster the Blackstone Valley-Amber Valley relationship.
- State tourism professionals visited Gloucester in May as part of the annual Whistle-Stop Tour sponsored by the State Department of Tourism, as a highlight of the Blackstone Valley portion of the tour. A scavenger hunt was held highlighting the many antique shops in Chepachet.

- A new handicapped accessible ramp was installed on the banks of the Blackstone River in back of Pawtucket City Hall. Free tickets were given out by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for rides on the *Explorer* to handicapped residents to encourage them to take a ride on the *Explorer* and use the new handicapped accessible ramp.
- Bob Calvert, a Pawtucket native who has appeared on *Spencer for Hire* and *As the World Turns*, will perform Broadway show tunes on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in June.
- The Hartford Courant featured the Blackstone Valley in a multi-page story in the Sunday edition. The story featured the Slater Mill, the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* and the Brown & Hopkins Country Store.
- A slot machine covered in mud and estimated to be over 40 years old was found during a Blackstone River clean-up by Ryan Billington and friend Eric Hogan. Tourism Director Robert Billington thinks that the slot machine was thrown into the river during a gambling raid in the Broad Street, Cumberland area years ago.
- "A Search for William Blackstone" weekend was held on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* with tours leaving from the dock in Central Falls. Local actor David Ely portrayed William Blackstone.
- William Blackstone's 400th Birthday Party was held on March 5th at the Slater Mill Historic Site. A 17th century style dinner was served and included Cheate bread, boiled capons, roast chine of pork, minced turkey pie and apple tart.
- Robert Billington, David Macaulay and Al Klyberg were inducted into the William Blackstone Society in 1995 at Twin River in September.
- Paul Kazarian of Japonica Partners donated \$10,000 towards the mortgage on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. Mr. and Mrs. Kazarian were given the Explorer Cup for their generous donation.
- The Niagara Prince, the 170 ft. cruise ship built by Luther Blount and Blount Marine, sailed up Narragansett Bay and docked at the School Street Pier in Pawtucket in August. Luther Blount brought the cruise ship up from Newport to test ballast tanks on the voyage.
- Providence Journal reporter M. Charles Baskt took a ride on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* on a "Wilderness Tour" through Central Falls, Cumberland, and Lincoln.
- The Town of Lincoln purchased Hearthside House on Breakneck Hill Road in Lincoln for \$300,000.
- The Tourism Council co-sponsored a two-day heritage event in August with the Manville Sportsmen's Club of Lincoln. The event featured a Minuteman bivouac, a Native American display. A series of Scottish activities were held on Sunday.
- The Franco-American Jubilé was held in Woonsocket in August and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was a co-sponsor.
- Actor David Ely portrayed Samuel Slater for children in the River Classroom program.
- On the 25th Anniversary of Earth Day, many residents in the Blackstone Valley participated in Earth Day clean-ups in the area.
- Mayor Robert Metivier, Mayor Thomas Lazieh, Congressman Patrick Kennedy and Robert Billington greeted the Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt when he visited the Slater Mill and toured the Blackstone Valley National Historic Corridor. He also toured the Blackstone River on the tour boat the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
-

- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* launched its second season of boat tours with a cruise on the Blackstone River behind the Slater Mill historic site. Captain Mary Pat Driscoll joined us as a captain of the *Explorer*. She once captained the boat *Sam Patch*.
- Tours of the historic Blackstone Canal in Central Massachusetts are now available onboard the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*
- Robert Billington was elected to his second term as President of the Old Slater Mill Association. It was announced at the annual meeting of the Slater Mill that a new Visitors Center will open at the former Peerless Building on Main St, Pawtucket in September of 1996.
- Robert Billington was appointed by Governor Almond to serve on the Rhode Island Rivers Council.
- The Tourism Council began selling 1st edition, *Cumberland by the Blackstone – 250 years of Heritage* by Dave Balfour and Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane on behalf of the Town of Cumberland
- A new Derwent Valley Heritage Corridor, based on the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor, was planned in England where Belper is located. Robert Billington first visited Belper, England, which is the birthplace of Samuel Slater, in 1993. An Amber Valley/Blackstone Valley Compact was signed in 1994 by representatives of both organizations.
- The Burrillville High School band performed a world premiere of *Blackstone River Echoes*, which was composed by Robert Clark and commissioned by the Christa McAuliffe Fellowship Program Project.
- John Marsland and the Friends of the Blackstone received a national Make a Difference award sponsored by USA Today for their clean-up work on the Blackstone Canal.
- The 4th Annual Steamboat Muster was held in September 1995 at the State Pier in Pawtucket. A dinner/dance and cruise on the *Vista Jubilee*, built by Luther Blount of Blount Marine, was also held during the weekend of the Steamboat Muster.
- The 1995 Phoenix Award was presented to Robert Billington and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council by the American Society of Travel Writers. The Tourism Council was recognized for efforts in aggressively developing tourism in the Blackstone Valley, which the travel writers noted increased 11% annually, faster than any other region in Rhode Island. In the fiscal year 1994-1995, more than 30 tour companies brought in group tours to the Blackstone Valley.
- More than 10,000 people attended the Opening Day of the 14th Oktoberfest in downtown Pawtucket.
- Robert Kennedy, Jr. and Patrick Kennedy made a strong pitch in October for naming the Blackstone River an American Heritage River.
- Charlie Hall and the Ocean State Follies performed at the Travel Experiences Trade Show at Lincoln Park. The trade show, now in its seventh year and produced by Conway Tours and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, has become a major event in the area.
- Free boat rides on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* were provided by the New England Treatment Company to 570 Woonsocket 5th graders
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer*, the first vessel to ply the waters of the Blackstone River in 147 years, has given tours to 24,000 people since it started tours in 1993.
- Thirty tourists visiting from France enjoyed a tour on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*, a lobster dinner at the Bocce Club, and a visit to the Museum of Work and Culture in October.

- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council purchased a 6-passenger surrey through Cycleworks in Cumberland with funding provided by Citizens Bank, Cumberland Farms, Vanesse Hangen Brustlin, Fournier Jeep Eagle, C and M Realty, H and J Enterprises and the City of Central Falls. The surrey made a debut in the Pawtucket Oktoberfest Parade in October.
- A framed print of Geddes Farm by Lincoln artist Peter Stanton of North Smithfield was raffled off by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in October.
- The Christmas in the Valley brochure for 1995 was produced by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and was available for no charge to the public.
- A three-day Fall Foliage Tour of the Blackstone Valley was featured in the October edition of Yankee Magazine. The tour highlights Wright's Farm Restaurant, Diamond Hill Vineyard and the Slater Mill among other valley highlights.
- John and Rita Fransham, residents of Belper, England, visited the Blackstone Valley for a month and were featured in the Central Falls Centennial Parade flying the Belper flag from their car.
- Santa Claus kicked off "Christmas in the Valley" with his arrival at the Slater Mill in Pawtucket and was welcomed by area children. Park Ranger Suzanne Buchanan read a holiday story titled "A New Coat for Anna". Visitors were asked to donate used coats in good condition which were donated to needy residents.
- The American History Showcase shown on the A & E Channel featured the videos on the history of the 20 cities and towns that make up the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor. The videos were produced by Chuck Arning, a Park Ranger at the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor, and cover the cities and towns that straddle the River in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.
- Congressman Patrick Kennedy announced that the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was awarded a grant for \$1,500 to expand its program of providing educational heritage brochures for school children. The grant was awarded by Congress to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- The Blackstone Valley Christmas Trolley gave 45-minute tours of the Blackstone Valley during the holidays. Jayco the clown entertained the children during the tour.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council received a \$10,000 grant from the Rhode Island State Senate for operations.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$333,556 for 1995.

1996

- The Catholic Oak tree which stands near the entrance to the Ann & Hope in Cumberland is a red oak and was once the site of where William Blackstone preached. It was featured in the Notable Rhode Island Tree Calendar of 1996.
- The Tourism Council offered a new program in 1996 aboard the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* called "River in the Classroom" which educated students about the importance of the Blackstone River. Ocean State Power donated \$5,000 to get the program started. The donation started the fifth anniversary of the company's production of its first megawatt of power.
- In May, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council hosted the 45-members and families of the Thornton's Brass Band from Amber Valley, England. The band performed in all nine Blackstone Valley communities as well as Providence to over 4,000 people. The concerts cemented the relationship between the Blackstone Valley and the Amber Valley in England.
- The City of Pawtucket and the Pawtucket Riverfront Commission met in August to consider the future of the parcel of land next to the State Pier in Pawtucket owned by Dr. Paul Healey.
- New round-trip tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* leaving from the Old Oyster House Restaurant in East Providence to the Providence waterfront were offered daily in August by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- State Sen. Sandra Hannaway presented a \$5,000 legislative grant to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in March.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council expanded and relocated their headquarters and full-time Blackstone Valley Visitor Center to 171 Main Street, Pawtucket.
- Dustin Hoffman and Dennis Franz came to Pawtucket to film *American Buffalo*. The Pawtucket Hollywood Walk of Fame commemorated filming *American Buffalo* in Pawtucket with handprints of the stars and director Michael Corrente.
- Film director Michael Corrente was honored at a rally and reception at the Slater Mill shortly before the world premiere of Corrente's film *American Buffalo* at the Showcase Cinema in Warwick. The event was sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- The Tourism Council developed a year-round consumer event calendar which was distributed to 40,000 visitors yearly.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council assisted with the 11th Annual Rhode Island Historic Preservation Conference in Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council produced a free 1996 *Blackstone River Valley Rhode Island Visitor Resource Guide* - the first comprehensive Visitor Guide on the Blackstone Valley.
- The 5th Annual Pawtucket Steamboat Muster, was held in August at the State Pier and featured a Steamboat Parade, music, food, pony rides, games for kids, entertainment and Billy Martin's Big Top Circus.
- *A Bay Queen Sunset Cruise* was also held on August 16th from the State Pier in Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone Valley surrey, a six-passenger bicycle participated in four parades.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council offered a \$35 group tour package for visitors as part of the only New England appearance of a special 150th anniversary exhibit by the Smithsonian Institution. The "Experiencing America Tour" of the Blackstone Valley will include a 45-minute tour on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* and a bus or trolley ride to the RI Convention Center to view the 100,000 square foot exhibit, which is the largest show ever put on by the Smithsonian or any other museum.

- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* offered special tours in Woonsocket for two cruises on the Blackstone River to help raise much-needed funds for a new roof at the Masonic Temple in Cumberland. The Cumberland Masonic Temple will be the new home of the Blackstone River Theater.
- Eighteen months and 23,000 passengers later, Robert Billington of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council has a new nautical vision for two 75-passenger, 57-foot boats that will shuttle commuters between Pawtucket and Providence before and after work and be used mid-day for interpretive excursions on the Pawtucket and Seekonk Rivers.
- A Summer Safari Tour on the Blackstone River was offered this year with a tour on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* followed by an escorted tour with a llama through the woods of the Blackstone Gorge. The llamas are provided by The Llama Farm of Cumberland.
- Trolley tours sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council were offered at the Jubilé Franco-Americain in Woonsocket.
- Michael Corrente was scheduled to shoot the movie *Outside Providence* in Rhode Island and parts of the Blackstone Valley.
- Fall Foliage tours were offered in the Blackstone Valley by trolley, by riverboat on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*, by train on the Providence & Worcester Railroad, by car on an 85-mile fall foliage self-guided tour, by air by airplane or helicopter from North Central State Airport, and by canoe. Explore the foliage along the Blackstone River, by foot, traverse the quaint country villages and historic sites with a National Park Service Ranger, and by bicycle, along the Blackstone Valley Bike Path.
- Bobby and Peter Farrelly and Michael Corrente were honored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council at their annual meeting at Sher-le-Mon in Cumberland. Bobby and Peter Farrelly recently produced the movie *Dumb and Dumber* starring Jim Carrey, and Michael Corrente recently produced the movie *American Buffalo* starring Dustin Hoffman and Dennis Franz.
- Bob Cox and Eugene Peloquin were honored at the Annual Meeting with Special Recognition Awards. Bob Cox for his efforts in establishing the Cumberland Historic District and his participation in writing the Regional Comprehensive Plan for the Blackstone Valley. Eugene Peloquin, the Executive Director of the Business Volunteers for the Arts, was praised for his efforts in helping raise funds for various events and for his wonderful participation in helping the Tourism Council present its various programs throughout the year.
- The Massachusetts State Police were assisted by the staff of the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* when they were able to use the *Explorer* as a diving platform to try to recover a handgun that was believed to have been used in the suicide of a Burrillville man whose body was found near the banks of the Blackstone River in Millville.
- A historic river voyage was pioneered from the Old State Pier in Pawtucket to Waterplace Park located in Capital Center in Providence with Pawtucket Mayor Robert Metivier and Providence Mayor Vincent "Buddy" Cianci at the helm of the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- The Tourism Council organized the first annual Blackstone Valley Tourism Council "Going Places" Auction at St. Mary's Antiochian Church in May.
- Work began at what will be the new home of the William Blackstone Monument in Valley Falls, Cumberland. The project will cost \$162,300 according to Town Engineer David Boulay.
- The second annual Jubilé Franco-Americain was held in Woonsocket in August featuring arts and culture, music, dance, theater, film, lectures and forums, visual arts, culinary arts, and children's programs. The event was held over four days.
- The Tourism Council offered the first River Studies Scholarship Program in cooperation with the Narragansett Bay Commission.

- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* provided historical tours from eight venues throughout the Blackstone Valley of northern Rhode Island, the South County area of Rhode Island, and nearby Massachusetts. New this year were tours of the Pawtucket River and special tours of the Slatersville Reservoir in North Smithfield. Dinosaur Discovery and Haunted River Tours were also featured. Popular tours included leaving from the Slater Mill, Central Falls, Blackstone George, Pawtucket East Providence Waterfront, and Woonsocket Falls.
- The Tourism Council produced a free guide to the 21 factory outlets in the Blackstone Valley.
- A 682-pound pumpkin, the fifth largest in New England and grown by John F. Castellucci of Smithfield, was on display at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center at 171 Main St, Pawtucket. The pumpkin won First Prize at the Topsfield Fair in October.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council pioneered the first riverboat tours along the Wood-Pawcatuck River in Westerly, in cooperation with the South County Tourism Council and the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association.
- The Blackstone Valley Travel and Tourism Trade Show at Lincoln Park was held in October. A record number of exhibitors participated and Charlie Hall and the Ocean State Follies performed. Marge Desrosiers of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council coordinated the event which was co-sponsored by Conway Tours of Cumberland.
- The Tourism Council used a side-scan sonar, in cooperation with Bryant College's Department of Science Technology, locating what may prove to be the lost canal boat in the Blackstone River in Millville, Massachusetts.
- Gene Peloquin, Director of the Business Volunteers for the Arts, and Robert Billington, President of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, successfully coordinated an event at the Providence Performing Arts Center to bring arts organizations, local tourism councils, and small businesses together at a successful early morning meeting.
- Thomas Shannahan, the local expert on area Civil War veterans and a keeper of a collection of paintings by Central Falls most famous artist, Lorenzo deNevers, who painted President Eisenhower, FDR and baseball great Ted Williams, was inducted into the William Blackstone Society.
- A new boat and canoe launch was constructed at Cold Spring Park in Woonsocket. The ribbon-cutting was held in November.
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* was docked at the lower Slatersville Reservoir during the new car show in North Smithfield in September.
- The Seventh Annual Rhode Island Custom Car Show was held on the grounds of Philips Components at Pound Hill Road and Industrial Drive.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is offering limited-edition *American Buffalo* pins for \$3 to promote the walking tour of the movie *American Buffalo*, directed by Michael Corrente and starring Dustin Hoffman and Dennis Franz.
- The movie *American Buffalo* premiered at the Showcase Cinema in Warwick in September. The movie was followed by a reception at the Roger Williams Park Casino.
- The Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor was funded for an additional year for \$1.02 million under a provision included by Sen. John H. Chafee in a federal spending bill.
- The Slater Mill Historic Site celebrated its 75th Anniversary in September featuring guest speaker John Kenneth Galbraith.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation allotted \$880,000 to two passenger vessels to shuttle passengers from Pawtucket to Providence. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council will manage the project and provide the balance of the funds needed with help from the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, the RI Port Authority and the cities of Pawtucket and Providence. The allocation was announced by Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy.

- A roundtrip Fall Foliage tour from Cumberland, RI to Worcester, MA on the Providence and Worcester Railroad was held on October 19.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation allocated \$4 million towards the Blackstone River Bikeway Project. The projected path for the completed bikeway will run 21 miles from India Point Park thru downtown Pawtucket and Central Falls, Valley Falls, Lincoln and Woonsocket and on to the Massachusetts line. The completed bike path will eventually allow bicyclists to travel from Bristol, RI to Worcester, MA.
- The Tourism Council offered Haunted River Tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in Woonsocket leaving from Market Square. Bob Calvert and Raconteur Productions have produced the *Ghosts Along the Blackstone* tours for three years. Mr. Calvert, the writer, director and producer of the tours, has an impressive resume which includes appearances on *Masterpiece Theatre*, *Spenser for Hire*, and the popular soap opera, *As the World Turns*. Bob Calvert and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council also offered Haunted Happenings tours on the Blackstone Valley Trolley.
- Hillary Clinton visited the Slater Mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island the day before election day to ask voters to support her husband in the Presidential election. Robert Billington, as President of the Slater Mill Association, gave Mrs. Clinton a tour of the oldest cotton mill in America. It was Mrs. Clinton's third visit to Rhode Island.
- Plans were made for the World Canal Conference which will be held from October 14-17, 1997. The conference is hosted by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and coordinated with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Repairs to the Slater Mill Dam and the rotted wooden spillway were delayed in mid-October because of recent storms and the rain-swollen river. River levels reached over 10 feet in October, creating unsafe working conditions. The original dam was built of wood, stone and debris over 200 years ago to support the Slater Mill, the oldest cotton-spinning mill in America. The \$100,000 project has already been delayed a few times for various reasons.
- A new program called *Travelers* on the Discovery Channel filmed a show on the Slater Mill and Autumnfest in October. The cast members also visited the Llama Farma, a llama farm in Cumberland and took a ride on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. The show will reach 83 countries around the world.
- An underwater survey was taken in October of a Millville section of the Blackstone River by two Rhode Island state archeological divers from the state Board of Underwater Archeological Resources to look for the bulk of an old Blackstone canal boat that possibly plied the waters of the Blackstone River between 1828 and 1848.
- Graham Knight from the Derwent National Trust in the Amber Valley in England visited the Slater Mill and the Blackstone Valley. Mr. Knight plans to use the Blackstone Valley as an excellent example moving forward, as the Derwent Valley is the first Historical Corridor in England.
- James Pepper, Executive Director of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, and Robert Billington, President of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, received the Pride in *Rhode Island Award* from the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce.
- A \$1,000 matching grant was awarded the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's grant program, the Preservation Services Fund. The grant will be used to support an interpretive guide training program.
- Sen. Jack Reed announced \$4 million in Federal money to the Blackstone River Bikeway and \$1.2 million to buy two commuter ferries to shuttle passengers from Pawtucket to Providence.

- The Pawtucket Bridge Mill Power Station and Hydro Power Plant, which celebrated a century-old role as a generator of electricity, was inducted into the Hall of Fame by the Hydro Review, the national trade magazine for the hydro-electric industry.
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* toured the Slatersville Reservoir during the Slatersville *Slaterfest Celebration*.
- The first tours of the Blackstone River narrated in French onboard the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* were held in October. The two tours scheduled for October 20 will be narrated by *Explorer* tour guide Sue Bernier and will focus on the importance and influence of French immigrants and the French culture to the city of Woonsocket.
- A walking Tour of Historic Central Falls guide was available at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center. The guide included 35 sites in the square mile city and was produced by Historic Central Falls.
- The Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor was featured in a front page, ten-page article in the Akron Beacon Journal in November.
- The Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor celebrated its 10th anniversary at the Depot in Woonsocket in February. U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy, U.S. Senator Claiborne Pell, U.S. Senator Jack Reed and U.S. Representative Patrick Kennedy attended.
- Santa arrived by boat on the Blackstone River in back of the Slater Mill Historic Site and families formed a motorcade to continue to Slater Park for *Christmas in the Park* organized by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Recreation Department of the City of Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone Valley Holiday Shopping Tour included visits to select specialty shops in Central Falls, Cumberland, Lincoln and North Smithfield in December by motorcoach. The new tour was produced by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- President Clinton signed a law on November 12 extending funding to the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor for 10 more years. The operations budget was doubled to \$650,000. The Clinton signing also extended the boundaries of the Corridor to include all of Worcester, Massachusetts.
- While taking a tour on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in 1994, fourth-grade students of Connie Hurd came up with the idea of a canoe launch at Cold Spring Park in Woonsocket. In 1996, their wish came true as their former teacher Mrs. Hurd cut the ribbon to officially open the canoe launch at the park.
- The new offices of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center were scheduled to open in September 1997 at the Benjamin Chester Building, 175 Main Street, Pawtucket. The Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission provided \$500,000 and the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority will be spending \$480,000 for improvements to the building for restrooms and a waiting area for passengers waiting for buses in downtown Pawtucket. The balance of the money will come from the city of Pawtucket and from private groups such as the Champlin Foundation.
- The third annual *Christmas in the Valley* publication produced by The Valley Breeze in conjunction with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council published 25,000 copies. The publication highlighted holiday events from Pawtucket to Woonsocket.
- The Blackstone Valley Christmas Trolley ran the *Sights and Lights* holiday tours in December from the Lincoln Mall and featured lighting displays in the Blackstone Valley. The tours were sponsored by the Lincoln Mall and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- The Federal government's decision to award ownership of two proposed river shuttle boats to the state instead of a local agency, the BVT, was a result of standard federal policy, not a hijacking of the project by government officials, it was announced in December.

- Robert Billington, Executive Director of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, proposed an extensive three-month study of the Pawtucket River that would involve extensive public input. The study would seek to develop a broad-based public consensus on the best way to re-develop the riverbanks. Billington suggested that the study could be paid for by \$5,000 coming from the Pawtucket Redevelopment Agency and \$5,000 from the Dunn Foundation.
- Bill Brew, the first river ecologist hired by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council made trips into the classroom during the cold winter months. Bill waded knee-deep into the Blackstone to bring back water samples to the young children. Some of the samples included insects, fish and tadpoles.
- The Tourism Council started to book schools eager to participate in the two new environmental education programs instituted by the Council this year: *River in the Classroom* and *Blackstone Valley Trolley Tours*. The *River in the Classroom* program taught students about river development, canals, waterpower, water quality and mill villages. The *Blackstone Valley Trolley Tours* taught students about the history of their particular town.
- New 19th century reproduction light poles and light fixtures with halogen lamps were installed along the Broad Street Bridge in Valley Falls in December.
- The William Blackstone Monument and Park on Broad Street, Cumberland was dedicated in December.
- Dressed in a long black coat, scarf and top hat, Robert Billington, Executive Director of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, helped to deliver holiday pizzas from Domino's Pizza in Pawtucket to benefit the *Merry Christmas Fund* of the Pawtucket Times.
- A new *Winter Events in the Blackstone Valley* tourism kit was produced by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council featuring events and activities to do in the area.
- The Blackstone Valley Trolley was used for the first time for the popular *Gallery Night Tours* in Providence where participants visited the many art galleries in the city.
- Robert Billington announced that the remaining \$6,000 mortgage on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* should be paid by the end of 1996, four years after having the boat built. Billington planned to "sink" the mortgage payments in a small metal box in the Pawtucket River where the first riverboat tours were held.
- The Champlin Foundation granted \$8,600 to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council to make the trolley handicapped accessible.
- The new Blackstone Valley Visitor Center received inquiries from an average of 561 visitors per week either by mail or in person.
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer*, the Council's 49-passenger riverboat, carried 21,784 passengers from May to October of 1996. That figure included the 7,000 school children who learned about the environment and the history of the Blackstone River on the *Explorer* this year.
- Since 1993, more than 75,000 passengers have toured the Blackstone River on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- Suzanne Buchanan, a National Park Service Ranger, visited local Blackstone Valley schools in December to read *A New Coat for Anna*. The classic story illustrated a selfless mother's plight to trade personal items with farmers, spinners, and tailors to secure a coat as a Christmas present for her daughter. Because of hearing the story read, many area school children were encouraged to donate hundreds of used coats to the needy in the Blackstone Valley.
- The video *Woonsocket, A City on the Move* premiered at Harris Hall in December. The video was produced by the Greater Woonsocket Board of Realtors and the City of Woonsocket and cost \$15,000 to produce.

- Susan K. Moore became the new Executive Director of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council offered Providence Banner Tour Trolley tours. The tour highlighted 20 historic sites in downtown Providence, College Hill, Smith Hill, Federal Hill and the Capital Center area.
- Robert Cox of Pawtucket won the Thomas Edison look-alike contest celebrating Edison's 150th birthday. The contest was sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Electric Company, and Mr. Cox's entry was sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Bob was featured as a special guest on the Blackstone Valley Trolley during Pawtucket's Oktoberfest.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was awarded \$20,000 from the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor to continue the Council's Event Calendar Program, and the Visitor Information Distribution Program.
- Steve Hamblett, Publisher of the Providence Journal, called a RI Tourism Forum together to engage the local tourism councils in discussing ways they could better work together to promote the state and their respective areas.
- The annual revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$352,753 for 1996.

1997

- Plans for the Blackstone River Watershed Council were established.
- The Tourism Council hosted the World Canal Conference in the Blackstone Valley in October 1997.
- Christmas trolley tours through Lincoln, Cumberland and Central Falls were developed.
- The Arts and Entertainment History Channel has chosen to air six episodes of the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor series *Along the Blackstone*.
- A second riverboat, the 10-passenger Spirit of Blackstone Valley, was purchased.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council planned Tourism Business Networking events.
- A "think tank" of 30 business people toured the East Providence coastline on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. The group looked for new ways to attract new businesses to the area.
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* scheduled tours in the Pawtucket Harbor, Valley Falls, the Blackstone Gorge, the Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers, the Providence River to Waterplace Park, and Woonsocket this year.
- *Christmas in the Valley* was published, a 24-page flyer done in cooperation with The Valley Breeze.
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* purchased a mobile operations center with support from Fleet Bank.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council held the second annual Going Places Auction in April at St. Joseph's Church in Cumberland. The event included a buffet dinner, auction and entertainment.
- The Tourism Council hosted trolley rides in April to various businesses throughout the Blackstone Valley to introduce what attractions are in the area.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council opened up tours to the public on the Blackstone Valley Trolley. A tour of Colonial Mills and Blackstone Jewelry in Pawtucket, Colonial Homestead in Cumberland, Wright's Dairy Farm in North Smithfield and Ryco Manufacturing in Lincoln with lunch at the Lincoln Mall was planned for May.
- The Eisenhower Grant through Bryant College was received, which was used to purchase 11 laptop computers for the River in the Classroom.
- The schedule for the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* ran from April to October. New tours were planned, including boat trips from the Providence River to Waterplace Park and tours of the Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers in Bradford, Rhode Island.
- Initiated the RI Tourism Directors Roundtable.
- Hosted delegation from Amber Valley, England.
- For the first time, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, in cooperation with the Valley Breeze, published the official *1997 Visitor Resource Guide* for the Blackstone Valley.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council received the *1997 Environmental Achievement Award* presented by Save the Bay at their annual meeting in March.
- The Tourism Council introduced Seymour De Vallee – the Blackstone Valley Chicken, to promote chicken family-style dinners in the Blackstone Valley
- Haunted Trolley Tours and Haunted River Tours were held in October.
- The U. S. Senate approved an Interior Appropriations bill to bring \$1,069,000 to the Blackstone Valley for the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.
- The Tourism Council hosted the New England Foundation for the Arts weekend.

- The Blackstone Valley Trolley offered trolley tours during the holiday season in Cumberland and Lincoln.
- The Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, which opened in October, told the story of the impact that the French-Canadians had in Woonsocket and the Blackstone Valley.
- Flowers and materials were collected for a well dressing which was done on the Blackstone River near the Slater Mill. The Tourism Council invited three artists from Belper, England to Pawtucket for a community well-dressing in which visitors built a 6" x 9' mosaic made of natural materials such as flowers, eggshells, black peppercorns and pinecones to honor efforts to clean up the Blackstone River.
- The historic Leroy Theater was demolished in Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council received a grant of \$20,000 from the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission to continue the Tourism Council's Event Calendar program, the Visitor Information Distribution program and the Visitor Public Relations program for the Heritage Corridor.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council conducted trade missions to the Amber Valley and St. Hyacinth, Quebec.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council inducted Mayor Robert Metivier, Carol Metivier, and Ben Mondor into the William Blackstone Society at their Annual Meeting held at Hasbro in Pawtucket.
- The Rev. William Blackstone Memorial Park on Broad Street in Cumberland was dedicated on Memorial Day in May. The ceremonies coincided with the 250th anniversary of the Town of Cumberland.
- A partnership was established with Johnson & Wales as a travel practicum site.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council hosted a reception for Sile de Valera, Minister of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands of Ireland.
- A delegation from St. Hyacinth, Quebec to further the Sister City association with Woonsocket was hosted by the Tourism Council.
- The Tourism Council held a series of River Workshops to tour the Pawtucket and Blackstone River and discuss plans for the future of the Pawtucket riverfront. Design consultants Wil Gates and Don Leighton will lead these planning sessions.
- Christmas trolley tours for Burrillville, Gloucester, Smithfield, and North Smithfield were developed.
- Twenty-one Venture Scouts from the Amber Valley in England joined members of Arnold Mills Boy Scout Troop 1 for a week of sightseeing, camping and swimming at Bowdish Lake Campground in Gloucester. The visit was the last stop on a trip which also included stops in Yosemite National Park and Missouri.
- The Tourism Council made plans to build a British-style canal boat for their Millenium Project. The canal boat will be built in England by C.T.P. Fox Boat Builders.
- The Tourism Council assisted with a program for Riverfront Development for Pawtucket.
- The Slater Mill installed a new elevator and handicapped-accessible restroom.
- Tourism activity rose by 5.8% in 1997 according to figures released by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Some scenes for the movie *Outside Providence* were shot in Pawtucket. The movie, based on a book written by Bobby and Peter Farrelly, was directed by Michael Corrente.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council participated in the Southern New England Hospitality Trade Show.
-

- The Cumberland 250th Committee and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council sponsored a tour of nine places of worship in Cumberland.
- A French Garden Party was held at Diamond Hill Vineyard in Cumberland in September. The event was a highlight of the 5-day Jubilé Franco-American celebration.
- Peter Hook, the Lord Mayor of the Amber Valley in England, visited the Blackstone Valley at the invitation of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The visit was part of an ongoing partnership between the Blackstone Valley and the Amber Valley to promote tourism in both communities.
- A historically-narrated Fall Foliage Train Ride from Cumberland, Rhode Island to Worcester, Massachusetts on the Providence & Worcester Railroad was held in October. It was the 10th year that the Fall Foliage train ride was held.
- Fleet Bank awarded a check of \$10,000 to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council to renovate the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* and also to help fund the RiverClassroom program.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council paid off the \$40,000 mortgage on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in less than four years.
- Glocester, Burrillville and Smithfield were recognized as part of the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor.
- The Tourism Council offered a Holiday Shopping Tour of the Blackstone Valley on the Blackstone Valley Trolley. The tour included stops at unique gift shops, factory outlets, and herb and garden shops.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Bryant College Department of Science and Technology were the recipients of a \$44,000 education grant from the Eisenhower Professional Development Program.
- The Blackstone Valley Visitors Center in Pawtucket completed its first year of operation, serving over 25,000 people from 26 cities and towns in Rhode Island, 47 states, Washington, D.C., and 25 countries.
- The Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was over \$393,105 for 1997.

1998

- The Blackstone River received the prestigious designation as an American Heritage River by President Bill Clinton.
- "Rhode Island Rivers Day" was established to celebrate the Blackstone River's impact on the community and honor its volunteers.
- The RI Film Forum was established by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Dave Balfour, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, was appointed to be Chepachet Village's first Main Street Coordinator.
- The Rhode Island General Assembly voted in favor of creating an Arts and Entertainment District in Pawtucket to offer tax incentives to artists to encourage them to move into the mill districts in Pawtucket.
- The Northern Rhode Island Conservation District, with a grant funded by the federal Clean Water Act Section 319 and the Rhode Department of Environmental Management, recruited volunteers to work on small one-day projects to improve the quality of water in the Blackstone River. Volunteers toured the river on the Tourism Council's boat the *Spirit of the Blackstone* to become familiar with the area.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was cited as the Audubon Society's *Organization of the Year*.
- A grant was applied for from the Town of Cumberland for \$10,000 to conduct a feasibility study on the construction of riverboat landings for the Albion and Manville Dam section of the Blackstone River.
- Wright's Farm Restaurant in Burrillville celebrated 25 years of "all you can eat" chicken family-style.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Preservation Society of Pawtucket and the Slater Mill Historic Site offered an 11-day tour of the Amber Valley in England from June 29 to July 9.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council assisted in the organization of the Rhode Island International Film Festival and premiere of the movie *Something about Mary*.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council offered Haunted River Cruises in October on the *Explorer* leaving from Market Square in Woonsocket.
- The Federal Department of Transportation awarded \$2 million to design and build a three-mile segment of the Blackstone Valley Bikeway in Lincoln and Cumberland and \$500,000 to design and build the Ten-Mile River Greenway bicycle/pedestrian path.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council organized BV2000, a Blackstone Valley millennium group which was started by Valley resident Helen Paradise to celebrate the millennium in various ways in the Blackstone Valley.
- The former Children's Museum in Pawtucket was purchased by Edith and Michael Marra of East Greenwich and will become The Grand Manor, a location for private parties, weddings, and bridal showers.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council offered a new way to discover the beauty and history of the area with Blackstone Valley Pedal Tours on the Blackstone Valley Surrey. The Surrey is a six-passenger "surrey with the fringe on top" with a tour guide who narrates a historical tour along the Blackstone Valley Bikepath in Lincoln.
- Robert Billington, President of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, completed the requirements to earn the designation as a Certified Tour Professional. The CTP program is administered by the National Tour Association, America's premier packaged tour organization.

- The 4th Annual Jubilé Franco-Americain was held in Woonsocket August 20-23. French-Canadian culture and heritage were celebrated with four days of an evening garden party and gala reception, a concert, international goods and crafts demonstration, boat tours, a Taste of Quebec and a traditional French Unity Church Service.
- Robert Billington accepted an award of appreciation from the Audubon Society of Rhode Island. The Council received the award from Director Eugenia Marks in appreciation of the Council's efforts to promote environmental education, awareness and protection of the environment through the years.
- The Blackstone Valley was highlighted in the New York Times with a mention of the *Christmas in the Valley* insert in the Valley Breeze.
- The third annual Shopping Tours on the Blackstone Valley Trolley were held in November. The trolley visited 10 shops and factory outlets in the Blackstone Valley that sell such items as crafts, collectibles, candles, pottery and seasonal items.
- The Cumberland Economic Development Commission planned *A Shop Hop* during the last weekend in September. The event included over 25 specialty shops in Cumberland and the featured shops offered demonstrations, raffles and special promotions.
- The Rhode Island Labor and Ethnic Festival was held at the Slater Mill in September. The festival featured children's activities, ethnic food, folk arts and crafts, labor exhibits, live music, and storytelling.
- A Civil War Reenactment was held at Chase Farm in Lincoln in September. More than 500 reenactors from Virginia to Canada participated in authentic Union and Confederate camps.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council brought two English soccer teams from Belper, England to the Blackstone Valley.
- Boat rides on the Tourism Council's *Spirit of the Blackstone* were offered leaving from the Slater Mill. *The Spirit of the Blackstone* carried 2,400 passengers during the first year.
- The Tourism Council worked with the Town of Glocester to develop the Chepachet Village Committee to create a vision for Main Street in Chepachet.
- Historical tours of Woonsocket on the Blackstone Valley Trolley were held in August during the Jubilé Franco-Americain.
- Two tourism venues under development in northern Rhode Island were designated as enterprise zones, making them eligible for special tax credits. The two locations are the Central Falls Landing Project on Broad Street and the Blackstone River Theater in Cumberland.
- Tours on the Narrow River in Narragansett were offered on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* by the Tourism Council.
- The Rhode Island Film Festival was held at the Stadium Theater in August.
- The film *Something About Mary* by Bobby and Peter Farrelly was shown at the Stadium Theater. An opening Gala Reception was held at the Biltmore Hotel to celebrate the screening of the movie as the kick-off to the film festival.
- Clara Angelica Porto, the Tourism Director of Sergipe, Brazil, visited the Blackstone Valley on a fact-finding trip in January. The Tourism Director was in the Blackstone Valley as part of the Partners of the Americas Program and was introduced at a reception at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center.
- Pawtucket's Mayor James Doyle and over 50 officials toured the city of Woonsocket with Mayor Susan Menard to learn how to revitalize Woonsocket.
- In March, Robert Billington, President of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, wrote an editorial for the Providence Journal suggesting that we celebrate Rhode Island Rivers Day on the Blackstone River every year.

- The Central Falls Landing Project received \$120,000 in Entitlement Funds sought from HUD. The City of Central Falls bought the metal building on the site in December 1997 which it wants to sell or move for \$85,000. The city advertised the site hoping to attract \$500,000 in private investment.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council offered Christmas trolley tours of Cumberland, Lincoln, Woonsocket and North Smithfield on select dates in December.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council received a grant for \$3,000 from actor Paul Newman's Foundation to benefit educational and research efforts on the Council's boats.
- The Blackstone River Watershed Council held its first meeting at Bryant College. The Watershed Council is being organized by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council through a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation.
- The keel for the Samuel Slater, the British-built canal boat, was laid.
- The Tourism Council brought an Erie canal boat to the Pawtucket River.
- The Tourism Council organized two Elderhostel programs in the Blackstone Valley.
- The Tourism Council became a Yankee Magazine Community Partner and raised \$1,200 for the Samuel Slater canal boat.
- A grant was received from Ocean State Charities to computerize the Group Tour Division.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council submitted the lone bid to operate the commuter water shuttle service between Providence and Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone Valley is included in Smithsonian Institution's "America's Snapshot Tour."
- The Discover New England Tourism Summit was hosted by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council along with other State Tourism Regions.
- Yankee Magazine offered to help fund the building of the Samuel Slater Canal Boat, the millennial project of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, by giving the Tourism Council \$10 for every \$20 collected for a renewal or new subscription to Yankee Magazine. The offer was part of the Community Partners Program of Yankee Magazine for 1998. The Tourism Council raised \$1,200 through Yankee Magazine to support building of the Samuel Slater Canal Boat.
- The Federal government set aside \$742,000 to build a ferry terminal at Town Landing in Pawtucket.
- John Chan was inducted into the William Blackstone Society during the Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council at Wright's Farm in Nasonville.
- The first stretch of the Blackstone Valley Bike Path from Route 123 in Lincoln through the Blackstone River State Park to the Ashton Viaduct was opened in October. The path follows the original towpath along the Blackstone Canal and passes the Wilbur Kelley House. The construction of the bike path will continue in phases and will eventually run from Pawtucket, Rhode Island to Worcester, Massachusetts.
- Copies of *Christmas in the Valley* were inserted in issues of the Valley Breeze in November and an additional 11,000 copies were distributed throughout the Blackstone Valley.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council received a \$30,000 grant from the Rhode Island Foundation to create a Blackstone River Watershed Council. Under the plan, the Tourism Council will serve as an advocate for the Blackstone River, develop more educational programs about the river, and create more citizen support.
- Blackstone Valley residents, in cooperation with Club Richelieu in Woonsocket, collected non-perishable food items in January to send to the ice-stricken town of St. Hyacinthe, Quebec. Conway Bus Company donated the use of a bus to deliver the collected food to Canada.

- The new Town Landing in Pawtucket, which cost \$475,000, featured a boat launching ramp and three fishing areas.
- The Rhode Island Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Artists awarded Town Landing the prestigious Honor Award.
- The Slater Mill Historic Site, which is now handicapped-accessible, received a visit from State Senator James Langevin.
- The 20th Anniversary of the Pawtucket Preservation Society took place at the world headquarters of Morris Nathanson Design on Exchange Street in Pawtucket. The celebration included a tour of the former Rhode Island Cardboard Company, now called Blackstone Studios, which is the first live-work place for artists in Pawtucket.
- A cross-country ski trip to the George Washington Management Area in Gloucester was offered by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in cooperation with the Pawtucket Recreation Department. The Blackstone Valley Trolley picked up tour participants at the Visitors Center in Pawtucket and ski equipment was provided by B & B Cycle and Sports in Lincoln.
- Chuck Arning, a National Park Ranger with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, was recognized as the national winner of the prestigious Freeman Tilden Award for Excellence in Interpretation at the National Interpreter's Workshop in Beaumont, Texas. Chuck was honored for his monthly cable show *Along the Blackstone*.
- Golden hammer pins were sold for \$10 to help fund the authentic British Canal boat, the Samuel Slater, the new millennium project for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- The US Department of the Interior agreed to fund the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor for another 10 years. The plan called to preserve and develop the Heritage Corridor per Sen. Jack Reed. With the approval of the 10-year plan, another \$3 million dollars can be accessed over 10 years.
- Boat tours on the Blackstone River from the Manville Dam to Woonsocket on the Spirit of the Blackstone, the Council's new 14-passenger river boat, were a highlight of Riverfest weekend in Woonsocket.
- National Park Service Director Robert Stanton, at the invitation of Congressman Patrick Kennedy, toured the National Heritage Corridor. The Corridor was considered to be one of the most successful projects of its kind in the National Park System.
- The Town of Cumberland took possession of Diamond Hill State Park, clearing the way for increased local activities and town-led recreational development.
- Over 900 people climbed aboard the Blackstone Valley Trolley to tour the Christmas lights in North Smithfield, Cumberland, and Lincoln.
- Over 1,200 children participated in the reading of *A New Coat For Anna* and donated coats for the needy. The program was sponsored by the Heritage Corridor and attendance eclipsed all previous years.
- An Arts District was created for downtown Pawtucket, opening up the door for new live-work art studios and the revitalization of old mills.
- First Lady Hillary Clinton spoke at the Stadium Theater in Woonsocket, catapulting the theater into the national spotlight.
- New England's oldest travel trade show was held at Lincoln Greyhound Park in October. It was the 10th anniversary of the trade show, which was co-produced by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and Conway Tours.
- The first Valley-organized Elderhostel program was presented to 30 older students from as far away as Alaska. The success of the program led to two more programs planned for 1999.
- Construction began in Cambridgeshire, England on the Blackstone Valley's Millennium project: a 40-foot-long canal boat to arrive in the Blackstone Valley by January 2000. Senator John Chafee signed on as a supporter.

- The *Blackstone Valley Events Guide*, produced by the Heritage Corridor and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, won a national award in Alaska for production excellence.
- The former Lonsdale Drive-In Theater property was purchased by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to be kept as open space. The Army Corps of Engineers conceived an innovative regeneration plan for the property.
- Dan Golden, the Director of NASA, visited the Slater Mill Historic Site to address the National Manufacturers Week gathering. Golden was impressed with the innovations found at the Slater Mill.
- Over 700 students, led by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, fanned out throughout the Blackstone Valley to identify and paint hundreds of storm drains to help bring the river to a pristine condition.
- After a huge public/private institutional campaign and a student-led write-in campaign, President Clinton named the Blackstone River an "American Heritage River." Rhode Island's Congressional delegation was very supportive of this campaign.
- New Heritage Corridor boundary signs were installed in each of the new Rhode Island communities in Burrillville, Glocester, and Smithfield, and the new communities in Massachusetts.
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer*, the Valley's first river boat in over 160 years, carried its 100,000th passenger since launching in 1991. The Blackstone River was named the state's "eco-industrial tourism classroom" educating thousands of people about the history and beauty of the river.
- The Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket proved that it is a major attraction for Rhode Island and a key component of the revival of Woonsocket. It broke all records for visitation for 1998.
- The Rhode Island International Film Festival, a Flickers Production, screened over 250 new films and drew more than 5,000 people to this two-year old event. Flickers produced the Jubilé Franco-Americain.
- Renovations began at McCoy Stadium, allowing for 10,000 fans to enjoy a game and improving wheelchair access.
- The Arnold Bakery was saved and re-built with the leadership of the Blackstone Valley Historical Society.
- The Tourism Council launched a second riverboat, the "Spirit of the Blackstone."
- Johnson and Wales started a Practicum Site at the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Blackstone Valley Visitors Center. Approximately 100 students per year work at the Council headquarters seven days a week.
- Northern Rhode Island saw a 28% increase in tourists during the second half of 1998.
- The Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$394,367 for 1998

1999

- Water Cruises of Rhode Island launched the Hope and Renaissance European-style ferry boats to shuttle commuters between Providence & Pawtucket. Water Cruises is a partnership between Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and Conway/Grayline of Rhode Island.
- The POLAR EXPRESS™ Train Ride, launched with permission from author Chris Van Allsburg and publisher Houghton Mifflin.
- The Council worked closely with the US Army of Corps of Engineers, the US Natural Resources Conservation Commission, Save the Bay, and the National Park Service.
- Wal-Mart presented the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council with a grant of \$1,000 to be used for the opening of the new Visitor Center in Pawtucket.
- The Tourism Council published an *Official Visitor Guide to the Blackstone Valley*. Twenty-five thousand copies were distributed annually. In addition, a collection of brochures was published each year which highlighted local restaurants, ethnic foods, special events, factory outlet shopping, and train, trolley and river tours.
- The Tourism Council had contracts this year with the City of Pawtucket, the National Park Service, the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, and the RI Department of Transportation for the new Visitor Center in Pawtucket.
- The Tourism Council developed projects for the RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, the Pawtucket Preservation Society, and the city of Woonsocket.
- The Tourism Council's trolley was licensed by the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission and regulated by the United States Coast Guard.
- The Tourism Council began to serve as an internship and practicum learning site for Johnson and Wales University, the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, Bryant College, the Community College of Rhode Island, the Sawyer School, and the RI State Internship Program.
- Robert Billington was selected as a participant in Leadership Rhode Island class of 1999.
- In February, the Pawtucket Redevelopment Agency deeded the undeveloped land owned by the Healey family at Town Landing to the city of Pawtucket to be used for passive recreation.
- The Riverfront Development Commission planned to schedule River Workshop '99 to continue the conversation about the future of the Blackstone River.
- Robert Billington and Cumberland Police Chief Tony Silva received the Distinguished Citizen's Award from the Cumberland Business Association in February.
- A contest was held to choose the winning names for the new ferry boats planned by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council to sail from Pawtucket to Providence. The winning names chosen were the Hope and the Renaissance.
- A new event, a Spring Blossom Train trip on the Providence & Worcester Railroad from Cumberland, Rhode Island to Gardner, Massachusetts and Worcester, Massachusetts, was held in May. The tour featured a historical narration on the history of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was chosen by the Rhode Island 2000 Committee to present an exhibit titled *Millenium Canal Boat Exhibitions*, commemorating Rhode Island's canal history and the Samuel Slater Canal boat the Council is having built in England as its millennium project for 2000.

- The Blackstone River Watershed Council went into its second year. The Watershed Council was involved in projects to instill commitment, responsibility and sustainability of the watershed located along the banks of an American Heritage River in a National Heritage Corridor.
- Captain Fred Curtis was hired as the administrator and captain of the Hope and the Renaissance, the two new ferry boats that are being built to run from Pawtucket to Providence.
- The Tourism Council sold small bottles of coffee syrup at \$2.99 a bottle in cooperation with Autocrat Coffee to support the building of the Samuel Slater Canal Boat.
- One hundred twenty people volunteered on Earth Day 1999 to clean up the Blackstone Canal in Lincoln. The Earth Day clean up was coordinated by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Blackstone River Watershed Council.
- Mindy Hidenfelter was hired as the new full-time ecologist for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- A Wine Tasting and Meet The Artists Night was held in May at the To Kalon Club in Pawtucket to benefit artists traveling to the Amber Valley in England.
- The 15th Annual Statewide Historic Preservation Conference was held in Woonsocket in April.
- A 1985 Chevrolet Suburban was donated to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and given a much-needed facelift by Crown Collision of Pawtucket.
- The new Pawtucket-Providence ferry boats, the Hope and the Renaissance, owned by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council were launched in July. Tours to Wickford, East Greenwich, and Warwick as well as sightseeing tours around Narragansett Bay were also offered on the new ferry boats, the Hope and the Renaissance, in conjunction with Conway Bus Tours of Cumberland. Sunset Cruises, Providence Harbor Supper Cruises, and cruises to WaterFire in Providence were also offered. The two new ferries, the Hope and the Renaissance, that were built as commuter ferries from Pawtucket to Providence, also offered rides from Pawtucket to the new Providence Place Mall.
- The 2nd Annual Rhode Island Rivers Day was celebrated in June in Pawtucket, Cumberland and Central Falls. Highlights of the day in Central Falls included a decorated canoe and kayak contest, a river rescue demonstration, free riverboat rides, speeches and award presentations, and canoe and kayak rentals.
- The Blackstone Valley was featured in the New York Times Sunday Travel section in July.
- A 5-day Elderhostel program based on the history of the Blackstone Valley was held in July.
- The June meeting of the Cumberland Business Association was held on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* leaving from The Landing in Central Falls.
- The annual Travel Experiences travel-trade show, in cooperation with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and Conway Bus Lines, was held at Lincoln Park in October.
- Sixteen-ounce bottles of spring water from Yacht Club Soda were sold by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council to help fund the building of the Samuel Slater Canal Boat. The water, bottled by Yacht Club Soda in North Providence, had a distinctive Blackstone Valley label designed by artist Neville Lassotovitch.
- The 5th Annual Jubil  Franco-Americain took place in August in Woonsocket and celebrated the French-Canadian heritage of the Blackstone Valley with more than 75 events scheduled.
- Former Mayor of Belper, England, Tim Benson and his wife Julie, visited the Blackstone Valley for a week in August.

- The Town of Cumberland and the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor teamed up to build a facility near the Pratt Dam that provided canoeists and kayakers access to the river.
- The Tourism Council moved its headquarters to a new office at 175 Main Street, Pawtucket across from the historic Slater Mill. The 12,000 square feet headquarters included a visitor information kiosk, the Slater Mill Gift Shop and Gallery, the Pawtucket Arts Collaborative Gallery, a 90-seat movie theater, the RIPTA bus station, the Tourism Council offices and a 50-foot floor map of the Blackstone Valley. The grand opening and ribbon-cutting of the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center was held in September.
- Blackstone's 1996 Merlot, a red wine, and Blackstone 1997 California Chardonnay a white wine from California winemaker Dennis Hill, were featured at the Grand Opening of the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in September.
- The Pawtucket Arts Festival was headed by the Tourism Council.
- The movie *Outside Providence*, based on a book written by Cumberland native Peter Farrelly and directed by Michael Corrente, premiered in Rhode Island in September.
- The Canadian Mounted Police were in the Oktoberfest Parade in Woonsocket in October.
- The Blackstone Valley Historical Society was honored with the Regional Tourism Award at the Rhode Island Annual Tourism Unity Luncheon during National Tourism Week in May at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence.
- Participants in the Rhode Island Tourism Whistlestop Tour in May visited the Blackstone Valley Bikepath along with other points of interest in the state.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council sold Blackstone Valley Splash, a new soda that includes cola, birch beer, cream and root beer, made and bottled by Yacht Club Soda of North Providence. The soda along with bottles of coffee syrup were sold as a fundraiser for the building of the Samuel Slater Canal Boat.
- The East Coast Greenway, a city-to-city multi-use trail, was chosen as a National Millennium Trail at the International Trails and Greenways Conference in Pittsburgh, PA. The 2,300-mile trail will eventually run from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida. In Rhode Island, the trail extends from the Rhode Island-Massachusetts border in northern Rhode Island, along the Blackstone River Heritage Corridor and into Providence.
- *World Smile Day* was celebrated on October 1, 1999. Harvey Ball of Worcester designed the yellow smiley face and designated the first Friday of October to be World Smile Day. Mr. Ball asked that people celebrate the day by doing an act of kindness. Smiley face buttons were on sale for \$1 and smiley face posters were on sale for \$10. All sales benefitted the building of the Samuel Slater Canal boat.
- The Labor and Ethnic Heritage Festival was celebrated in September at the Slater Mill.
- Moonlight cruises were offered on the Hope and the Renaissance, the Blackstone Valley commuter ferries.
- The Providence & Worcester Railroad was the setting for the Fall Foliage Train trip sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in October.
- Robert Billington and Natalie Carter were presenters at the International Institute for Peace Through Tourism at the Third Global Conference that was held at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland.
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* was chosen as an Editor's Pick for Yankee Magazine for 1999.
- Flicker's Arts Collaborative and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council sponsored the Rhode Island Film Forum at the Marriott Hotel in June.

- Joanna Hunter was named as the new River Navigator by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency because the Blackstone and Woonasquatucket Rivers were named American Heritage Rivers by President Clinton.
- Michael Cassidy was inducted into the William Blackstone Society at the Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in October. Harvey Ball, the designer of the smiley face, was the guest speaker and the band Plainfolk, led by Harvey Ball's son, performed.
- The Bishton family from Belper, England visited the Blackstone Valley in October. It was their second visit since they played with the Thornton Brass Band from the Amber Valley on a previous visit in 1998.
- Haunted River Tours leaving from Woonsocket were offered this year. The performers were from the Speed of Thought Players from the Attleboro Community Theater.
- General Motors Corporation gifted a 7.5 acre parcel of land along the Blackstone River where a car dealership once operated.
- New maps of the Blackstone Valley Bikepath were unveiled at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in November. The maps were a joint project of the East Coast Greenway Alliance, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, the Department of Environmental Management, the Department of Transportation, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Massachusetts DEM and the Massachusetts Highway Department.
- The Blackstone Valley Christmas Trolley offered 70-minute tours of the area leaving from the Lincoln Mall or Christianson's Orchard in North Smithfield. The Speed of Thought Players were the entertainers onboard.
- The Champlin Foundation awarded a \$25,000 grant to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council toward constructing a British Canal Boat.
- The City of Woonsocket was highlighted in the travel section of the Boston Globe.
- The Blackstone Valley was featured in the travel section of the Providence Sunday Journal.
- The British Canal Boat Capital Campaign was started as a fundraising campaign for the Samuel Slater British Canal Boat which is being built in England. The Tourism Council sold detailed, hand-drawn watercolor pictorial maps of the Blackstone River Valley of Massachusetts and Rhode Island by Rosalind H. Sturges Allen for \$15 each to help in the fundraising campaign.
- The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor was officially changed to the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor in honor of U.S. Senator John H. Chafee who died in October.
- U. S. Representative Patrick Kennedy announced that \$1 million in federal money would be awarded to new projects in the Blackstone Valley.
- Seal Watch Tours were offered by Water Cruises of Rhode Island, LLC, operators of the European-style ferry boats, the Hope and the Renaissance. The tours took the ferry down Narragansett Bay and almost as far as Prudence Island.
- A raffle was held for \$5 per ticket for the fund-raising campaign for the Samuel Slater Canal Boat which was being built in Cambridge, England.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council received the Coastal Clean-Up Institutional Award from the RI Department of Environmental Management, the Audubon Society and BankBoston.
- During the period from September 1 to November 30, 1999, 23,251 visitors visited the newly opened Blackstone Valley Visitors Center.
- The Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$353,893 for 1999.

2000

- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat built by C.T.P. Fox Boatbuilders of Cambridgeshire, England arrived in Central Falls in January
- Launched the British Canal Boat, the Samuel Slater which provides daytime cruising, tea tours and overnight accommodations on the Blackstone River
- Spring Scenic Train Excursions on the Providence & Worcester Railroad were held in May. For the first time, the train traveled to Worcester, MA and then to Putnam and Danielson, CT before returning to Cumberland, RI.
- An Elderhostel Program titled *From Fields to Factories: the Blackstone River Valley of New England* was held April 30-May 5. The program attracted seniors 55 and older.
- The Blackstone River Watershed Council participated in the *Millenium Spruce-Up* of the Blackstone Canal along the Blackstone River Bikeway in Lincoln.
- The Council announced that a \$250 scholarship will be awarded to one student in each of the Blackstone Valley communities.
- Water Cruises of Rhode Island offered Seal and Nature Cruises of Narragansett Bay on the Hope and the Renaissance ferry boats.
- A bird watching tour was held on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* leaving from Central Falls Landing.
- Water Cruises of Rhode Island sponsored special tours during the Tall Ships Festival. A Sunset Cruise, a Day Cruise to the Tall Ships and a cruise to the Parade of Sails were offered.
- The William Blackstone Potato Head statue that was designed by local artist Neville Lassotovitch for a state tourism campaign was donated to the Amber Valley Borough Council in May. The Potato Head statue was beloved by the children of Belper, England when it was placed in front of McDonald's. Many adults thought that the Potato Head fashioned to resemble William Blackstone was "tacky" and it soon moved to the American Adventure Wild West theme park outside of Belper, England. The controversy about the Potato Head was mentioned in the Sun tabloid and ABC radio in London, the British wire service Reuters, BBC radio and its Canadian counterpart CBC, the Associated Press, and local radio and TV stations from Providence to Colorado.
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat was christened in May. Robert C. Goff and his wife Maraya were the first overnight visitors.
- The Northern Rhode Island Mardi Gras Committee received the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Achievement Award at the Rhode Island State Unity Luncheon in May.
- Water Cruises of Rhode Island, LLC offered cruises of Narragansett Bay leaving from the Point St. bridge in Providence. The tour will travel by the houses of local painters and artists in Warren.
- The Christmas Trolley Tours were held in December leaving from the Lincoln Mall and Christianson's Orchard. The tours were sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- The Blackstone Valley Institute was held at Bryant College in March. The Institute sponsored the conference called *The Blackstone Valley in an Emerging Global Economy* and had over 100 people in attendance
- Melanie Debarros, branch manager of the Broad Street branch of Fleet Bank presented a check for \$500 to Robert Billington for Central Falls students to tour the Slater Mill.
- Ron Buzzard, the Mayor of Belper, England spent a day in Chepachet hosted by Blackstone Valley board President Dave Balfour. He also met with Mayor James Doyle of Pawtucket.

- Rhode Island Rivers Day was held on June 17 at the Central Falls Landing. The Samuel Slater Canal boat was available for tours as well as the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. A festive canoe and kayak parade was held and awards were presented.
- Chainsaw artist Michael Higgins of Tiverton carved a statue at the Veterans Auditorium in Pawtucket for a pilot of a TV show called *Weird and Wonderful*. Higgins donated the 800-pound, white pine wood and the statue will be donated to Fallon Elementary School in Pawtucket.
- The map of the Blackstone Valley that is made up of tiles manufactured by Folia Industries and laid on the floor of the Visitors Center in late 1999 has already begun to warp and plans were made to replace it.
- Neville Lassotovitch designed William Blackstone and Betty The Learned Elephant for a statewide Mr. Potato Head campaign.
- The William Blackstone Potato Head, designed by Neville Lassotovitch, was unveiled at the Blackstone Valley Visitors Center in Pawtucket.
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat was highlighted in the American Canals Magazine in Spring 2000.
- 5 oz. souvenir bottles of Autocrat coffee syrup were for sale by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Tours of the Providence River during WaterFire nights were held on the Spirit of the Blackstone Valley. Tours to WaterFire were also available on the Hope and Renaissance ferry boats owned by Water Cruises of RI, LLC
- The John H Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor presented Heritage Partnership grants to help build the Samuel Slater Canal Boat, and to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for development of a Blackstone Valley Educator's Guide website.
- Betty the Learned Elephant, the Potato Head designed by Neville Lassotovitch was completed and placed at the Manton Free Public Library in Glocester.
- The first RI Dragon Boat and Taiwan Day Festival – introduced Dragon boat racing to the Blackstone Valley.
- The Narragansett Bay Commission donated a 1985 Chevy Suburban to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Crown Collision donated services to fix the truck. The truck also has a hitch on the back which can be used to tow the Tourism Council's boats.
- Robert Billington and other local officials traveled to Taiwan to attend the International Conference on Taiwan's Tourism Development Strategy for the 21st Century.
- Blackstone River Watershed Council provided \$250 scholarships to 10 high school students for the first time.
- The Blackstone River Theater, which will be located at the former Masonic Temple on Broad St in Cumberland, announced a grand opening that was held in April 2000.
- Tours of the Blackstone Gorge on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* were held from May-July. Tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* along with a visit to the Southwick Zoo in Mendon, Massachusetts were held in July.
- The 15th Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was held in June at Spring Lake in Burrillville. Megan Epler Wood, President and founder of the EcoTourism Society was the guest speaker. Dave Balfour was inducted into the William Blackstone Society.
- Robert Billington served as Grand Marshall of the Autumnfest Parade in Woonsocket.
- Sixteen visitors from the Amber Valley visited the Blackstone Valley in October.
- The Tourism Council hosted sold-out Christmas Trolley Tours in Burrillville, Smithfield, North Smithfield, and Lincoln.

- A Rubber Ducky Race was held in the Blackstone River. Over 900 rubber ducks were dropped into the river from the John Street Bridge raising funds for the Blackstone Valley.
- The Hope and the Renaissance, two ferry boats owned by Water Cruises, LLC offered commuter and leisure rides from Pawtucket to Providence. The cumulative passenger total since the shuttle service began in July 1999 was 8,459 passengers on both ferries.
- *Seal Watch and Nature Cruises of Narragansett Bay* sponsored by Water Cruises of Rhode Island, LLC were held in March on the Hope and Renaissance ferry boats.
- A week-long Rivers Project led by Bob Williams, a professor of Science Education at Southern Illinois University, was held in July onboard the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- Nine teenagers from the Narragansett Boat Club in Providence were rescued by the Captain and crew of the Hope ferry boat after their eight-oared rowing boat capsized on the Seekonk River on August 2. The Hope is owned by the Tourism Council and Conway Tours/Grayline.
- An informational video on Taiwan was shown at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center for a week, celebrating the friendship between Taiwan and Rhode Island. The U.S Olympic baseball team played the Taiwan Olympic Baseball Team at McCoy Stadium on August 1.
- The Council invested in the development of a computerized ticketing program.
- Walmart of Woonsocket donated \$2,500 towards the publication of a book called "*A Month in the Blackstone River Valley*" which will be a hard-covered coffee table book about the farms, fields, factories and families of the Blackstone Valley.
- The theater at the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council had 50 seats from the Leroy Theater of Pawtucket that were recently reupholstered. The seats were available to be adopted for a cost of \$350.
- A Night Out Against Crime was held in Woonsocket in August and featured the Blackstone Valley Trolley filled with policemen, members of the clergy, public officials and the Woonsocket Neighborhood Watch group visiting neighborhoods. Policemen handed out t-shirts and coloring books to children.
- The Pawtucket Arts Convergence Festival Gala was held at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in September. The Gala featured food and entertainment.
- The Pawtucket Convergence Arts Festival 2000 was held from September 8-24 in various locations and featured photography exhibits, children's activities, musical entertainment, and events at Slater Park.
- Expedition 2000 took place in September with paddlers canoeing from Worcester to Providence. Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Director Jan Reitsma and Massachusetts Secretary of Environmental Affairs Bob Duran joined the group for one day, paddling to Manville.
- Restaurant owner Louis Yip purchased two dragon boats from China and had them shipped to Pawtucket. The boats were the star attraction at the First Annual Dragon Boat Festival which took place at the Pawtucket Landing as part of the Pawtucket Convergence Arts Festival.
- Robert Billington approached local businesses about purchasing an English double-decker bus to travel between tourism sites in the Blackstone Valley.
- U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee took a ride on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* from Central Falls Landing.
- The Fall Foliage train trip on the Providence & Worcester Railroad was held in October. The historically-narrated train tour traveled from Cumberland to Worcester roundtrip.

- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* and The Hope and The Renaissance, the two European-style ferry boats, were featured in *Destinations Magazine* in October.
- Tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* were held on the Blackstone River leaving from Market Square in Woonsocket and focused on the cultural heritage of the French and Franco-Americans who settled in Woonsocket.
- Canoe rentals were available from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council through the Blackstone Canoe and Kayak Company.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council operated the first Polar Express train ride from the historic train depot in Woonsocket on the Providence and Worcester Railroad. There were two trips carrying 450 passengers.
- The Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was over \$1,026,876 for 2000.

2001

- The Tourism Council led a cultural/tourism/economic development tour to the Amber Valley in England as part of the Amber Valley/Blackstone Valley Compact.
- Work on the Central Falls Landing project was begun. Partial funding for river landing portion was provided in a grant from the ISTEAF funds, administered by RIDOT.
- A birdhouse-making workshop at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center was held in February and sponsored by the Tourism Council.
- Tom Ward, publisher of *The Valley Breeze*, published the *Visitor Guide to the Blackstone Valley*.
- Robert Billington participated in the Brazil National Tourism Marketplace. Rhode Island and Sergipe, Brazil are sister states.
- The City of Pawtucket received a Millennium sculpture from the town of Belper, England.
- Twenty-eight people from the Amber Valley visited the Blackstone Valley to strengthen our ties with Belper, England, the birthplace of Samuel Slater.
- The Tourism Council managed the Build Out Analysis Plan funded by the National Heritage Corridor for RIDEM and the nine Blackstone Valley communities.
- The Tourism Council worked with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, the Providence & Worcester Railroad, the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and others to host the first Blackstone Valley Greenway Challenge which is a running, canoeing and biking event.
- The Tourism Council hosted the headquarters for the city-wide arts festival, Convergence Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone River Watershed Council began working with RIDEM on the *Blackstone River Action Plan*. The Plan will establish one document that will address all of the needs of the Blackstone Valley Watershed in RI.
- Hundreds of visitors have stayed overnight on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat since it's launching in 2000.
- *Trout Unlimited* wrote a story highlighting the Blackstone River in their Winter 2001 edition.
- Donna Rochon, a Pawtucket artist and business owner, was hired as the program manager of the Convergence Pawtucket Arts Festival.
- *Preservation Magazine* featured the Blackstone River Valley in the September/October 2001 issue. The Blackstone Valley was used as a success story by the National Trust in the publication *Stories Across America*.
- Tourism Council staff attended the NTA conference in Salt Lake City, Utah – the largest motor coach sales event in the United States.
- *The Blackstone Valley Christmas Trolley Tours* will pass houses in Cumberland that are on the *Deck Your Doors* contest sponsored by Residential Properties, the Valley Breeze and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Special Christmas trolley tours thru Pawtucket's Winter Wonderland are offered for the first time.
- Special two-hour Christmas trolley tours will travel from Burrillville to Winter Wonderland in nearby Connecticut for two trips in December.
- *Visit My Home – New England's Historic National Park* stickers are available at no charge to residents of the Blackstone Valley.
- The House Appropriations Committee approved \$1.5 million dollars for the third phase of the Blackstone Valley Bikeway per U.S. Representative Patrick Kennedy.

- The Blackstone River Watershed Council celebrated ZAP the Blackstone clean-ups in April to celebrate Earth Day.
- WaterFire boat tours on the *Spirit of the Blackstone* were offered on select dates from May to September.
- *Spring Birding Tours* were held on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in May.
- Radio personality and storyteller Florence Markoff presented a lively narrative on famous and not-so-famous Rhode Islanders at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in April.
- Robert Billington visited the Amber Valley in May.
- The Visitors Center in Pawtucket was the venue for this year for the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce Legislative Session.
- The Pawtucket Foundation took a tour on the Blackstone Valley Trolley in June led by Dan Sullivan from Collette Tours.
- The fourth annual Rivers Day event was held at Central Falls Landing in April.
- Six high school seniors were awarded scholarships from the Blackstone River Watershed Council in April at the Rivers Day celebration.
- Blackstone Valley destinations chosen as editor's picks in Yankee Magazine include Water Cruises of Rhode Island, the Samuel Slater Canal Boat, the Blackstone River Bikeway, Wright's Farm Restaurant, and Chan's in Woonsocket.
- The William Blackstone Potato Head received worldwide attention after being banished from Belper, England to a new location. Stories on Mr. Potato Head were in the Daily Telegraph, ABC Radio in England, The Daily Sun, the Mirror, BBC Radio, the Associated Press, along with local newspapers and TV stations in the United States.
- For the first time, all 24 communities in the Blackstone Valley celebrated Project ZAP with clean-ups of the Blackstone River on Earth Day in April. The Tourism Council led ZAP the Blackstone on Earth Day with 700 volunteers participating in community clean-ups and storm drain stenciling.
- The Tourism Council welcomed youth soccer players and their chaperones from Belper, England in May to play in a soccer tournament, attend a PawSox game and visit local places of interest in the Blackstone Valley.
- For the second year in a row, the Dragonboat Races and Taiwan Day Festival was held on the Blackstone River in Pawtucket.
- A Spring Blossom Railway Tour was held in May on the Providence & Worcester Railroad. The historically narrated tour train traveled from Cumberland, Rhode Island to Gardner, Massachusetts roundtrip.
- The Blackstone Valley Visitor Center received a wooden female millworker in March carved by chainsaw artist Michael Higgins of the Magic Garden in Tiverton.
- A storm drain stenciling program throughout the Blackstone Valley sponsored by the Tourism Council was held in April.
- William Blackstone Potato Head was shipped to England and received national and international publicity.
- America House of Newport was chosen to develop the Tourism council's marketing campaign. The firm will develop several PR campaigns, trade show exhibits, media advertising and promotional rack cards.
- Yankee Magazine featured an 18-page color story on the Blackstone Valley.
- A Rubber Ducky Race was held in the Blackstone River. Over 900 rubber ducks were dropped into the river from the John Street Bridge raising funds for the Blackstone Valley.
- Tourism Council offered three Elderhostel summer tours presenting historic and cultural aspects of the Blackstone Valley.
- The Tourism Council and Conway Tours completed a two-year ferry transportation contract for the operation of ferry boat service between Pawtucket and Providence, under the direction of RIDOT. While 55% of our

passenger goal was achieved, the operation ran safe, on time and offered great service. However, The Hope and the Renaissance, were put up for sale due to low ridership.

- The Council retired its working boat, Blackstone Valley Tourism One and sold Hovercraft Tourism 3, an experimental vessel used along the Blackstone River.
- The Tourism Council is now online with a website developed by David Goldstein and his company INTAP.
- A strategic marketing plan was completed for the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor. Dan Yaeger Associates led the collaborative effort to create a united voice, logo and promotional campaign for the Tourism Council, the National Heritage Corridor, and the Blackstone Valley Visitors Bureau in Massachusetts.
- Produced the 5th *Christmas in the Valley* guide to holiday activities.
- The Opening Gala for the Convergence Arts Festival was held at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in September.
- The Artist Studio Trolley Tours, part of the Pawtucket Convergence Arts Festival, will be held in September.
- In September, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council listed 17 ways to see the Blackstone Valley including by train, by bike, by canoe, by riverboat, etc.
- The Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was held in September and the Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Gene and Rita Conway of Conway Tours/Grayline. Dana Newbrook was inducted into the William Blackstone Society.
- The original restored film on Project ZAP was shown at the Visitors Center in Pawtucket in September.
- Chainsaw artists and wood sculptors Michael Higgins and Billy Rebele carved two small children of millworkers out of large logs at the Veteran's Memorial Amphitheatre in Pawtucket in September as part of the Convergence Art Festival.
- Rose Lavoie of the Gloucester Heritage Society received the 2001 Rhode Island Tourism Achievement Award from Governor Lincoln Almond at the annual Rhode Island Tourism Unity Luncheon at the Rhode Island Convention Center.
- The Renaissance ferry boat that is owned by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and Conway Tours-Grayline was leased to a private company that plans to ferry commuters from Liberty Island Park in Jersey City, N.J. to a dock in Lower Manhattan near Ground Zero.
- The winning team from the Rhode Island Dragonboat Races competed for a trip to Taiwan sponsored by China Airways.
- The Blackstone Valley Lifetime Achievement Award was given to Gene and Rita Conway of Conway Tours and the William Blackstone Society Award was given to Dana Newbrook of A.I. Designs at the annual meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in September at the Kirkbrae Country Club.
- British Tea Tours were offered on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat in September and October.
- Chainsaw artists Michael Higgins of the Secret Garden in Tiverton and Billy Rebele carved a boy and girl millworker out of wood for the Convergence Arts Festival in Pawtucket in September.
- The Fall Foliage Train Excursion on the Providence & Worcester Railroad from Cumberland, Rhode Island to Worcester, Massachusetts was held in October.
- The staff of the newly-formed Pawtucket Foundation, led by Director Rich Davis, took a trolley tour of Pawtucket to identify key areas of the city that could be developed, such as river walks, old mill buildings and vacant lots.

- The Blackstone Valley Watershed awarded six \$250 scholarships to area high school seniors on Rivers Day in June.
- The Mr. Potato Head comic strip debuted in the Pawtucket Times in July. The strip was developed by Garfield creator Jim Davis.
- The U.S. Senate passed an appropriations bill that would award \$2 million to the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.
- As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Representative Patrick Kennedy announced that the panel has approved \$1.5 million for the third phase of the Blackstone River Bikeway.
- The Blackstone River Valley Community Preservation Super Summit was held in June to discuss land use planning of the Blackstone Valley for the future. Over 250 planners, town officials, organizations and the public attended the event which was sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission.
- Elderhostel offered tours to seniors over age 55 in Rhode Island and the Blackstone Valley. Elderhostel has offered tours in Rhode for the past six years organized by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Yankee Magazine selected several Blackstone Valley areas as "Editor's Picks" in the April edition of the magazine. The venues chosen were Water Cruises of Rhode Island, the Pawtucket to Providence Ferry Service, the Samuel Slater Canal Boat docked in Central Falls, the Blackstone River Bikeway that stretches from Pawtucket to Woonsocket, Wright's Farm restaurant in Nasonville and Chan's Restaurant in Woonsocket.
- Numerous articles about Mr. Potato Head being sent to Belper, England appeared in newspapers all over the United States and Great Britain.
- Tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* leaving from Market Square, Woonsocket were available from August – November. Haunted River tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* leaving from Market Square were held in October.
- A deck and floating dock system was built at Central Falls Landing by B & B Environmental Construction Services. The project included a boat-launching ramp and a portage area for canoes and kayaks.
- The Blackstone Valley Trolley was used as part of the Artist Studio Trolley Tours that were offered during the Pawtucket Convergence Arts Festival.
- A Rhode Island Hospitality, Travel and Tourism Summit was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel for tourism operators to talk about the impact of 9/11 on the industry.
- Tours of the Blackstone Valley were a highlight of the National Preservation Conference which was held in Providence in October.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council reported that the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center saw an increase of 33.9 percent in traffic for the year ending as of September 2001.
- *Christmas in the Valley* was published by The Valley Breeze in November. In past years, the Tourism Council has published a *Christmas in the Valley* brochure. It has now been expanded to a newspaper insert by The Valley Breeze in partnership with the Tourism Council.
- For the second year in a row, the Polar Express tours on the Providence & Worcester Railroad were held in November. The Polar Express made six trips and carried 1,998 passengers.
- The Tourism Council hosted Christmas trolley tours in Burrillville, North Smithfield, Smithfield, and Lincoln.
- Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket welcomed 93,000 visitors to the Blackstone Valley.
- The Annual Revenue for the BVTC was \$894,148 for 2001.

2002

- Worldwide publicity was created for the Blackstone Valley after sending a 7-foot-tall William Blackstone Mr. Potato Head to England.
- The tourblackstone.com website was launched, promoting attractions, events and other Blackstone Valley information.
- Robert Billington attended World Canal Conference in Montreal, Canada.
- Robert Billington presented a sustainable tourism development paper in Hong Kong at an International Conference on Tourism.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council attended the Pow Wow in New Orleans, one of the largest travel shows in the United States.
- A *Spring Blossom Train trip* was held on the Providence & Worcester Railroad in May.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. The funds will be used to support tourism development, programs and operations, and public awareness efforts.
- The Mr. Potato Head that was sent to Belper, England by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council as a good-will gesture last year had his hat ripped off and his arm broken. He was sent for repairs to a fiberglass specialist and is now in front of a Safeway Store in Belper. Mr. Potato Head was kidnapped by a group calling itself The Potato Liberation Army and covered in tin foil before safely being brought back to the Safeway Store in Belper.
- A comprehensive plan has been developed to encourage redevelopment of the underused Pawtucket waterfront. The plan would create three new types of zones - one promoting the development of the public open space, another allowing industrial activity and the third encouraging a mix of uses, including residential, light manufacturing and commercial.
- A 30th anniversary celebration of Project ZAP was held on Earth Day in April when tons of tires and trash were picked up along the Blackstone River.
- One hundred tourism display racks made by Classic Design of Pawtucket were filled with tourism brochures from the Blackstone Valley placed in locations throughout the Heritage Corridor.
- A \$1,000 check was received from Bristol County Savings Bank to be used for the purchase of a double-decker bus by the BVTC.
- A series of affordable, multi-generational day trips for children and adults were held in the Blackstone Valley, sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The program was called *Bring Your Grandparents to the Blackstone Valley*.
- Robert Billington was honored in May by the Northern Rhode Island Council of the Arts for being a good friend of the arts and artists in the area.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council received preliminary approval for the Blackstone River Navigation System of Dockings and Landings along the Blackstone River from the ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act). If final approval is given, the landings would be built in Pawtucket, Lincoln, Cumberland, and Woonsocket.
- The Bristol County Savings Charitable Foundation donated \$3,500 to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for sculpture commissions.
- Ecology tours for children and adults were held on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* riverboat in July.
- *The Blackstone River Valley Passport* was introduced and offered discounts to historic and cultural attractions, riverboat tours, performing arts, restaurants and gift shops.

- An intergenerational Elderhostel called *Memories Too Special to Forget* was offered this year to children and grandparents. The six-day Rhode Island tour was a hands-on Rhode Island history lesson.
- Volunteers from the Blackstone Valley River Rescue Regional Dive Team were involved in attempting to bring up a safe that was found buried in the Blackstone River.
- Doug Hurst, a popular NASCAR driver known to his fans as Car 43, visited the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center as part of a blood drive sponsored by the Rhode Island Blood Center.
- The Army Corps of Engineers planned to convert 20 acres of the former Lonsdale Drive-In to marshland. The Blackstone Valley Bikeway will eventually connect the marshland area to the beginning of the bike path in Lincoln.
- A successful Convergence Arts Festival was held in Pawtucket for three weeks in September. The Dragonboat Festival was held and attracted many teams from the East Coast.
- The brochure *Pawtucket: Let Us Entertain You!* won a Literature and Promotion Award from Northeastern Economic Developers Association.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council unveiled its newest mode of transportation in October - a 1981 British double-decker bus which holds 78 passengers. The bus was available for tours of the Blackstone Valley, weddings and special events. Special tours on the double-decker bus to the Museum of Work & Culture and Brown & Hopkins Country Store in Chepachet were offered on Sunday afternoons.
- Tourism officials from Belper, England, the sister city to the Blackstone Valley, visited Pawtucket in October.
- Former State Senator Myrth York and businessman Donald Carcieri were guests at the Blackstone Valley Annual Dinner in October.
- A ribbon cutting was held in October to officially open River Island Park in Central Falls.
- Haunted River Tours were held on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in October leaving from Woonsocket.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, in cooperation with the Valley Breeze, published the annual Christmas in the Valley insert in the Valley Breeze.
- Two opportunities to fish while on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* were offered in July leaving from The Landing in Cumberland.
- Christmas Light Tours were held in December on the Blackstone Valley Trolley and the Blackstone Valley double-decker bus.
- A new footbridge connecting Cumberland and Lincoln sides of the Blackstone Valley Bikeway was dedicated in November. The new bridge brings the total length of the bikeway to 7 miles.
- The Blackstone Valley double-decker bus was a highlight of the "Business After Hours" event at Bristol County Savings Bank, sponsored by the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce in October.
- Robert Billington was an invited speaker for the 2002 Massachusetts Historic Preservation Conference that was held in New Bedford, Massachusetts.
- The Tourism Council sponsored a *Fall Foliage train tour* on the Providence & Worcester Railroad that traveled from Cumberland, Rhode Island to Gardner, Massachusetts round-trip.
- A special *RI Rivers Day Birding Tour* was held in June on board the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.

- The Blackstone River Watershed Council presented two \$500 scholarships to two local high school students who have shown a strong commitment to the environment.
- The Blackstone River Watershed Council, through a legislative grant sponsored by Senator Marc Cote, presented nine \$250 scholarships to area high school students.
- *Blackstone Valley Explorer* Riverboat *Wilderness Tours* leaving from the Central Falls Landing were held in July.
- *A Safari Cruise of the Blackstone Gorge* on the *Spirit of the Blackstone* with a trip to Southwick Zoo was held every Saturday in August.
- A cruise on the Blackstone River, recently designated an American Heritage River, took place every weekend from August to November leaving from the Woonsocket Landing at Market Square.
- A Farm Stands brochure was produced in May by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in cooperation with the Blackstone Valley Visitors Bureau.
- U. S. Representative Patrick Kennedy and other federal, state and city officials were on hand to open segment 5 of the bike path from Front Street to Quinville in Lincoln in June.
- Rhode Island Rivers Day was held in June at the Central Falls Landing.
- Thundermist Tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* leaving from Market Square in Woonsocket were held from August to November.
- Louis Yip received the Blackstone Valley Regional Tourism Award in May from Governor Lincoln Almond at the annual Rhode Island Tourism Luncheon at the Rhode Island Convention Center.
- The annual photo contest *Pawtucket Mills: Our Past and Our Future* sponsored by the Convergence Arts Festival will be on display at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center during the month of September.
- Haunted River Tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* were held in October leaving from Market Square in Woonsocket.
- The Blackstone River Watershed Council was awarded official designation by the Rhode Island Rivers Council.
- Water quality testing equipment was upgraded on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in collaboration with Narragansett Bay Commission.
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat was featured in a story by the Associated Press this year and the story appeared in over 200 national and international publications.
- Feature stories about the Blackstone Valley appeared in *Preservation Magazine*, a publication by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- A cover story about the Blackstone Valley appeared in *Group Tour Magazine*.
- *Yankee Magazine* included a feature story on the Blackstone River Valley.
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* and the Samuel Slater Canal Boat were featured in a cover story in *Newsday Magazine* in June.
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat was featured in a story in *Rhode Island Roads Magazine* in July.
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat was featured in an article in *UK Waterways Magazine*.
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat was featured in a story in the *Narragansett Bay Journal*.
- The Tourism Council, in collaboration with the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor presented the first customer service training program for 35 front-line managers.

- Ten different tours were offered this year through the Elderhostel program. Blackstone Valley Tourism has participated in Elderhostel for the past six years.
- Robert Billington attended the National Tourism Association Convention in Houston, Texas.
- The Blackstone Valley hosted 25 guests this year from the Amber Valley.
- The Tourism Council received a grant from the Austin T. Levy Foundation to produce a Distance Learning Program about the Blackstone Valley to classrooms around the country.
- The City of Pawtucket received a Literature and Promotion Award from Northeastern Economic Developers Association in September for the tourism brochure *Pawtucket: Let Us Entertain You!* designed by Neville Lassotovitch.
- The 12-passenger river craft *Spirit of the Blackstone* offered tours on the scenic Whittin Reservoir in Douglas, Massachusetts in July.
- The Pawtucket Arts Collaborative opened an art gallery at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket.
- *A Bugs of the Blackstone Tour* led by Tammy Gilpatrick was held on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in June.
- The Rhode Island Dragonboat Festival and Taiwan Day was held in September. Southwest Airlines provided a \$200 plane ticket for each member of the winning team or the team can decide to divide up \$3,000.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism continues to work with the city of Central Falls on the redevelopment of Central Falls Landing. A new boat landing and docks are under construction.
- Funding of \$510,000 for the construction of four new river landings on the Blackstone River will come from the state and federal money appropriated under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century.
- The Tourism Council continues to host the Christmas Trolley Tours in Burrillville, North Smithfield, Smithfield, Cumberland and Lincoln.
- Robert Billington and Mary Harrington attended the National Tour Association Convention Trade Show in Los Angeles.
- A total of \$10,000 was collected by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in honor of Shawn Nassaney and his girlfriend Lynn Goodchild who perished on 9-11 when their hijacked plane crashed into the World Trade Center. A scholarship fund was set up and a check was presented to St. Raphael's Academy in Pawtucket, as Shawn was a 1998 graduate of the school.
- British Tea Tours were offered on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat.
- Betty Johnson, local author and historian, received the William Blackstone Award from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council at the Council's annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony. Governor Lincoln Almond and gubernatorial candidates Myrth York and Donald Carcieri also spoke.
- Two fishing trips on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* leaving from the Cumberland side of the Blackstone River were offered in July.
- A puppet show and exhibit by Dan Butterworth Puppets was on display at the Slater Mill Gallery at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in December.
- A Bicycle Tour map of the Blackstone Valley was available from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in partnership with the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island.
- *Turn it Around With Tourism*, a national network teleconference devoted to the organization of rural tourism initiatives, was held at Bryant College and organized by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.

- Over 700 people attended the *Travel Experiences Trade Show 1992* at Lincoln Greyhound Park for group tour planners in October.
- During two different Polar Express train trips, the Providence & Worcester Railroad collided with two parked cars that were parked too close to the railroad tracks near the new bike path on a Saturday and Sunday in November.
- The Polar Express train ran from Cumberland and carried 2,568 passengers on a total of 8 trips.
- *The Blackstone Valley Christmas Light Tours* on board the Blackstone Valley Trolley and the British double decker bus were held in December.
- The Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$789,920 for 2002.

2003

- The Easter Bunny and representatives from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council visited the offices of the Valley Breeze, The Times and Neighbors to promote the first Easter Bunny Express Train Trips which were held on the Providence & Worcester Railroad in April.
- The City of Pawtucket received five new Dragonboats from Taiwan for the Rhode Island Dragonboat Festival which is held at Festival Pier in Pawtucket during the Pawtucket Arts Festival.
- For the first time, there was an Open Studio Stroll in the Spring where over 100 artists' studios opened to the public. The Blackstone Valley Trolley shuttled people from one location to another throughout the day.
- Over 3,000 tires and other trash were hauled out of the Blackstone River by the Blackstone River Watershed Association. The project was underwritten by Firestone for Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful.
- The Blackstone Valley and the Amber Valley of England celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the twinning of the two areas in May.
- A special one-day event called *There's No Place Like Home* celebrating National Tourism Week and sponsored by the State Department of Tourism was held on May 1. The special event included 22 bus tours that criss-crossed the state and highlighted many historical points of interest.
- The first Easter Bunny Express train ride on the Providence and Worcester Railroad left from Cumberland, Rhode Island in April.
- Robert Billington of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was elected to serve as chairman of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission.
- The Great American Cleanup partnership, in cooperation with the nine Blackstone Valley communities, collected over 7,000 tires along the Blackstone River in May.
- DeTours provided self-guided maps featuring themed tours in the Valley.
- The Tourism Council led a group of 12 Blackstone Valley citizens on a tour of the Amber Valley in England in May.
- The Tourism Council's British double-decker bus was profiled as a feature article in AAA Southern New England March 2003 newsletter.
- A grant was received from the Narragansett Bay Commission to provide scholarships for students to participate in ecology program on the *Explorer*.
- Robert Billington led the Board of Directors of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce in Massachusetts on a bus tour of the Blackstone Valley in Rhode Island to acquaint them with the area.
- The Blackstone Valley Greenway Challenge was held in September.
- The Valley Breeze received the Blackstone Valley Tourism Award from the RI Department of Tourism in May at the Unity Tourism Luncheon. Tom Ward and Marcia Green accepted the award from Governor Carcieri.
- The Pawtucket Arts Festival Gala at the Blackstone Valley Visitors Center hosted 45 restaurants. The Gala also featured music and art exhibits.
- Plans have been approved for a public access ramp for boats, canoes and kayaks at a two-acre spot on the Blackstone River off Manville Hill Road in Cumberland.
- The *Blackstone Valley Explorer* marked its 10th anniversary with free rides on the *Explorer* riverboat on August 16 at the Central Falls Landing and also at the Pawtucket Pier on August 31.

- Catch and release programs were presented on the *Explorer* to acquaint people to the recreational uses of the Blackstone River.
- The Samuel Slater canal boat was featured in Rhode Island Monthly and the Providence Sunday Journal as a "hidden treasure." The Blackstone Valley also featured in an article in Fodor's Travel Guide.
- The Blackstone River Watershed Council, in partnership with the Heritage Corridor, the Blackstone River Watershed Association, the Blackstone Headwaters Coalition and the Massachusetts Audubon Society, started a watershed-wide, citizen water-quality monitoring program.
- The Blackstone River Watershed hosted a waterway clean-up in April at the Blackstone River State Park in Lincoln.
- Blackstone River Watershed Council hosted a Blackstone River clean-up in May as part of the Great American Clean-Up.
- The Valley Breeze, in partnership with the Tourism Council, published the Blackstone River Valley Visitor Guide Spring/ Summer, Fall and Holiday editions. Over 60,000 copies were published each season.
- The Tourism Council received a \$6,000 donation of Blackstone Valley paintings from local artist Peter Campbell.
- Robert Billington attended the Travel Industry Association of America trade industry expo in St. Louis, Missouri.
- The Tourism Council joined with Elderhostel to present state-wide and regional heritage tours featuring the Blackstone Valley.
- A shopping trip to the Wrentham Village Premium Outlets was held on the Tourism Council's double-decker bus on two Saturdays in May.
- *A Walk in the Footsteps of Samuel Slater* tour was held on the Tourism Council's double-decker bus on various days throughout the summer.
- Rides to WaterFire in Providence on the double-decker bus were offered by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council participated in the Discover New England Travel & Tourism Summit highlighting regional cultural destinations.
- Leon Mathieu seniors were special guests on the Blackstone Valley double-decker bus tour on the Cox Cable "road trip" travelogue in May.
- A double-decker bus tour and Chicken Family Style Dining at Wright's Farm was held on various dates in the summer.
- *Discover Rhode Island's Work Life of the French Canadians* tour on the Tourism Council's double-decker bus was held on various days throughout the summer.
- The Tourism Council provided office space to the Gamm Theater as they transition moving from Providence to Pawtucket.
- The Tourism Council completed a business plan and early designs for the Blackstone River Exploration and Research Center with assistance from Ocean State Charities, the Heritage Corridor, Morris Nathanson Design, and the Narragansett Bay Commission.
- The Blackstone River Watershed Council with the Blackstone Rivers Project, Mass Audubon, Broad Meadow Brook and BRVNHCC presented a Clean Water Festival at which over 10 schools from Worcester to Central Falls presented projects on clean water.
- The Blackstone River Watershed Council secured a \$250,000 open space grant through the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to go towards the purchase of the Blackall property in Cumberland.
- A Spring Historic Shopping Train Excursion to Putnam, CT on the Providence & Worcester Railroad was held in June.

- Blackstone Valley hosted artists and visitors from Belper, England as part of the twinning between Pawtucket and Belper.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the South County Tourism Council presented an interpretive bus and walking tour of King Philip's War in April. Passengers boarded the 78-passenger British double-decker bus owned by the Tourism Council and traveled the approximate route troops took to the Great Swamp Fight.
- The Blackstone River Watershed Council provided ten \$250 scholarships to graduating seniors in the Blackstone Valley.
- Historic Adventure double-decker bus tours were held in June.
- As part of Project Zap in June, the public was invited to enjoy scenic tours along the Blackstone River aboard the Spirit of the Blackstone Valley.
- A Fall Foliage Train trip to Gardner, Massachusetts was held in October and a Fall Antique Shopping Trip to Putnam, Connecticut was held in October. All train trips were held on the Providence & Worcester Railroad.
- The observance of the signing of the 212-year old Polish Constitution of May 3rd was held at the Visitors Center in June. Polish food, polka music, Polish video presentations, and other exhibits were featured at the event.
- A poetry reading by Norah Pollard, daughter of Pawtucket jockey Red Pollard, was held at the Visitor's Center as part of the Convergence Arts Festival.
- All 9 cities and towns in the Blackstone Valley participated in clean-ups in the Valley as part of the Keep America Beautiful 50th Anniversary.
- Blackstone River Watershed Council received a \$7,500 grant from the RI Rivers Council.
- Haunted River Tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* leaving from Market Square in Woonsocket were held in October. Local actors from the New Gate Theater were the performers on the boat.
- Will Gates was inducted into the Rev. William Blackstone Society at the Tourism Council's Annual Meeting in September.
- A special needs class from Lincoln High School enjoyed a tour of historical spots in Lincoln on the Blackstone Valley Trolley. Since the trolley is handicapped accessible, it gave the students a first-time opportunity to see where they live in relation to each other and also see historical locations in the town of Lincoln.
- The Blackstone Valley double decker bus was a highlight of the Northern Rhode Island Small Business Expo at Bryant College by offering shuttle rides to the Expo.
- In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Blackstone Canal, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council offered historical tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* highlighting the Blackstone Canal and Tow Path in Woonsocket.
- The Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor will receive \$1.9 million dollars in federal funds for fiscal year 2004.
- Three thousand tires were hauled from the banks of the Blackstone River during the spring clean-up event.
- The Samuel Slater canal boat was available for overnight stays and British tea tours.
- "Tour Rhode Island, There's No Place Like Home" planned a one-day bus tour of Rhode Island to familiarize Rhode Islanders with local tourism spots. One thousand Rhode Islanders learned about favorite visitor destinations throughout the state from tourism professionals.

- The Blackstone Valley Polar Express was held on four dates in November this year. Eight trips were made from Cumberland and carried 2,352 passengers.
- Annual revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$841,130 for 2003.

2004

- A new website, Cycleblackstone.com, promoted the Blackstone Valley Bike Path.
- The Blackstone Valley Art Showcase was held from December 14 through January 17 at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center to benefit the educational programs of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- The fifth year of the Pawtucket Arts Festival took place in September with a gala at the Pawtucket Visitors Center. The Arts Festival included trolley tours to art studios, Dragonboat races, a film festival, and a performance of the RI Philharmonic at Slater Park.
- The former Lebanon Mill on Exchange Street was transformed in 2004 into Blackstone Exchange LLC, live-work condo units along the Blackstone River in Pawtucket. The project is being developed by Ranne Warner from Lexington, Massachusetts.
- Over 2,100 discarded tires were hauled out of the Blackstone River during Keep America Beautiful's Great American Cleanup in May, and they will be taken away and recycled by Firestone Tire.
- A *Preserve America Community Award* was presented to the city of Pawtucket in July by Lynn Scarlett, assistant to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.
- Tours to visit the Tall Ships in Newport via the double-decker bus were offered by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in July.
- Boat tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in September focused on the development of the city of Woonsocket and the history of the French-Canadian immigrants.
- *Blackstone River Pizza Cruises* were held on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* on Saturdays in August leaving from the Landing in Central Falls.
- *Movies Under the Stars* were held at The Landing in Central Falls on Saturday evenings in August.
- A ribbon-cutting was held on Rhode Island Rivers Day in June to celebrate the new boat launch at The Landing in Central Falls.
- The Blackstone Canal was named one of the 10 most endangered historic resources by Preservation MASS.
- Two of the latest DeTour maps have been released including *Christmas in the Valley: Northern Rhode Island* and *Christmas in the Valley: Central Massachusetts*.
- An image of The Samuel Slater Canal Boat, which was built in England and is used for overnight stays on the Blackstone River, was on the cover of 200,000 pizza delivery boxes sold by Ronzio Pizza which is headquartered in Central Falls.
- *Blackstone Valley Canoe Trail*, a civic art project, placed gaily decorated canoes throughout the Blackstone Valley in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.
- Representatives from the Blackstone Valley along with Representative Patrick Kennedy flew to Taiwan to receive six dragonboats for the Rhode Island Dragonboat Festival to be held in September.
- RIPTA donated a 12-passenger mini-bus to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The mini-bus was made handicapped-accessible with a grant from the June Rockwell Levy Foundation. They also provided a grant to create a wheelchair ramp for the double-decker bus.
- State and local officials had a ribbon cutting at Central Falls Landing to commemorate a Blackstone Valley Tourism Blackstone River Valley Canal Transportation and Navigation System.
- Mayor King and an 11-member delegation from the Amber Valley visited the Blackstone Valley to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the twinning of Amber Valley and the Blackstone Valley.

- An article about our William Blackstone Potato Head appeared in the London Guardian newspaper.
- The Easter Bunny made a surprise visit to the local newspaper offices to promote our upcoming Easter Bunny Train trips on the Providence & Worcester Railroad.
- A new Blackstone Valley road map was designed by Arrow Map Inc. of South Easton, Massachusetts. The map includes all nine cities and towns in the Blackstone Valley along with points of interest.
- Easter Bunny train trips were held on the Providence & Worcester Railroad on April 3.
- State Tourism officials have created 22 differently-themed bus tours to travel the state on May 1 to show that "*There's No Place Like Home*"
- A Spring Shopping Tour to Putnam, CT on the Providence & Worcester Railroad was held on June 12.
- A preview of the dragonboats was held at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in March.
- Rhode Island Dragonboat Races and Taiwan Day Festival were held in September.
- Blackstone Valley Visitors Center hosted *A Taste of Pawtucket Gala* in September to kick off the Pawtucket Arts Festival.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism received \$5,000 in environmental funds from the Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District because the Tourism Council was forced to cancel boat tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. In October of 2003, an overflow of untreated raw sewage flowed into the river from Millbury's water treatment plant when they lost power for three hours.
- The seventh annual Rhode Island Rivers Day was celebrated on June 19 with the opening of the Blackstone Riverboat Landing and dock in Central Falls. Highlights of the day included a ribbon-cutting, entertainment, awards and presentations, and a number of water activities including canoe and kayak rentals, free rides on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* and British Tea Tours on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat. Representative Patrick Kennedy and Senator Jack Reed attended.
- Rhode Island Rivers Month was celebrated in June with canoeing, kayaking, hiking, fishing, arts and crafts, and theatrical and musical events throughout the state.
- Cumberland resident, Frank Geary, who has worked as an environmentalist and conservationist for over 30 years on the Blackstone River, was honored with the John H. Chafee Award on Rhode Island Rivers Day.
- The Pawtucket Red Sox hosted the Triple-A All Star Game at McCoy Stadium in July.
- Transportation to the Tall Ships in Newport on a British double-decker bus was offered by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in July.
- Fall foliage train tours on the Providence & Worcester Railroad from Cumberland, Rhode Island to Putnam, Connecticut were held on two dates in October.
- A new series of four different bicycle tours were planned as a new visitor attraction in partnership with the John H. Chafee National Heritage Corridor, the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Blackstone Bike Tours will feature overnights and visits to local attractions.
- Over 4,000 people participated in the "Footsteps in History" event, "Five Centuries in Three Days," a culmination of the Preserve America Communities Award in 2004. Over 130 attractions in 24 communities from Providence to Worcester were open to the public at no charge.
- Thundermist Tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* were held in October departing from the Woonsocket Landing.

- Haunted River Tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* were held in October leaving from the Woonsocket Landing.
- Overnight Tours on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat and British Tea Tours leaving from the Central Falls Landing were held this year
- The Polar Express movie premiered at the Showcase Cinema in Seekonk and Providence Place Mall.
- Kacey Richards, representing the Deborah Cook Sayles Pawtucket Public Library, received the "Footsteps in History" award at the Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Rose Lavoie was inducted into the William Blackstone Society. Jacques Staelen was honored for his work as Chairman of the Rhode Island Box Car Merci Train which was brought to display at the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket.
- *Christmas in the Valley* is the name of two new regional self-drive tours developed by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Each tour comes with its own map to make planning and driving easier.
- Blackstone Valley Christmas Lights Tours on the British-style double-decker bus were offered in December.
- The Travel Industry of America reported that the Blackstone Valley employed 1,240 people in tourism-related industries, generating a \$24.4 million payroll in 2004. The nine communities that make up the Blackstone River Valley generated \$8.1 million in state and local taxes and travel expenditures in the area were \$99.2 million.
- Polar Express train rides left from Cumberland, Rhode Island to Uxbridge, Massachusetts on four dates in November for a total of 8 trips carrying 2,584 passengers.

2005

- The Tourism Council obtained licensing by Warner Brothers to host THE POLAR EXPRESS™ Ride.
- The Rhode Island Chinese New Year was celebrated in February at the Chinese Christian Church in Pawtucket. Over 1,000 people attended.
- The Pawtucket Rotary Club is lighting up the Blackstone River at the falls near the Slater Mill to celebrate their 100th Anniversary.
- The Dineblackstone.com database of Blackstone Valley restaurants and eating establishments was created.
- The Blackstone Valley double-decker bus was sold to the Philadelphia Trolley Works Company in June. The Philadelphia Trolley Company bought the bus and repainted it and opened the top. The bus is now part of the fleet of double-decker buses touring historic sites in Philadelphia.
- A boat provided by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council partnered with WaterFire, The PARI Independent Living Center, and the Ocean State Center for Independent Living to offer boat rides to tour WaterFire in Providence. For the third year in a row, people with disabilities such as Lou Gehrig's disease, cerebral palsy, and other disabilities were able to see WaterFire up close.
- The Easter Bunny Express Train ride on the Providence & Worcester Railroad was held in March.
- The book *Rhode Island 24/7* was published and included a photo of the Blackstone Valley by Kris Craig, a Providence Journal photographer.
- Various boat tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* were offered this summer include Twilight Cruises, Family Fishing Cruises, Early Evening Nature Cruises with the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, and Brown Bag Lunch Cruises.
- Chris Van Allsburg was presented the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 20th Annual Dinner of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in September at the Kirkbrae Country Club. Tom Ward, editor and publisher of The Valley Breeze, was inducted into the William Blackstone Society. The Blackstone Valley bureau of the Providence Journal was honored for *Summer on the Blackstone* which was a front-page series published every Monday in the Providence Journal.
- Blackstone Valley Christmas Trolley Tours were held in December.
- The Blackstone River Theater received the 2005 Governor's Blackstone Valley Regional Tourism Award at the Rhode Island Tourism Unity Awards Luncheon.
- RiverSing, a gathering of local choral and musical performers, helped celebrate Rhode Island Rivers Day in June along the banks of the Blackstone River.
- State tourism representatives visited St. Ann Arts and Cultural Center in Woonsocket on the annual Whistlestop Tour celebrating Rhode Island Tourism Week.
- The second annual Tour Rhode Island "There's No Place Like Home" celebration was held in Rhode Island in May. The event featured 24 buses that highlighted different tourism attractions in the state.
- DeTour maps highlighting various tours in the Blackstone Valley were published and were available at the Visitor Center.
- The latest stretch of the Blackstone Bikeway from the former Lonsdale Drive-In to the Pratt Dam in Lincoln was opened in June.
- *Expedition 2005*, a four-day, 50-mile kayaking and biking expedition which starts in Worcester and ends in Pawtucket was held in June.
- The Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament and Silent Auction was held at Crystal Lake Golf Course in June.

- The 20th Anniversary of the BVTC was celebrated throughout the year with the Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament at Spring Lake, Burrillville in June, a Chowder Reception onboard the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in Central Falls in July, an Ice-Cream Party and visit to the Penny Arcade at Spring Lake, Burrillville in August, a Wine and Cheese Reception at Diamond Hill Vineyard, Cumberland in September, a Reception at the covered bridge in Lincoln Woods in October, a chicken-family style dinner at Cricket's Restaurant in Smithfield in November, and a Candlelight Reception at Brown & Hopkins Country Store in Chepachet in December.
- The Belper Youth Soccer Team visited the Blackstone Valley for a one-week visit starting on May 28 as part of the on-going partnership between the Blackstone Valley and the Amber Valley in England. The group played three soccer games against local teams in the Blackstone Valley.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor unveiled the Blackstone Canoe Trail, a year-long travel promotion aimed at highlighting the recreational and eco-tourism destinations located in central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island. The campaign will feature dozens of brightly painted fiberglass canoes strategically located in various locations within the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor from Providence to Worcester.
- Senator Lincoln Chafee and Mark Jewell of the National Park Service toured the Blackstone Valley with Robert Billington.
- The Providence Journal ran a series "*Summer in the City*" highlighting special events in the Blackstone Valley of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, such as music festivals, boat tours, kayaking and canoeing on the Blackstone River.
- Construction was started on the new Blackstone Valley Gateway Center on Rt. 295 in Lincoln.
- A pontoon boat owned by the Tourism Council partnered with the Fogarty Center, the PARI Independent Living Center and the Ocean State Center for Independent Living to offer WaterFire tours to people with disabilities.
- Summer evening Nature Cruises were offered on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in July.
- The M/V Providence Piers will present "Cruises to WaterFire" leaving from Festival Pier in Pawtucket on Saturdays in the summer.
- The northbound Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center on Rt. 295 will open in November.
- The Tourism Council received a \$1,000 donation from Walmart towards the Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament and Polar Express Train trips.
- The Rhode Island Dragonboat Races and Taiwan Day Festival attracted more than 30 teams to compete in the Dragonboat races.
- One hundred thirty attractions in the Blackstone Valley of Rhode Island and Massachusetts will celebrate *Footsteps in History* on Columbus Day Weekend. The event is sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council sponsored a Fall Festival and Shopping Excursion train trip to Putnam, Connecticut in October.
- The BVTC celebrated its 20th Anniversary at the Kirkbrae Country Club in September and honored Chris Van Allsburg, author of *The Polar Express*.
- Christmas trolley tours with Santa were held in December.
- Polar Express train trips departed from Ann & Hope in Cumberland. Eight trips carried 2,511 passengers.
- The Hollywood film *Hard Luck* starring Cybill Shepherd and Wesley Snipes was filmed at Franklin Farm in Cumberland in December.
- Annual Revenue for the BVTC was \$864,145 for 2005.

2006

- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was presented with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) *Ulysses Prize for Innovation in Tourism Management* for contributing to a positive change with regard to community values in Rhode Island over the past 20 years. The prize was presented in Madrid, Spain. The Tourism Council also received the United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Sbest certification.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, in partnership with Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful and Firestone Complete Auto Care in Warwick, held a one-day tire collection for the Blackstone Valley. The event is the Great American Clean-Up, part of the Keep America Beautiful campaign.
- The original locomotive weathervane that was on the Woonsocket Train Depot was sold for \$1.2 million dollars. The weathervane that replaced it was stolen.
- Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center opened off I-295 in Lincoln.
- The U.S. House of Representatives approved legislation extending the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor federal financing for five more years.
- The annual Colombian Festival attracted over 5,000 people to the grounds of the Slater Mill in Pawtucket in August.
- The Tourism Council hosted the "RI Tourism Sustainability" Conference.
- The 21st Annual Dinner for Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was held at Kirkbrae Country Club in September. Phyllis Nathanson and Joe Garlick were honored. Joe O'Donnell and John Worsley were inducted into the William Blackstone Society.
- Bob Dylan performed at McCoy Stadium in August as part of the Pawtucket Arts Festival.
- The second edition of the book *Cumberland by the Blackstone* was written by David W. Balfour, Chairman of the Cumberland Historic District Committee and Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane.
- The Blackstone Canoe Trail Program features 18 brightly-painted canoes placed in different communities in the Blackstone Valley. The canoes are situated near an attraction that demonstrates the region's natural, cultural or historical heritage.
- Tours on the Blackstone River on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* and the Samuel Slater Canal Boat will resume in May in the Central Falls/Valley Falls area. Tours will start up again since the docks have been repaired after being damaged by flood waters months ago.
- "Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Tourism Economic Impact" study was done with assistance from the Travel Industry Association of America.
- A new car was offered by Bay Buick as the top prize for a hole-in-one at the Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament at Crystal Lake Golf Club in June.
- The Blackstone Alert website provided information in case of weather and other emergencies.
- The Easter Bunny Express Train Ride was held in April on the Providence & Worcester Railroad.
- The Tourism Council initiated the Keep Blackstone Valley/Keep America Beautiful program.
- The White House presented the Blackstone Valley, through the Rhode Island State Historical and Preservation Commission, a \$120,000 grant to produce Footsteps in History for the next two years.
- The ferry boat, Providence Piers, formerly known as The Hope, gave tours of Providence Harbor and the Seekonk River and also offered rides to WaterFire.

- The Tourism Council hosted the Blackstone Valley Flood Forum with the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, Code Red and New Commons.
- The Footsteps in History program highlighted 24 communities in the Blackstone Valley which opened to the public at no charge over Columbus Day weekend. The program expected to welcome over 4,000 visitors to the 100 sites that were open.
- The 20th anniversary of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was celebrated with events throughout the year, including a dessert reception at the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket in January, a Valentine's Dance at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket in February, a Victorian Reception at Hearthside in Lincoln in March, an Apple Blossom Reception at the Smith-Appleby House in April, and the 200th anniversary of the Slatersville Mill in May.
- The Tourism Council organized the largest *Tour Rhode Island, There's No Place Like Home* event to date. Over 1,200 Rhode Islanders toured their home state.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council hosted a statewide conference on Voluntourism.
- The Fall Train trip on the Providence & Worcester Railroad from Woonsocket, Rhode Island to Putnam, Connecticut was held in October. The tour featured a train ride, antique shopping, an arts and crafts fair and dining in local restaurants.
- St. Brendan's School in East Providence collected over 162 pounds of plastic bottles and cans as a project for Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful. Because of collecting so many pounds of water bottles, 2,000 fleece jackets, valued at over \$30,000, were provided by Sam's Club of Seekonk and Aquafina. The fleece jackets were made from recycled water bottles and were given to local shelters and organizations that serve the needy in the Blackstone Valley.
- Over 18,000 people attended the RI Dragonboat Races and Taiwan Day Festival.
- The Polar Express train ride departed from the Ann & Hope in Cumberland, Rhode Island for four dates in November. Eight trips carried 2,842 passengers.

2007

- The Tourism Council received worldwide publicity in Dubai, UAE, by the World Travel and Tourism Council, winning the top *Tourism for Tomorrow Destination* award.
- The Tourism Council won the Sbest Certification from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The accreditation recognizes excellence in the Tourism Council's destination management and was created to promote improvement in competitiveness and sustainability of tourism destinations around the globe.
- The Tourism Council published the *Rhode Island Green Visitor Guide for the Blackstone Valley* uses all environmentally-friendly methods and materials, and highlights eco-friendly destinations, activities and environmental principles.
- The Blackstone Valley Green Tourism Symposium was held at the Visitor Center in April.
- The Tourism Council introduced the *International Foods of the Blackstone Valley* booklet, promoting multicultural dining offered in the historic Blackstone Valley region. More than 70,000 brochures were printed.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council sponsored the Easter Bunny Express Train trips in April. The train trip featured an Easter Bonnet Contest and participants were given an Easter Basket by the Easter Bunny.
- RiverSing was held on the banks of the Blackstone River in June. The event featured choral and musical performers, food, dance, and more along the river.
- "Free Sundays" aboard the *Explorer* riverboat was sponsored by the Citizens Bank Foundation.
- Attendance figures for the Route 295 Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center is over 35,000 visitors per month.
- The Tourism Council established the *Blackstone Alert River Safety program*
- Consuela Sherba and Patricia Zacks received the Person of the Year Award for the Pawtucket Foundation.
- The *Vista Jubilee* was brought back to the Blackstone Valley for a "down river cruise" sailing out of Pawtucket. Proceeds benefitted the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center.
- The Tourism Council managed over 75 overnights and chartered British Tea Tours on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat.
- DineBlackstone.com, which highlights local restaurants, was the most recent website developed by the Tourism Council.
- Marc Kohler presented the stories of Captain Marcus, The Pirate of the Blackstone Valley at the Visitor's Center during February school vacation.
- Chicken family-style in the Blackstone Valley was highlighted in an article in the Boston Globe in March.
- French-Canadian Heritage in Woonsocket was featured in The Boston Globe
- Robert Largess drove an 1800's style stagecoach from East Providence to Worcester for three days in September to commemorate the third annual Footsteps in History Weekend.
- *Rhode Island Rivers Day* was celebrated on June 16 at the Central Falls Landing with boat tours, dragonboat rides, arts and crafts and an award ceremony.
- The Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament was held in June at Crystal Lake Golf Course.

- The Tourism Council developed the Sustainable Tourism Development Laboratory to help other communities design thoughtful tourism planning and development strategies.
- The Gloucester Heritage Society presented The Dorr March in June which included colonial militias, history lectures, and entertainment in celebration of Thomas Wilson Dorr.
- Jan Reitsma was appointed as the new Executive Director of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.
- The Martin Street Bridge in Cumberland re-opened in August and a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held for a new section of the Blackstone Valley Bikeway.
- The Blackstone Valley Secret Ingredient Food Tours were featured in many local publications and were very popular.
- *The Dynamite Cook-off*, sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Northern Rhode Island Council on the Arts and Jen's Dish talk show was held in River Island Park in Woonsocket in September.
- The Great Road Historic District received the 2007 Governor's Blackstone Valley Regional Tourism Award at the Rhode Island Convention Center in May.
- The Tourism Council was presented a citation by Representative Ray Church for winning the Sbest Certification from the United Nations World Tourism Organization for international distinction in tourism.
- Janice Kissinger was appointed new CEO of the Slater Mill.
- The Blackstone, a restaurant and music club owned by John Lefrancois, will move into Hope Artiste Village in Pawtucket.
- French-Canadian Heritage in Woonsocket was featured in the Travel section of the Boston Globe.
- An article on Samuel Slater and the Slater Mill was featured in Reflections Magazine in March.
- Hollywood director, Kevin Lima, received the Blackstone Valley Excellence in the Arts Award at the Tourism Council's Annual Meeting at Kirkbrae Country Club, Lincoln in September. Bob and Peter Conway of Conway Bus Tours were inducted into the William Blackstone Society.
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat and the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* were lowered into the Blackstone River in May to begin their new season. Tours from the Central Falls/Valley Falls location were discontinued last year because the docks had to be rebuilt after being destroyed by raging waters during the flood of October 2005.
- A ribbon-cutting was held in June for the section of the Bikeway from the Lonsdale Drive-in to the Pratt Dam in Lincoln.
- The movie *Hachi, A Dog's Story*, starring Richard Gere will start filming in October at the Woonsocket Train Depot.
- Robert Billington appeared on NBC 10 News Sunrise with Frank Colletta in February.
- The fourth annual *Tour Rhode Island - There's No Place Like Home* bus tours, which were coordinated by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, allowed over 1,200 Rhode Islanders to tour their home state. Twenty tour options were offered and participants were able to tour the Newport Mansions, visit the Slater Mill, tour downtown Providence, take a ferry to Block Island, and visit local wineries among other Rhode Island highlights.

- *Footsteps in History*, which includes 24 events on 24 separate weekends from June to September in the 24 communities of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor was a highlight of 2007. The event was coordinated and promoted by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- The Polar Express train rides made 10 trips and carried 3,313 passengers in November.
- Annual revenue for the BVTC was \$939,925 as of 2007.

2008

- The Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful program was certified by Keep America Beautiful.
- The Tourism Council was awarded a \$50,000 Preserve America grant for the Broad Street Regeneration Project.
- The Broad Street Regeneration Project was initiated with the Mayors of Pawtucket, Central Falls and Cumberland.
- *Tour Your Own Backyard* tours were organized by the Tourism Council.
- "Blackstone Valley Salsa" and "Blackstone Valley Dynamite Sauce" food contests were held.
- Events of the Week, a regular news release, was emailed to over 300 media outlets and linked to a widening network of websites.
- The Tourism Council joined Facebook and Twitter.
- The Citizens Bank Foundation provided a \$5,000 grant to sponsor "Free Sundays on the River" aboard the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- Robert Billington was highlighted in The Senior Digest in November. Mr. Billington received four prestigious awards in 2008, including the Tom Roberts Prize for Creative Achievement in the Humanities from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, The Destination Award from the World Travel and Tourism Council, The North American Travel Personality of the Year Award from the World Travel Awards, and the Heritage Award from the Pawtucket Foundation.
- The Tourism Council was recognized as a sustainable tourism development pioneer on the Center for Sustainable Destinations website by the National Geographic Society.
- The Council's Sustainable Tourism Laboratory is recognized by the Economic Policy Council in the State of Rhode Island.
- The Blackstone Valley Canoe Trail was highlighted in a new coffee table book, *American Art on Parade* highlighting community folk art in all 50 states. The canoes were hand-painted by local artists depicting images of Valley destinations and attractions.
- The Broad Street Winter Festival was initiated.
- The Tourism Council coordinated the ribbon cutting for the Cherry Tree Project along Roosevelt Ave. and organized the Cherry Blossom Festival and planting of cherry trees.
- Navigant Credit Union became the naming sponsor for the Blackstone Valley Polar Express with a \$10,000 grant.
- The Tourism Council received a Rhode Island Foundation grant to establish the *Blueprint for Sustainable Tourism*.
- The Polar Express train made 10 trips from Cumberland, carrying 3,661 passengers.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$980,656 for 2008.

2009

- The Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory was accepted as a partner to Global Sustainable Tourism Alliance of the United Nations Foundation, the Rain Forest Alliance and the United Nations World Tourism Organization.
- The Tourism Council sponsored a bus trip to Washington, DC for the Inauguration of Barack Obama in January.
- A Civic Tourism II Conference dealing with sustainable tourism concepts hosted 180 participants.
- The sixth annual Tour Rhode Island, coordinated by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, featured 24 bus tours which toured different parts of the state, was held in May.
- Blackstone Alert had a meeting at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket and heard a report of the Flood of 2005 and how it affected businesses in the Blackstone Valley.
- Brown & Hopkins Country Store, located in Chepachet, is the oldest continuously operated country store in America. Brown & Hopkins celebrated 200 years in 2009.
- The "Achievement in Rhode Island Sustainable Tourism" Award (ARISTA) was received by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and acknowledged the efforts of qualified non-profit organizations incorporating sustainable practices.
- A preview of the new bridge design for the Pawtucket River Bridge was held at the Visitor Center in downtown Pawtucket.
- *The Family Guy* tours were held at ComiCon Providence, featuring destination sites mentioned in *The Family Guy* TV show produced by Rhode Island native Danny Smith and RISD graduate Seth McFarland.
- Central Falls native Viola Davis was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actress for her role in *Doubt* starring Meryl Streep.
- Sixty cherry trees were planted along Roosevelt Avenue in Pawtucket and Central Falls in April to celebrate the Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Festival. The Cherry Tree planting was initiated and financed in part by Louis Yip and Sunny Ng of Tai-O Corporation of Central Falls and Pui-O Corporation of Pawtucket. The trees were planted as the first phase of a multi-year plan.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council published *The Green Visitor Guide* as part of the Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory. Free copies of the Guide were offered to visitors who seek an environmentally-friendly experience.
- *Special Occasion* breakfasts were held at Comfort Inn, Pawtucket including a Valentine's Day Breakfast, St. Patrick's Day Breakfast, Easter Bunny Breakfast, May Day Breakfast, and Breakfast with Santa.
- A book signing of *The TV Maître D' Cookbook* with Joe Zito and Linda Beaulieu was held at the Visitors Center in March.
- Events sponsored by Blackstone Valley Tourism Council were featured in *The New York Times*, *Gourmet Magazine*, and *Ohio.com*.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism sponsored a Blackstone Alert Project to talk about the Flood of 2005.
- Rhode Island's Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory is inaugurating a \$250 cash prize and trophy for the Achievement in Rhode Island Sustainable Tourism Award.

- The Cherry Blossom Festival was held on Roosevelt Ave, Central Falls with dedication of the newly-planted cherry trees and a parade featuring helium-filled Cherry Blossom balloons that are based on the design used in the Macy's and Rose Bowl Parades.
- Sixty cherry trees were planted on Roosevelt Avenue in Pawtucket and Central Falls. Planting of the trees was initiated and financed by Louis Yip and Sunny Ng of Tai-O Corporation. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls, Collette Tours and the Pawtucket Foundation led the project.
- The Great American Clean-Up was held as part of Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful in June.
- A new book, *Landscape of Industry: An Industrial History of the Blackstone Valley*, published by University Press of New England, was for sale at the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council offices.
- Kip's Restaurant in Pawtucket celebrated 50 years in August 2009.
- A celebration was held in September at Slater Mill to mark the construction of the long-awaited fish ladders on the Blackstone River.
- A French Festival River Cruise was held on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* featuring a boat ride on the *Explorer* and a special lunch which included a dynamite sandwich, a tour of the Museum of Work and Culture, the movie *Hidden in the Blackstone Valley*, and a visit to the French Farmers Market.
- The Pawtucket Film Festival, as part of the Pawtucket Arts Festival, was held at the theater at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council became the first U. S. agency to be Certified in Tourism Governance by the United Nations World Travel Organization to adopt their international procedures.
- Danny Smith, producer and writer for *The Family Guy* TV series, was honored at the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Annual Meeting with the Excellence in the Arts Award. Donna Houle and Gary Furtado were inducted into the William Blackstone Society. The Brown & Hopkins Country Store received the Footprints in History Award.
- The 5th Annual Heritage Golf Tournament was held in June at the Crystal Lake Golf Course in Burrillville.
- A fundraiser for the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* called Keep-the-Boat-Afloat was held at Hope Artiste Village in June.
- The Pawtucket Foundation sponsored the 5th Annual Pawtucket Proud Day in June. The volunteers constructed the first Habitat for Humanity project in Pawtucket.
- The 10th Annual Rhode Island Rivers Day was celebrated in June with a special three-day celebration at the Central Falls Landing.
- The popular Secret Ingredient Food Tours were held weekly in the Blackstone Valley and featured foods from many different ethnic restaurants including Portuguese, Greek, Columbian and Cape Verdean.
- *Blackstone Valley Explorer* Tours were held from May-October leaving from the Central Falls Landing.
- Citizens Bank Foundation sponsored selected free tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- Several Pawtucket schools participated in the River Classroom program onboard the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* with scholarship funds provided by the City of Pawtucket Community Development Block Grant Program.
- Wright's Farm Restaurant of Harrisville won the Blackstone Valley Regional Tourism Award at the Rhode Island Tourism Unity Luncheon in May.

- *Abraham Lincoln: Face to Face* was held at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in April. The event featured original paintings by artist Peter Campbell, music by the Heritage String Quartet and a reading by Ricardo Pitts-Wiley.
- The Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory workshop was held at the Visitor Center in May. Online journalism pioneer Sandeep Junnaker, creator of the New York Times On Line and professor at the City University Graduate School of Journalism, was the guest speaker.
- A French Meat Pie Cook-off and Dynamites contest was held in September at the French Farmer's Market.
- Rhode Island River's Day celebration was held June 19-21 with tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* and an award presentation to Citizens Bank.
- Fall Foliage Train rides to Putnam, Connecticut on the Providence & Worcester Railroad were held in October.
- Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful held The Great American Clean-up in April.
- *The Family Guy* Executive Producer Danny Smith honored with Blackstone Valley Excellence in the Arts Award at Tourism Council Annual Dinner.
- A new tour called *French Festival, Factories, and Fun* was held on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in September.
- *The Farm Fresh Fall Tour* was held in October, highlighting Brown and Hopkins Country Store, with lunch in an authentic roadside tavern, shopping for antiques, apples, pumpkins, fresh dairy, honey and baked goods.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council hosted the first meeting of new think tank called *KeepSpace* at Blackstone Valley Visitor Center. *KeepSpace* was founded by Rhode Island Housing.
- International Star Diamond Award by the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences was accepted by Gov. Donald Carcieri at the State House in January on behalf of the state tourism agencies of Rhode Island.
- Robert Billington was honored as the recipient of the Mary Brennan Stars of the Industry Award.
- The popular Polar Express train rides leaving from the Ann & Hope in Cumberland were held in November. Ten trips carried 3,588 passengers.
- Last minute Polar Express and other holiday gifts were available for purchase at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center at 175 Main St., Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, in partnership with the Blackstone Valley Merchants Association, the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, the cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls and the town of Cumberland sponsored 'Santa Claus is Coming to Broad Street' in December. Santa traveled down Broad Street in a fire truck from Cumberland Town Hall and visit local businesses.
- Breakfast with Santa was held in December at the Comfort Inn in Pawtucket.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for 2009 was \$915,585.

2010

- The Polar Express was moved to the 19th century train depot in Woonsocket.
- Blackstone Culinaria continued to produce weekly food tours at restaurants in the Blackstone Valley. Many different cultures are featured in the food tours, including Japanese, Vietnamese, Chinese, Mexican, Guatemalan, Mediterranean, Portuguese, Spanish, Indian, Greek, Irish and Senegalese. Some of the restaurants featured include The Village Restaurant, Chepachet Farm, Enn Japanese, Chan's Fine Oriental Dining, Taqueria Lapito, River Falls, Jac's Wraps, The Pillsbury House, Jaswell Farm, Grace Note Farm, and The Hose Company.
- The 1st Annual Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Festival featured Asian & American culture together with a parade, dancing, demonstrations, cherry tree plantings, a May Breakfast, and the first-ever Cherry Blossom 5K road race on Roosevelt Avenue in Pawtucket.
- A Cherry Pie Bake-off was held at the Slater Mill Historic Site to celebrate the Cherry Blossom Festival.
- An exhibition of artwork honoring cultural diversity opened at the Collaborative Gallery at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center.
- The Tourism Council expanded the 3-hour Behind-the-Scenes Leisurely Bicycle Tours of the Blackstone Valley.
- The City of Pawtucket will receive \$200,000 from the Environmental Protection Agency for clean-up of the State Pier in Pawtucket.
- The 11th annual Dragonboat Races and Taiwan Day Festival will take place in August.
- The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission formed a non-profit because the Corridor's commission is due to expire in October 2011. The non-profit will embrace the same policies and operate under the same by-laws as the commission to the extent applicable by law.
- The Blackstone Valley Bikeway will ultimately extend 48 miles from Providence, Rhode Island to Worcester, Massachusetts. Currently 10 miles of the bike path are open to the public. An additional 2.5 miles of bikeway are completed in Worcester and Millbury.
- Collette Vacations was named to Travel & Leisure Magazine's World's Best Awards in the category of Tour Operators and Safari Outfitters.
- The Tourism Council hosted the 150th Anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's visit by train to the Blackstone Valley in May.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, in cooperation with the U. S. Census Bureau encouraged residents of the Blackstone Valley to be counted in the next census. The Tourism Council passed out tote bags containing information on the census at the Visitor Center in Pawtucket along with information on the Blackstone Valley.
- A derelict playground at Galego Court in Pawtucket was transformed into a community garden with the help of the New Urban Farmers. The Pawtucket Foundation with 100 volunteers prepared and planted the garden on Pawtucket Proud Day in June.
- For the fourth year in a row, the Citizens Bank Foundation sponsored Citizens Bank Free Sundays on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- Kenny Loggins performed with the Boston Pops at McCoy Stadium as part of the Pawtucket Arts Festival.

- Kerry Clark, a senior at Woonsocket High School and a graduate of the Woonsocket Area Career and Technical School, created a Blackstone Valley Visitor guide in Braille. Mr. Clark, who is legally blind, presented it to Bob Gilson, the volunteer coordinator of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- The Lincoln Train trip was featured in *Victoria Magazine*, *AAA Magazine*, *Lincoln Forum*, and the *Boston Globe*.
- Fall Foliage train trip was featured in *Yankee Magazine*.
- The Tourism Council created and developed the Rhode Island Family Guy Tour in partnership with Quahog.org and was featured on New York 1 with host Val D'Elia.
- The Roosevelt Avenue Cultural Mile Tour was created.
- The Tourism Council presented the Responsible Tourism Conference with guest speaker Martha Honey.
- The Tourism Council participated in long-range planning session for Tourism Cares.
- The RiverUsers Conference was coordinated by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- The Tourism Council worked with town planner Tom Kravitz on plans for Burrillville bike path.
- May 2010 we worked with RIDOT on creating a boat landing called Manville Landing in Cumberland, Rhode Island on the Blackstone River.
- A presentation on the history of the William Wheat Chocolate Factory was co-hosted by the Tourism Council.
- The Tourism Council hosted Board of Directors of the Chocolate Preservation Society of America for four days in the Blackstone Valley.
- The Tourism Council hosted world winners from ASHOKA Change Makers Geotourism Challenge Competition who participated in exploring the Blackstone River Valley as part of the BVTC Sustainable Laboratory.
- The Tourism Council attended Changemaker Conference in Washington, DC.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council received a grant for and coordinated the efforts for the Roger Williams – William Blackstone Trail for the striping of a safe bikeway.
- 341,008 visitors stopped at the Rt. 295 Visitors Center in Lincoln.
- The Tourism Council hosted Jim Leach, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of Mr. Leach's 50-state visit to promote cultural programming.
- Robert Billington attended the WTAT Summit in Beijing, China with Louis Yip in May as the winner of the 2008 World Travel and Tourism Award.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was accepted as a member of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.
- *In Your Own Backyard* Bus Tours continue to showcase hidden gems in the Valley.
- The Tourism Council attended the 15th Annual Discover New England Tourism Summit and International Marketplace in Newport.
- The Tourism Council partnered with AAA and the Woonsocket Call in an ad campaign to promote all Rhode Island attractions.
- Robert Billington did several earned media interviews and appearances to promote Sustainable Tourism Development programs.
- The Blackstone Culinary food tours received extensive media coverage in local media.
- *Tour Rhode Island – There's No Place Like Home*, the state-wide event, was managed by the Tourism Council.
- The *Footsteps in History* event was coordinated in October.

- The Tourism Council coordinated *Table for Two* program which promoted outside dining along Broad St. in Pawtucket, Central Falls and Cumberland.
- Over 80,000 visitors were welcomed to Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket, including visitors from overseas, school groups, and tourists.
- A flat screen advertising program was instituted at the Route 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln.
- The Tourism Council presented the Sustainable Tourism Development Conference with guest speaker Costas Christ to develop planning and strategy for the next generation of tourism in Rhode Island, emphasizing sustainable resources.
- The Tourism Council worked with all Rhode Island tourism districts and RIEDC on a five-year strategic plan.
- The Tourism Council hosted a national group of educational tour planners attending the 2010 Education Travel Conference in RI, who volunteered in a community service project with the Tourism Council's Broad Street Initiative.
- Electronic recycling programs were held monthly in cooperation with Indie Recycle.
- The Rhode Island Dragonboat Races and Taiwan Day Festival received extensive coverage in New England media. A front-page story in the Providence Journal Go! section highlighted the Dragonboat Races and included a full-page color photo.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council introduced Leisurely Bicycle Tours in the Blackstone Valley.
- The Exchange Street Bridge in Pawtucket is named for Pawtucket native Morris Nathanson at a ceremony held in September.
- The Blackstone Valley Fall Train and Shopping Excursion on the Providence & Worcester Railroad traveled to Putnam, Connecticut for the Great Pumpkin Festival. The Festival featured arts and crafts, sidewalk dining, a Fall Bazaar and antique shopping.
- The Tourism Council participated with Joe Garlick of WNDC with a VISTA community project.
- Through its urban outreach efforts, the Tourism Council worked closely with tourism partners and communities in assisting the US Commerce Department in getting active participation in the 2010 national census.
- The Tourism Council led a Blackstone Valley partnership to write a HUD grant raising \$10,000 to create a Sustainable Tourism effort in the Blackstone Valley.
- Morris Nathanson was awarded the Blackstone Valley Excellence in the Arts Award by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council at its Annual Meeting. Abe Nathanson was inducted posthumously. Hearthside in Lincoln received the Footprints in History award, the Blackstone Canal Tour Group of Worcester received the ARISTA Award for Sustainable Tourism, and John Gregory and Rick Greenwood were inducted into the William Blackstone Society.
- Blackstone Valley Visitor Center won funds for a major makeover, which will include new and better lighting, state-of-the-art multimedia displays and all new décor.
- A Living History of The William Wheat Chocolate Mill was presented at the Madeira Club.
- Buy Local of the Blackstone Valley Merchants Association served hot chocolate to the public at the Blackstone Valley Polar Express.
- The Polar Express train ride made 14 trips, carrying 5,310 passengers.
- Annual revenue for the BVTC for 2010 was \$808,710.

2011

- The first Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame commemorated Rhode Island's musical heritage through a museum and annual induction ceremonies.
- An on-road bike path was established, linking the Blackstone River Bikeway with the East Bay Bike Path allowing folks to pedal from Woonsocket to Bristol – a total of 33 miles.
- Tourism planners from around the country and the globe participated in the Blackstone Valley Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Lab to learn more about “sustainable tourism.”
- The three-hour “Behind the Scenes Leisurely Bike Path Tours” were expanded to 13 guided tours from Pawtucket to Lincoln and two new trips from Lincoln to Woonsocket.
- The Tourism Council coordinated efforts to bring Taiwanese performing artists who were touring the USA to the International Charter School in Central Falls.
- The Tourism Council helped coordinate the Colombian Festival Parade in Pawtucket and Central Falls.
- Blackstone Valley Culinaria Tours were very popular with participants, traveling to a different restaurant every Wednesday where they enjoyed a cooking demonstration and a meal.
- Seven *There's No Place Like Home* bus tours were held in the Blackstone Valley. Participants traveled to such diverse locations as Spring Lake Arcade in Burrillville, Wright's Dairy Farm in No Smithfield, McCoy Stadium in Pawtucket and went on a tour led by a ghost hunter from Chepachet.
- Mars, Inc. donated \$35,000 to build an interactive park and canoe launch in Central Falls near the location of the first chocolate factory in the country.
- *A Family Guy* Bus Tour was developed for Comic-Con, Providence in partnership with Chris Martin from Quahog.org.
- The Route 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln welcomed 293,183 visitors.
- The Polar Express train ride left from the historic train Depot in Woonsocket for 22 trips, carrying 7,326 passengers.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$848,348 for 2011.

2012

- Chocolate Mill Overlook Park was dedicated in Central Falls. Between March 2012 and February 2013, the BVTC organized a planning consortium of town planners, developers, architects and non-profit leaders for the purpose of visualizing design possibilities to a section in Pawtucket and Central Falls known as Chocolate Mill Gateway. The goal is to make this neighborhood a welcoming and prosperous place. These sessions generated plans for further developing river vistas, new housing developments and updated traffic calming and roadside landscaping designs.
- First inaugural concert and ceremony for the Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame was held at Hope Artiste Village in Pawtucket.
- The Hachiko monument unveiled in Woonsocket.
- The Cherry Blossom Festival was held in Pawtucket, Central Falls and Woonsocket.
- Work continued on the Broad Street Initiative in Pawtucket, Central Falls and Cumberland.
- The 20th Anniversary of the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* was held in April.
- The U. S. Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell, and National Park Service Director, Jonathan Jarvis, visited the Blackstone Valley in May.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism participated in the "So New" tours to promote southern New England as a destination.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the new Rhode Island State Society selected the first Cherry Blossom Princess in many years. The Princess was crowned by Governor Chafee and represented Rhode Island at the National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, DC.
- The Tourism Council helped to raise private donations along with the cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls to light the stone bridge that links the two cities.
- The Rt. 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln welcomed 87,238 visitors.
- The Polar Express train ride made 24 trips from Woonsocket and carried 8,953 passengers.
- Annual Revenue for the BVTC was \$1,035,120 in 2012

2013

- The Cupid Ball was held at Blackstone Valley Visitor Center to introduce the new Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Princess.
- The Ghost Army exhibit, film and reception were held at the Stadium Theater in Woonsocket.
- Beautiful archway lighting was installed on both the east and west sides of the Chocolate Mill Bridge.
- In June 2013, we sponsored the Blueways Alliance Paddle Across Rhode Island Program.
- A sharrow marking system was developed to allow on-road biking and connect bikeways.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council coordinated the efforts to build the state's first urban campground on the shores of the Blackstone River at River Island Community Park in Central Falls.
- Tokyo's Hachi Summit was celebrated in Japan and the Tourism Council sent a greeting letter along with a Hachi banner and Hachi brochures commemorating the movie *Hachi - A Dog's Story*, starring Richard Gere, which was filmed at the Woonsocket Train Depot. A statue of Hachi is at the Depot and attracts many Japanese visitors every year.
- The lighting of the new Route I-95 Pawtucket River Bridge took place in September with the Tourism Council in the forefront of having artists involved in the new design.
- A low-cost marketing plan was developed by the Tourism Council to highlight the outdoor recreation, history and rural charm of the town of Burrillville. The Council also developed a website VisitBurrillville.org.
- A \$40,000 grant was received from the Rhode Island Foundation's Initiative for Nonprofit Excellence.
- The Council signed a contract with RIDEM to manage the Gateway Visitor Center on Route 295 and to find a food vendor for the location.
- The Cumberland Town Planner and the Tourism Council worked together to revitalize Valley Falls Heritage Park. The Council worked to secure funding from RIDEM and the National Park Service to restore interpretive signs at the historic site.
- The Rt. 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln welcomed 63,994 visitors.
- The Polar Express train ride made 27 trips from Woonsocket, carrying 10,163 passengers.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$958,065 as of 2013.

2014

- A special Polar Express Event was held at the Woonsocket Depot to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the movie, featuring author Chris Van Allsburg, Warner Brothers, Rail Events, Lionel Trains, and artist Patrick Kinkade.
- Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park received official designation.
- The Blackstone Shop, a new store featuring handcrafted jewelry and artwork by local artists as well as Polar Express-themed gifts opened at the Visitor Center in Pawtucket.
- Pawtucket River Bridge Concerts featured DotAir and Louisiana Nights shows.
- The Tourism Council worked on the Burrillville geotourism project.
- The Sea Research Foundation and the Tourism Council launched a new science program that has middle-school students exploring the river's depths with a remote-controlled, video-equipped submersible device, and a miniature version of the robot submarine that Robert Ballard used to explore the wreck of the Titanic.
- The Samuel Slater canal boat was re-launched after a five-year hiatus. The canal boat can be used for tours, corporate events, birthday cruises and as a floating bed-and-breakfast.
- Leisurely Bike Tour Program took cyclists to historic locations throughout northern Rhode Island including Pawtucket, Lincoln, Woonsocket, Smithfield, and Burrillville.
- Yankee Magazine named the Leisurely Bike Tours a top recreational attraction.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was contracted by RIDOT to conduct a year-long Site Feasibility Study for riverboat access to the Blackstone River.
- A May conference was organized to discuss the future of Rhode Island's bikeways with officials from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management.
- The Pawtucket River Bridge and the Pawtucket-Central Falls stone bridge added 100's of LED lights to illuminate the arches with the help of the Tourism Council.
- The Cherry Blossom Festival was held this year in Pawtucket, Central Falls and Woonsocket.
- A Main Street clean-up in Woonsocket was held this year, made possible with a \$5,000 grant from Bud Light and McLaughlin and Moran.
- The Tenth Annual Heritage Golf Tournament sponsored Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was celebrated in June at Crystal Lake Country Club.
- Tourism Council representatives traveled to England's Amber Valley in July to solidify their relationship with the area where Samuel Slater lived before emigrating to Pawtucket, where he built the Slater Mill, the first water-powered spinning mill in America.
- Robert Billington attended the Cultural Heritage Tourism Conference in Washington, DC, where he met with 25 national organizations.
- The Rt. 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln welcomed 53,351 visitors.
- The Polar Express train ride from Woonsocket took 33 trips, carrying 12,020 passengers.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$1,144,528 as of 2014.

2015

- Paths to Progress RI advocated for completion of the state bike path system.
- We worked in Pawtucket to develop the first off-road section of the Blackstone River Bikeway.
- A three-wheel bike was built to transport and deliver tourism literature in the Blackstone Valley.
- A drone video of the Valley was created.
- The Tourism Council planned the first American Girl Train Trip based on Grace Thomas, an American Girl Doll of the Year, who was from the Blackstone Valley.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council established the Blackstone Valley Heritage Environmental Trust Fund to enhance environmental educational work in the Blackstone Valley.
- We completed two years of work supported by the Rhode Island Foundation's Institute for Non-Profit Excellence for Capacity Building.
- The Tourism Council was a part of the review team to determine the best advertising agency to represent Rhode Island's new branding campaign. Four dozen companies applied for this opportunity.
- Twelve travel bloggers, who have thousands of followers, were taken through all nine Blackstone Valley communities, introducing them to the Valley.
- The BVTC successfully created a new demonstrative river landing for the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* in Woonsocket's Cold Spring Park. With support from the City of Woonsocket, hundreds of people will cruise the Blackstone River this August and learn the stories of North Smithfield, Blackstone, MA and Woonsocket.
- The Tourism Council coordinated a night of entertainment entitled *Americana Along the Blackstone River* in Central Falls this July, bringing out hundreds to enjoy a concert and fireworks and celebrate the new bridge river lights over the Blackstone River.
- A celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Tourism Council developing tourism in the Blackstone River Valley was planned for October 1 at the Twin River Event Center.
- The Tourism Council worked with the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park on their management plan.
- We secured a restaurant and general store for the Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center. *The Outpost* opened on August 3, offering food service from 6 am to 6 pm. *The Outpost* is operated by new business owner, Mike Lafond, with support from Lil General Stores owner, Roger LaPierre. We created three new jobs with this enterprise.
- The Rt. 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln welcomed 68,699 visitors.
- The Polar Express train ride took 41 trips, carrying 15,112 passengers.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$1,381,025 for 2015.

2016

- The State awarded \$10 million for bike path construction as part of the Green Economy Bond.
- The Tourism Council created the Paths to Progress Committee to begin the effort to complete the bike paths, not only in the Blackstone Valley but throughout the state.
- The Tourism Council collaborated with the city of Woonsocket and Riverzedge Arts in the rebranding and repositioning of the city's Main Street Arts and Entertainment District.
- In November 2016 we ran a Care for the Cape workshop on Cape Cod for the Sustainable Tourism Lab.
- Robert Billington traveled with local officials and historians to Quebec as part of a mission by the Museum of Work and Culture, the city of Woonsocket and other local leaders to re-establish social, cultural, and economic development ties between Woonsocket and Quebec.
- The Tourism Council organized officials from Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Cumberland to re-start the Broad Street Regeneration Project, which the Council initiated in 2009.
- The Council partnered with the other Rhode Island regional tourism directors and the state's new Chief Marketing Officer to reformat Rhode Island's state tourism and marketing efforts.
- The Tourism Council re-christened the 40-passenger *Blackstone Valley Explorer* after a major renovation and updates. The Council also announced a partnership with Mystic Aquarium, conducting environmental education tours along the Blackstone River and adjacent waterways.
- The American Girl Doll Train ride was held again this year to commemorate Grace Thomas, the American Girl Doll of the Year 2015 who was from the Blackstone Valley.
- The Polar Express train ride took 48 trips from Woonsocket, carrying 16,578 passengers.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$1,766,170 for 2016.

2017

- The Tourism Council worked with consultants Nail Communications, RDW Group, MMGY Global (via its public relations arm NJF), and the RI House Legislative Commission to Study Tourism Marketing to strengthen the state's new tourism strategy and programming.
- The Tourism Council partnered with Delin Design, Tai-O Corporation, Rock Spot Climbing, and the City of Pawtucket to illuminate the Morris Nathanson Bridge (formerly the Exchange Street Bridge) in Pawtucket.
- The Tourism Council, along with the state-wide Paths to Progress Committee, successfully led the fight for a state bond to increase funds for the state-wide bike path, including building additional miles for the Blackstone Valley portion of the bike path.
- A coordinator was selected in March 2017 to manage the reinvigorated Broad Street Regeneration Initiative. The position was funded by the Rhode Island Foundation.
- In April the Tourism Council worked on a Blackstone Valley Familiarization Tour with the state's new advertising and public relations team.
- Blackstone Culinaria, our food experience tours, went to A & W Drive-In in Smithfield, Monte Cara in Pawtucket, McCoy Stadium in Pawtucket and Crepe Corner in Smithfield in June and July.
- With a grant from the Ocean State Charities, the Tourism Council purchased an underwater Remote Operated Vehicle for its tour groups to experience.
- The Council supported a successful grant for the new train station being built in Pawtucket and Central Falls.
- The Tourism Council participated in the state's celebration of Quahog Week and promoted the establishment of new breweries.
- The Council supported regional farming efforts and farmers markets through partnering with the state on a new farms brochure.
- The Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament took place at Crystal Lake Golf Club in Burrillville on June 12.
- Michael Tamburro and Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane were elected to the William Blackstone Society and inducted at the September 28 Tourism Council Annual Dinner.
- Partnered with Al's Waterfront Restaurant in East Providence to produce a series of public tours on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*.
- The Rt. 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln welcomed 80,296 visitors in 2017.
- The Polar Express train ride took 51 trips from Woonsocket, carrying 18,852 passengers.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$1,740,869 for 2017.

2018

- The Blackstone *Culinaria* for 2018 was set, giving residents and visitors the opportunity to visit great eateries in the Blackstone Valley. Participants learned how great food was created while they enjoyed their meal and gained a better insight into how our restaurants were founded.
- Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful received a grant to host a cigarette litter prevention campaign, installing 50 cigarette butt collection containers in bus shelters and municipal locations.
- Michelle Moreno-Silva was crowned Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Princess by Governor Gino Raimondo on March 16 at the State House.
- The Tourism Council supported over 1,400 volunteers that assisted in the 2018 Great American Cleanup, removing over 23 tons of litter from the Blackstone Valley.
- The BVTC's Marketing Director, James Toomey, produced a comprehensive and beautiful Visitor Guide for 2018, which was available to the public at all our distribution points throughout Rhode Island
- In April 2018 the Sustainable Tourism Lab brought Megan Epler Wood International to do a Sustainable Lab in Pawtucket.
- The Pawtucket Red Sox season opened at McCoy Stadium on April 6. We were hopeful that that RI House of Representatives would support the Pawtucket Baseball Park at Slater Mill. This would help bring at least 500,000 visitors to the Blackstone Valley each year, but it would reuse thousands of square feet of vacant retail space and make the Pawtucket riverfront ripe for thoughtful development.
- Through August, Wright's Dairy Farm and Bakery operated a pop-up ice cream scoop shop.
- We represented the Blackstone Valley Tourism Industry at the New England International Tourism Conference held by Discover New England on April 22-24 on Cape Cod. We scheduled one-on-one sales meetings to promote the Blackstone Valley as a destination to international visitors.
- We are working closely with the Museum of Work and Culture on a Quebec/Franco American Route that will connect our French history with the other French history cities of New England.
- Staff from the Tourism Council attended Polar Express Camp in Durango, Colorado and returned with thoughts on how to improve our locally-produced program.
- The Tourism Council's annual Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament was held at the Crystal Lake Golf Club in Burrillville on June 11.
- Our work with the Green Economy Bond for 2018 was successful. Along with funds for the RI Land Trusts, Historic Preservation and clean water, there was \$5 million for the state's bikeway development.
- The Blackstone River Bikeway experience was enhanced so visitors had a listing of bike-friendly stops that offer local history, nature viewing and a variety of special foods to try in the area.
- Additional biking off the Blackstone River Bikeway was added to include a route to explore all nine Blackstone Valley municipalities with an on-road route called Circle Blackstone.
- The 25th Anniversary of the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* was celebrated in August at Pawtucket's Festival Pier.
- The Broad Street Regeneration Program received the Rhode Island Foundation Award.
- Our Broad Street Coordinator, Jillian Finkle, has moved on to a full-time planning position with the City of Central Falls. The Broad Street 2.0 project has just received a \$50,000 grant from the RI Foundation to assist in the development of Broad Street. Broad Street 2.0 is a project of the cities of Pawtucket, Central Falls, Cumberland and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.

- The Rhode Island Chinese Dragon Boat Festival had 30 teams in competition.
- The Tourism Council sponsored and assisted with the Levitt Amp Music Series, a 10-week eclectic music event in Woonsocket.
- The Blackstone Valley 33rd Annual Awards and Luncheon Meeting was held at Twin River Event Center in October. Morris Nathanson and Denise Panichas were inducted into the William Blackstone Society. R1 Karting received the Blackstone Valley Excellence in Tourism Business Award and Slatersville Village was honored with the Footprints in History Award. The Excellence in the Arts Award was presented to the Stadium Theatre, and the Blackstone Valley Rising Star Millennials in Tourism Award was presented to Mayor James Diossa of Central Falls.
- Movie screenings of four classic Halloween films were held at Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in October in partnership with Mill City Haunts of Pawtucket.
- The annual Fall train trip on the Providence & Worcester Railroad through the Blackstone Valley to Putnam, Connecticut was held in October.
- A Blackstone in Bloom municipal competition and Tree Hunger Tuesday were two initiatives that were started in 2018 by Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful Coordinator, Donna Kaehler. Five locations were spruced up during the inaugural Blackstone in Bloom program and the Tree Hugger cleanups collected 1,900 pounds of litter.
- Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful conducted four corporate Earth Day litter cleanups that engaged 75 volunteers and removed 2,800 pounds of litter.
- Great American Cleanups removed more than 20 tons of litter from the Blackstone Valley.
- The Rt. 295 Visitor Center welcomed 64,422 visitors.
- The Polar Express train ride took 55 trips from Woonsocket, carrying 20,229 passengers. Sixty-two Polar Express volunteers gave 1,124 hours of time to the event.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$2,047,22 for 2018.

2019

- The Art League of Rhode Island Exhibition on Twisting Fibers was held at the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and adjacent Gallery 175 in Pawtucket from March 8 – May 8, 2019.
- East Providence native Margaret Rogers was crowned 2019 Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Princess by Governor Gina Raimondo on March 29 at the Rhode Island State House.
- Robert Billington was part of Governor McKee’s delegation to visit the Republic of China (Taiwan) April 13-18, 2019.
- Roger Brooks, President and Founder of Destination Development Association, was the guest speaker on May 19 at the Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory. Since 1981, Roger has assisted more than 2,000 communities with their downtown development place-branding, tourism, and marketing efforts, and he is now one of the most widely recognized experts in the field.
- The Annual Heritage Golf Tournament at Crystal Lake Golf Club in Burrillville was held in June.
- The Tourism Council partnered with Don Leighton and Arek Galle from BETA Engineering, Morris Nathanson, Louis Yip, and Sue Marra of the City of Pawtucket to plan the new Rev. William Blackstone statue that will be located on the corner of Exchange Street and Roosevelt Avenue in Pawtucket. The statue was designed by Peruvian artist, Peruko Ccopacatty of West Kingston.
- Leah Hill was hired as coordinator for the Broad Street Regeneration Project, a collaborative effort between Central Falls, Cumberland, Pawtucket and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The goal is to ensure Broad Street as a thriving, safe, walkable and multi-commercial corridor.
- Twenty-five years of the Amber Valley/Blackstone Valley Compact was commemorated in July with a visit to Belper, England by representatives from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Tourism Council President Robert Billington, Deborah Billington, Director of Operations Natalie Carter, Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful Coordinator, Donna Kaehler, Linda Dewing, Pawtucket Mayor Donald Grebien, Central Falls Mayor James Diossa, and Council Board Member Louis Yip traveled to England. A short presentation of the film *Slatersville* by Christian de Rezendes was featured during the visit to Belper.
- A new book *Hachi and Friends* by Italian author Anastasia Ormeron tells the story of the dog Hachi which is commemorated by a statue at the train station in Tsu, Japan and at a replica of the statue at the Woonsocket Train Depot.
- Ethan Kent from Project for Public Spaces headlined a public workshop on September 26 at Twin River before our annual luncheon. Ethan spoke about place-making as a transformative approach to economic development.
- The Council’s education development department received a Pawtucket Community Development Grant that funded *Watershed Detectives*, a new in-class environmental program that includes photographs donated by James Hunt Photography.
- For the second year in a row, the Tourism Council sponsored and assisted with the 10-week Levitt AMP Music Series at River Island Park in Woonsocket, an eclectic music event held every Friday in the summer that brought in local and national bands.
- The 20th Anniversary of the Rhode Island Chinese Dragon Boat Races and Taiwan Day Festival was celebrated on September 7 with the addition of six new boats brought to the city from Taiwan.
- The Tourism Council partnered on the New England Franco route with Anne Conway from the Museum of Work and Culture. The Trail will connect Biddeford and Lewiston, ME, Manchester, NH, Lowell, MA, and Woonsocket, RI and showcase the cities’ French-Canadian culture.

- The annual Fall Foliage train trip on the Genesee and Wyoming Railroad to Putnam, CT was held on October 19. Over 380 passengers enjoyed antique shopping, dining, an arts and crafts festival, a farmers market, and the Great Pumpkin Festival.
- The Tourism Council talked with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation regarding purchase of the train depot in Woonsocket.
- Bruce Tillinghast and Russ Gussetti were inducted into the William Blackstone Society at the Tourism Council's 34th Annual Awards Ceremony and Luncheon at Twin River Event Center on September 26. The Arnold Mills Fourth of July Parade received the Footprints in History Award for 2019.
- The volunteer staff at the Blackstone River State Park I-295 Visitor Center worked more than 650 hours over the course of 2019.
- For the third consecutive year, the Blackstone Culinaria program received a Providence Journal Critic's Choice Award in the Culinary Innovative category. Food tours were held in several communities with more than 300 patrons enjoying exclusive dining experiences at 10 Blackstone Valley restaurants. We continued our combined *Explorer* Riverboat/food tours. All the events were well attended and many were sold out.
- New hotels opened in the Blackstone Valley included the Twin River Casino Hotel and Home2Suites Hilton in Smithfield.
- Robert Billington participated in a special Legislative Commission on Tourism under Representative Lauren Carson, Chairperson.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council began managing the William Blackstone Scholarship fund for the Luke Charitable Foundation.
- Robert Billington was a member of the Preservation Foundation of the Museum of Work and Culture.
- The BVTC continued to participate in Paths to Progress (P2P) meetings and the Bicycle Mobility Plan Advisory Committee, and we worked on the Bicycle Mobility Plan with the state planning office.
- The BVTC participated in the Seekonk Channel/Henderson Bridge Planning Conference.
- The BVTC managed the legislative musical grant for Pawtucket for Michael Graham Downtown Rising.
- Robert Billington participated in the President's Council at Mystic Aquarium.
- The BVTC became a member of the Rhode Island Sports Commission.
- In July BVTC staff attended the unveiling of the Abraham Lincoln statue at the Woonsocket Depot.
- In September BVTC staff participated in a sexual harassment workshop.
- In September the BVTC founded the Economic Ambassador program.
- The BVTC purchased a TentRR program to create a Blackstone River Valley campsite.
- The Polar Express train ran in November and December, making 55 trips and carrying 20,042 passengers. One hundred two volunteers contributed 1,872 hours to the event.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$2,201,902 for 2019.

2020

- In January Robert Billington went to the Tomaquag Museum to establish a relationship with the native Americans regarding the William Blackstone statue to be installed in Pawtucket. He met with Loren Spears.
- In February preliminary meetings were held regarding East Providence joining the group of cities and towns promoted in the Blackstone Valley by the Tourism Council.
- The International Economic Ambassador program continued.
- Robert Billington met with the Department of Health and Virginia Sindelar regarding her licensing at Grace Note Farm.
- The BVTC continued the ZAP project.
- In February Mark Brodeur, State Tourism Director, met with the BVTC staff regarding branding for the Blackstone Valley.
- Robert Billington participated in meetings with CREST (The Center for Responsible Travel) regarding responsible tourism practices that businesses, destinations and travelers can adopt in order to achieve a healthier environment, help communities and honor indigenous cultures and ecosystems.
- BVTC staff continued to participate in the Paths to Progress (P2P) progress regarding the bike paths in Rhode Island.
- In April the BVTC participated in the Sowams Heritage Area Business Forum.
- A Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Princess was chosen. The National Cherry Blossom Festival was canceled in Washington, D.C. because of Covid-19. The crowning of Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Princess was canceled.
- The Blackstone Valley Heritage and Environment Education Fund was established in May 2020 with the Rhode Island Foundation.
- Robert and Debbie Billington were featured in a Culinary Live episode making pizza at Millrace Kitchen in Woonsocket. Additional Culinaria Live episodes were shown via Facebook because of Covid.
- In May an organizational meeting with Rhode Island Commerce and the tourism regions was held regarding economic development financial support.
- Brainstorming meetings were held to determine the feasibility/safety of having Polar Express run in 2020, due to Covid concerns.
- The Annual Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament was held at Crystal Lake Golf Club.
- In August staff met with Governor Gina Raimondo and Dr. Anthony Fauci regarding Covid safety.
- A new sign, based on the Hollywood sign, was installed at The Landing in Central Falls on the corner of Broad Street and Madeira Avenue.
- Rhode Island Dragonboat Festival and Taiwan Day was canceled for 2020.
- A walk-through happened at the BVTC's future new office at Central Falls Landing.
- The Tourism Council worked with the Department of Health to distribute masks and hand sanitizers.
- The 35th Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was postponed until April 2021.
- In October, Robert Billington attended the Pawtucket/Central Falls Resiliency Workshop.
- *Swampscare*, Halloween-themed boat trips, were held in October on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* leaving from Central Falls Landing.
- *Search for Santa*, Christmas-themed boat trips, were held in November and December on the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* leaving from Central Falls Landing.
- Polar Express train rides were cancelled in 2020 due to Covid.

2021

- *The Ghost Army* tank, built for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in 2019, was sent to the D-Day Museum in Virginia for exhibit.
- BVTC staff met with stakeholders regarding Watchamocket Square in East Providence.
- The Tourism Council organized a campaign addressing anti-Asian American sentiment in Rhode Island.
- The Tourism Council took possession of two donated pontoon boats for work on the Blackstone River.
- Meetings were held regarding a Market Square boat launch in Woonsocket.
- Robert Billington attended a RI250 brainstorming meeting.
- BVTC staff worked on the Blackstone River Needs Assessment Study.
- A meeting was held with the Champlin Foundation in April regarding the River Classroom in our new offices.
- In an effort to support the Chinese community and combat racism, the BVTC helped organize the Asian-American-Pacific Islanders (AAPI) group.
- The 36th Annual Celebration for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was held virtually in April. Over 200 Bananagram gift bags were sold for \$50 each filled with Blackstone Valley and Rhode Island memorabilia in commemoration of the annual celebration. The gift bags were valued at over \$300 each.
- In April, the BVTC participated with RI Commerce Corporation in the second annual "RI Hotel Weeks", promoting state lodging facilities.
- The Tourism Council assisted RI Commerce Corporation with networking local restaurants, connecting them to financial assistance programs that have been expanded due to the ongoing Covid pandemic.
- BVTC was a member of the Oversight Committee on Tourism.
- Robert Billington met with Judith Tolnick regarding her opposition of the William Blackstone sculpture.
- In June the BVTC inaugurated and cut the ribbon on our canoe and kayak training program at Central Falls Landing. Through a grant from Blue Cross/Blue Shield, the program was set up to teach Central Falls youth how paddle, canoe and kayak safely. Nine single kayaks and nine tandem kayaks were being used in the new kayak program which will give lessons to 200 low-to moderate-income school children from the City of Central Falls during the summer. The program will be run by the Tourism Council and the City of Central Falls.
- The BVTC was awarded a \$12,000 post-production grant by the RI Committee for the Humanities (RICH) for a locally-produced film on the history of Slatersville, the first planned village in the United States, an important part of expanding the nation's Industrial Revolution. The film is scheduled to be shown on RI Public TV sometime in 2022.
- The Tourism Council joined with AARP-RI and Age Friendly RI in hosting a public webinar on June 22, 2021. This online event focused on efforts made over the last 50 years to reclaim the Blackstone River and repurpose it for sustainable development and recreation.
- The Tourism Council purchased a boat house for Central Falls Landing.
- In July the BVTC welcomed the new Counsel General of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Boston.
- The BVTC participated in the Central Falls American Rescue Fund Planning meetings with Central Falls Mayor Maria Rivera.
- The Rhode Island Dragon Boat Festival and Taiwan Day was canceled for 2021 due to concerns about Covid-19.
- In October meetings were held with Emily Luther and John Guervremont from Mt. St. Charles, and we invited Mt. St. Charles students to participate in Polar Express.
- In October we screened the documentary "Slatersville" in our Visitor Center Theatre.

- ZAP planning continued.
- Robert Billington participated in the President's Council at Mystic Aquarium.
- The Polar Express train ride continued in 2021 with Covid-19 precautions making 33 trips from Woonsocket, carrying 12,056 passengers. Fifty-eight volunteers contributed 1,040 hours to the event.
- Robert Billington participated in the Bally's Twin River Charity Blackjack Tournament in December and won the top prize of \$10,000 for the Blackstone Valley Heritage & Environmental Trust Fund.

2022

- Robert Billington participated in the organization of the general management plan for the new National Park.
- We continue to be involved with the RI250 Committee.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council joined with the Lieutenant Governor's office, Commerce RI and the World Export Center at Bryant University to develop the Rhode Island Economic Ambassador Program.
- East Providence became the 10th community represented by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Roger Brooks from Destination Development Association led the BVTC in a branding exercise.
- We met with Nik Wadhwa on expansion of cricket into the Blackstone Valley.
- The Tourism Council continued to work on the Sowams Heritage Area Project.
- There was discussion of creating a Tomato Festival in the Blackstone Valley.
- Meetings were held with Hanna Instruments regarding scientific equipment for the River Classroom.
- Worked with Commerce RI on rail station signage along the MBTA route to Central Falls and Pawtucket.
- We revised the Broad Street Regeneration Initiative.
- We contracted with Bob Noll of Boston Productions for Polar Express.
- The BVTC joined the Hudson River Clearwater Project.
- Staff met with the Italian soccer delegation regarding the potential to expand young talent. We took them to the site of the future new Tidewater Stadium.
- The SNEP Watershed grant was received to combat invasive species.
- On June 22 a ribbon cutting/open house was held at our new offices at Central Falls Landing. Over 250 people attended the gathering.
- Our annual golf tournament was held July 25, 2022.
- The Tourism Council worked with GZA Environmental on the Woonsocket Landing project.
- Staff attended the groundbreaking event with Fortuitous at Tidewater Stadium.
- The William Blackstone statue was installed at the corner Exchange Street and Roosevelt Avenue in Pawtucket, with a property swap between the City of Pawtucket and Mr. Louis Yip.
- On August 27, 2022, the ZAP the Blackstone Valley-wide cleanup was held. This was the 50th anniversary of the ZAP the Blackstone Project.
- The annual Rhode Island Chinese Dragon Boat Races and Taiwan Day Festival was held on September 3, 2022.
- On September 10, 2022 a ZAP Celebration was held at Slater Mill with music, entertainment and exhibits. This event celebrated 50 years of clean up on and around the Blackstone River.
- Robert Billington met with LiveNation regarding their future in East Providence
- On November 11, 2022 the Polar Express train ride began and ran on Friday, Saturdays and Sundays through December 23, 2022. The train made 39 trips, carrying 14,305 passengers. Sixty-nine volunteers contributed 1,336 hours to the event.
- Robert Billington played in the Bally's Twin River Charity Blackjack Tournament and for the second year in a row, he won the top prize of \$10,000 for the Blackstone Valley Heritage & Environmental Trust Fund.

2023

- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council participated in the opening of the Pawtucket-Central Falls Transportation Center on January 25, 2023.
- Staff from the BVTC attended the ribbon cutting ceremony at the new Spa at Twin River in Lincoln.
- The BVTC partnered in a Destinations and New Attractions meeting with Commerce RI.
- We participated in a transit-oriented development event at the Rhode Island Convention Center.
- The Tourism Council continued to promote the Rhode Island International Economic Ambassador program.
- The Tourism Council continued to work on the Sowams Heritage Area Project.
- The sheep we purchased in a fund raiser at the Samuel Slater Experience was painted by artist Jerry Aissis.
- Robert Billington was appointed by the Secretary of State to the RI250 Commission. This group is tasked with encouraging civic pride, economic development, and sharing our state's history through organizing and participating in activities marking Rhode Island's role in the American Revolution. The Commission acts as a clearing house and facilitates American Revolution-related activities throughout the State beginning in 2022 and leading up to 2026. RI250 encourages all Rhode Islanders to become engaged and invested in this important milestone.
- The Tourism Council continued to work with Woonsocket officials on the Woonsocket Landing Project.
- In May, Bob Noll from Boston Productions worked on a proposal for the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center.
- In June the Tourism Council worked to restore damage to Central Falls Landing from the winter floods.
- Staff celebrated the 80th birthday of Natalie Carter, Director of Operations for the BVTC, with a surprise party at Blackie's restaurant in Smithfield.
- Our River Education Program teaching Pawtucket and Central Falls children kayaking and canoeing continued.
- In July, BVTC Staff toured the Pomham Rocks Lighthouse in East Providence.
- The Rhode Island Dragon Boat Races and Taiwan Day Festival was produced by the Tourism Council on August 30, 2023.
- BVTC staff researched the origins of coffee milk back to Abelsen & Scott, the originators of coffee syrup. It was traced back to its origination in Grant's Mill in Cumberland.
- Staff worked with the owner of Cadillac Mill on the Blackstone River to determine a launch and landing spot for boats coming to Central Falls Landing, the Pirates on the Blackstone ride and the *Explorer* riverboat.
- In September the Tourism Council produced the Pirates on the Blackstone ride on the *Explorer* riverboat.
- In September the BVTC held a kick-off event for the International Food Trail in the Blackstone Valley.
- In October the BVTC participated in the Taiwan ROC's National Day.
- Students from the Woonsocket Career and Tech built a train and an elf house for the Christmas Village at Polar Express.
- The Polar Express Train Ride ran from the Woonsocket Depot from November 10 through December 18. The train made 39 trips, carrying 14,567 passengers. One hundred four volunteers from the surrounding communities and businesses contributed 1,609 hours to the event.

2024

- The BVTC Staff met with Jen Kilsey, the new Director of the Pawtucket Arts Festival, to discuss programming for 2024. We helped create a formal event for the Cape Verdean community to celebrate their culture.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was part of the US250 Committee and the World Cup State Committee.
- Temporary interpretive plaques were installed at the site of the William Blackstone statue in Pawtucket at the corner of Roosevelt Avenue and Exchange Street.
- The Tourism Council continued to work on the Sowams Heritage Area Project.
- In February we re-launched the Paths 2 Progress (P2P 2.0) for the RI Department of Health and GrowSmart RI.
- On March 20, Rhode Island's 2024 Cherry Blossom Princess, Alexandria Evers, was crowned at Shark's Event Center in Center Falls.
- The Tourism Council worked on an advertising program at the Pawtucket-Central Falls train station.
- The Tourism Council worked with the Rhode Island Football Club on river access plans for Tidewater Stadium.
- Samantha Jackson, a URI graduate and Director of Education for the Tourism Council, was featured in an article, "One Water – Why Rivers Matter in the Ocean State", the cover story for the University of Rhode Island magazine, Spring 2024 issue.
- The 19th Annual Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament was held at Crystal Lake Golf Club in Burrillville. Proceeds benefited the youth environmental education programs for underserved communities in Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley.
- The gateway center/rest area on I-295 North was re-opened.
- The Tourism Council worked on preliminary plans for a canal boat to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Blackstone Canal with boat builder Lou Sauzedde of Bristol.
- In July the interpretive panel at the Hachiko statue in front of the Woonsocket Depot was replaced.
- We applied to the Department of Environmental Management for a Climate Resilience Grant. We submitted the grant for projects above and below the Slater Mill Dam. Above the dam, clean up is necessary after the winter and spring storms; below the dam we would like shell fishing to be possible.
- Staff members Samantha Jackson and Steve Maciel were interviewed by Hanna Instruments regarding our work to clean up the Blackstone River and our use of Hanna Instruments water quality testing equipment.
- Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful designed and painted a colorful mural in the plaza of the Joseph C. Jenks Middle School and Jaqueline M. Walsh High School in August 2024. It was funded by a generous grant from Keep America Beautiful.
- The Tourism Council investigated the possibility of the Blackstone Valley being part of the world-wide art installation by Danish artist Thomas Dambo. The Trail features giant troll sculptures made from recycled wood and other materials. The first installation in Rhode Island began in 2024 in South County and BVTC has applied for a grant to build and install the next troll in the state.
- The Samuel Slater Canal boat was hauled out of the river after storm damage was done to the docks. We worked with the City of Central Falls to rebuild the Central Falls Landing docks.
- The Tourism Council purchased a canoe launch for the Central Falls Landing canoe training program. The canoe training program with the City of Central Falls has been operating for three years.
- The Pirates on the Blackstone event started on Saturdays in September and will run through the end of October.

- The “Valley of the Blackstone” book launch took place on October 20, 2024 at the Museum of Work and Culture.
- In November 2024 the Tourism Council supported the Community Forest Restoration Plan program with Groundwork RI.
- Funds were received from the Rhode Island Legislature to enable the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket to open 7 days a week. A new visitor sign program was being developed.
- A plan was introduced to offer residents a Blackstone River Valley license plate. Information was sent to Blackstone Valley legislators.
- The Tourism Council applied for and eventually received a \$200,000 grant to construct a Thomas Dambo Troll in East Providence to continue the Rhode Island Troll Trail.
- The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority donated 4 train cars. The cars will ensure that the excursions run by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council are handicapped accessible under the law.
- New Woonsocket Station sign as well as a new Polar Express station sign were installed at the Woonsocket train depot.
- A sound shed was constructed for the Polar Express, and more concession and retail sheds were added to the Christmas Village, including an 8 x 16 hot chocolate cabin. Woonsocket Career and Tech students built a bridge and clock tower for the North Pole.
- The Polar Express train ride ran from Woonsocket November 8 through December 22, making 44 trips and carrying 17,242 passengers. One hundred twenty-eight volunteers from the surrounding communities and businesses contributed 2,017 hours to the event.

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council

Awards and Recognitions

Robert Billington and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council have received a number of awards and other recognition for their efforts to build up the Blackstone Valley and promote sustainable tourism. These include:

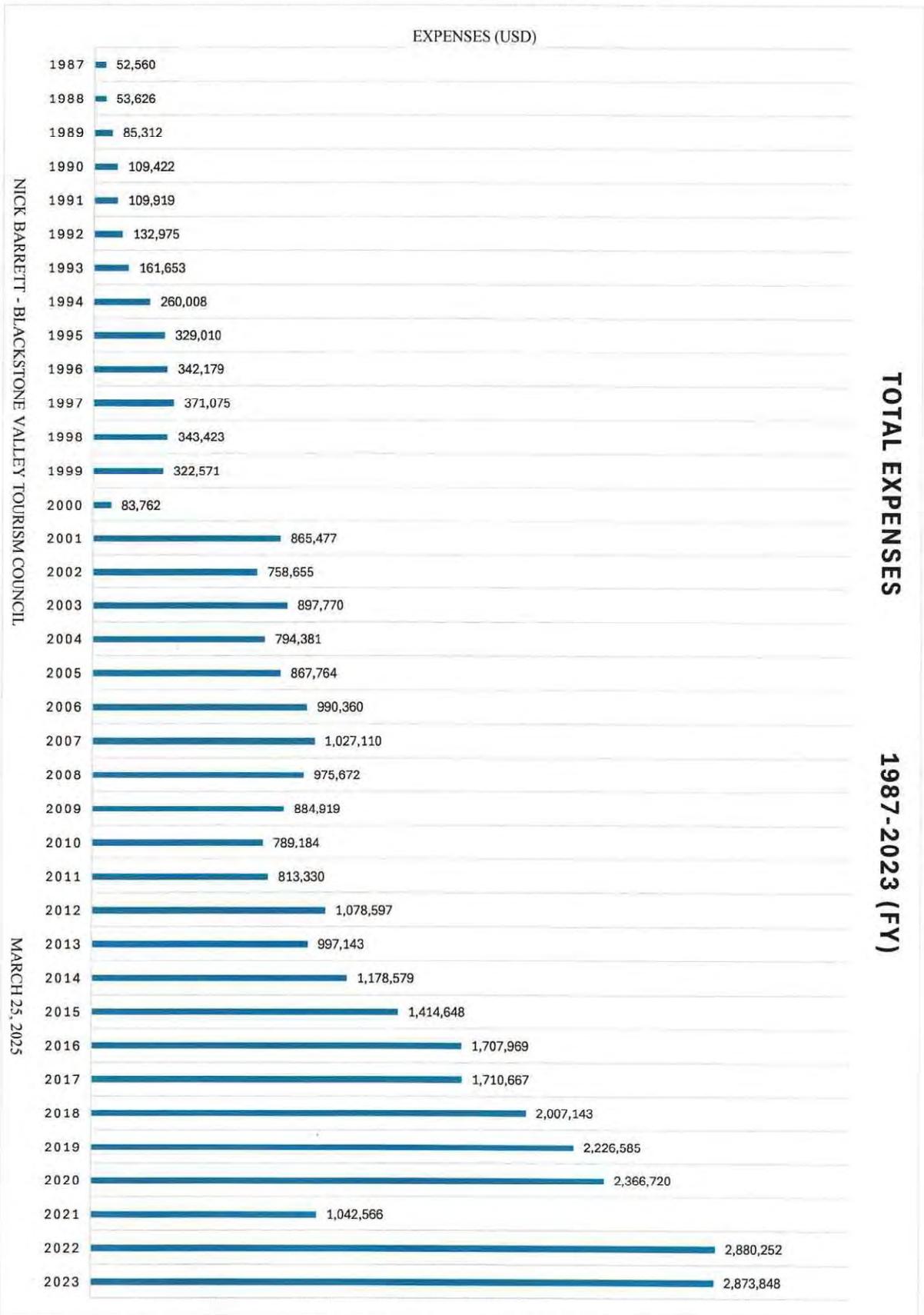
- Bob Billington induction into the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame (2016)
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Star of the Industry Award, Rhode Island Hospitality Association (2016)
- Tourism for Tomorrow Destination Award, World Travel and Tourism Council (2008)
- North American Travel Personality of the Year, World Travel Award (2008)
- Keep America Beautiful Standards of Excellence Award (2008)
- Tom Roberts Prize for Creative Achievement, Rhode Island Council for the Humanities (2008)
- Pawtucket Foundation Heritage Award (2008)
- “Stars of the Industry” Mary Brennan Award Rhode Island Hospitality Association (2008)
- SBEST Certification of Excellence, United Nations World Tourism Organization (2007)
- Business of the Year, Colombian-American Cultural Society (2007)
- Ulysses Award from the United Nations World Tourism Organization for Destination Management (2006)
- Coastal American Partnership for Action – Lonsdale Wetlands Restoration (2005)
- Environmental Achievement Award Public/Private Initiative (2001)
- NECTA Preservation Service Award Government at Work – Building a Bikeway (2000)
- National Park Foundation Environmental Conservation Award (2000)
- National Park Foundation Partnership Award (2000)
- Bravo Film Channel NECTA Award (2000)
- Community Partners Recognition Award, Yankee Magazine (1999)
- Rhode Island Coastal Cleanup Institutional Award (1999)
- Blackstone Valley Explorer, Yankee Magazine Editor’s Pick (1999)
- Distinguished Citizen Award, Cumberland Business Association (1999)

- Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Organization of the Year (1998)
- Save the Bay Environmental Achievement Award (1997)
- American Society of Landscape Architects Honor Award (1997)
- National Trust for Historic Preservation (1996)
- New England Foundation for the Arts Cultural Programs Honor (1996)
- Society of American Travel Writers Phoenix Award (1995)
- Cumberland Company Champions Award (1990)
- American Academy of Hospitality Science Five Star Diamond Award



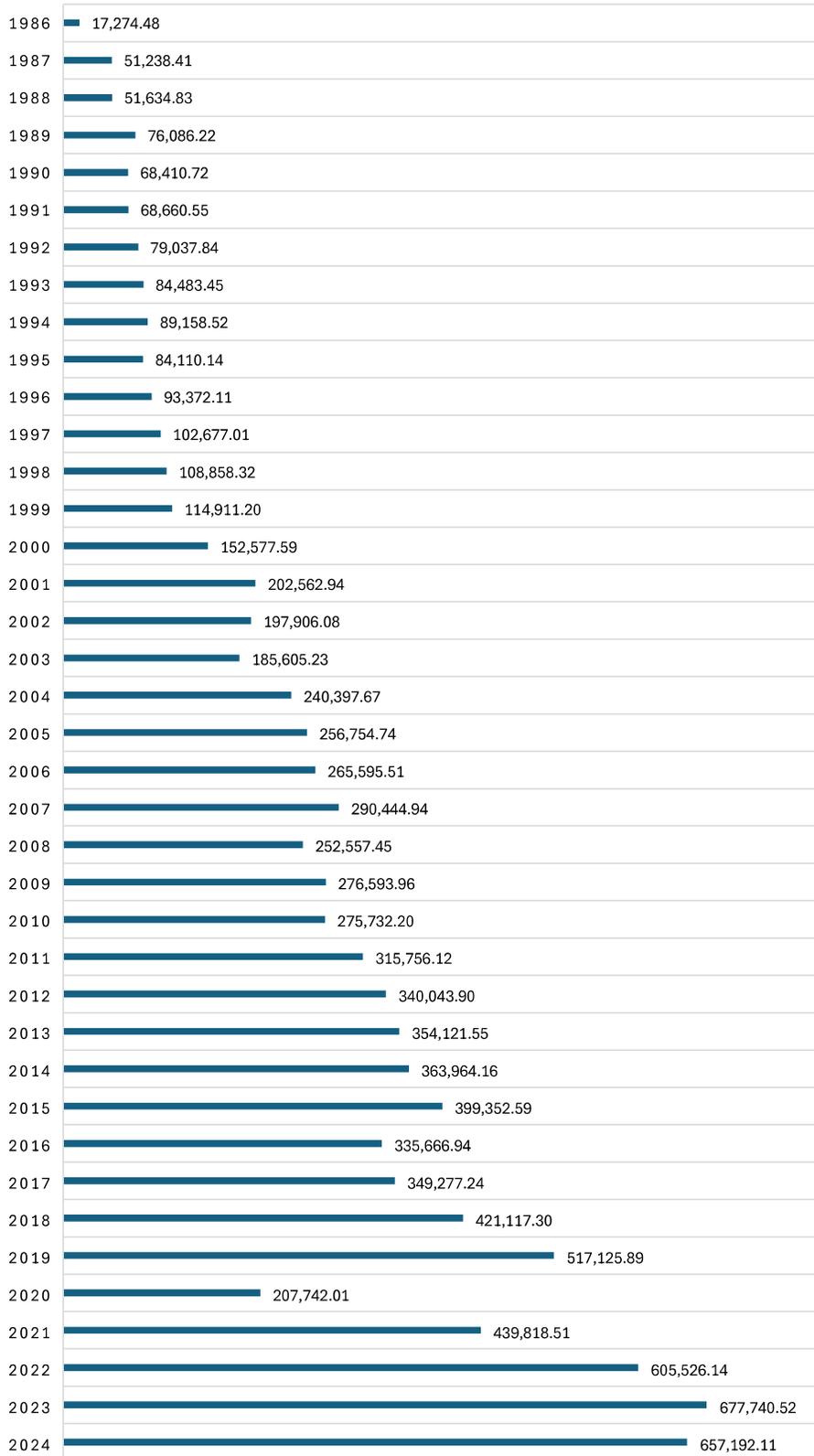
BVTC Train Trips - 1989 to 2024					
Year	Total passengers	# of Trips	Name of Trip	Departure Point	
1989	1,400	4	Interpretive Trips	Valley Falls, Worcester	
1990	280	1	Fall Foliage	Valley Falls	
1990	1,050	3	Interpretive Trips	Valley Falls	
1991	644	4	Fall Foliage	Valley Falls	
1992	1,120	4	Fall Foliage	Valley Falls	
1992	280	1	Spring Train	Valley Falls	
1993	280	1	Fall Foliage	Valley Falls	
1993	280	1	Spring Train	Valley Falls	
1994	340	2	Fall Foliage	Valley Falls	
1994	280	1	Spring Train	Valley Falls	
1995	280	1	Fall Foliage	Valley Falls	
1996	280	1	Fall Foliage	Valley Falls	
1997	300	1	Fall Foliage	Valley Falls	
1998	365	1	Fall Foliage	Valley Falls	
1999	365	1	Fall Foliage	Valley Falls	
2000	365	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	
2001	365	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	
2002	365	1	Fall Foliage	Cumberland	
2002	650	2	Easter Bunny Express	Cumberland	Round Trip
2003	365	1	Fall Foliage	Cumberland	to Putnam, CT
2003	650	2	Easter Bunny Express	Cumberland	Round Trip
2004	365	1	Fall Foliage	Cumberland	to Putnam, CT
2004	650	2	Easter Bunny Express	Cumberland	Round Trip
2005	365	1	Fall Foliage	Cumberland	to Putnam, CT
2006	365	1	Fall Foliage	Cumberland	to Putnam, CT
2007	388	1	Fall Foliage	Cumberland	to Putnam, CT
2008	388	1	Fall Foliage	Cumberland	to Putnam, CT
2009	388	1	Fall Foliage	Cumberland	to Putnam, CT
2010	388	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	to Putnam, CT
2010	325	1	Lincoln Train Trip	Providence	Woonsocket RT
2011	386	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	to Putnam, CT
2012	386	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	to Putnam, CT
2013	386	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	to Putnam, CT
2014	386	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	to Putnam, CT
2015	386	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	to Putnam, CT
2015	900	3	American Girl Train	Woonsocket	Round Trip
2016	386	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	to Putnam, CT
2016	900	3	American Girl Train	Woonsocket	Round Trip
2017	386	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	to Putnam, CT
2018	386	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	to Putnam, CT
2019	380	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	to Putnam, CT
2020	0	0			
2021	0	0			
2022	0	0			
2023	770	2	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	to Putnam, CT
2024	385	1	Fall Foliage	Woonsocket	to Putnam, CT
Total	20,349	63			

Blackstone Valley Polar Express 2000-2024				
Year	Total passengers	Cost per ticket	Number of Trips	Departure
2000	450	\$15.95	2	Woonsocket
2001	1,998	\$20.00	6	Woonsocket
2002	2,568	\$25.00	8	Cumberland
2003	2,352	\$25.00	8	Cumberland
2004	2,584	\$25.00	8	Cumberland
2005	2,511	\$27.50	8	Cumberland
2006	2,842	\$27.50	8	Cumberland
2007	3,313	\$29.50	10	Cumberland
2008	3,661	\$29.50	10	Cumberland
2009	3,588	\$35.00	10	Cumberland
2010	5,310	\$34+	14	Cumberland/Woonsocket
2011	7,326	\$35+	22	Woonsocket
2012	8,953	\$36+	24	Woonsocket
2013	10,163	\$39-\$57	27	Woonsocket
2014	12,020	\$39-\$58	33	Woonsocket
2015	15,112	\$39-\$68	41	Woonsocket
2016	16,578	\$42-\$92	48	Woonsocket
2017	18,852	\$45.50-\$95.50	51	Woonsocket
2018	20,229	\$48-\$101	55	Woonsocket
2019	20,042	\$52-\$97	55	Woonsocket
2021	12,056	\$52-\$97	33	Woonsocket
2022	14,305	\$55.12-\$102.82	39	Woonsocket
2023	14,567	\$60-\$112	39	Woonsocket
2024	17,242	\$65-\$121	44	Woonsocket
Total	218,622	passengers	603	trips total since 2000



NICK BARRETT - BLACKSTONE VALLEY TOURISM COUNCIL

MARCH 21, 2025



RILODGING TAX (ANNUAL TOTALS) SEPT. 1986 - OCT. 2024

With A Little Help From Our Friends

The unwavering support from Rhode Island's federal and state representatives, senators and elected officials has played a vital role in the success of our organization. Their assistance, along with the vital help from our business and charitable community, has led to the development of new programs and projects.

We thank the staff, friends, volunteers and supporters who have been a part of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council's work since from 1983:

Sen. Jonathan Acosta	Capt. Jeffrey Baris	Mildred Billington
Michael G. Adamowicz	Bill Bark	Ryan Billington
Karen Adams	Barbara Barnes	Sarah Billington
Ngozi Ahanotu	Patrizia Barone	Louise Bishop
Jerry Aissis	Nicholas Barrett	Terry Bisson
Jim Alden	Emma Barron	Lediona Bitá
Mayor Edgar R. Alger, III	Ron Barron	Joanne Black
Rick Alger	Lauren Bassett	M/M Paul Blackstone
Peter Alviti	Ryan Bassett	Irene Blais
Captain John Amalfitano	Paul Bateson	Richard Blockson
Caitlin Amos	Palmer Batty	Capt. Luther Blount
Rep. Mabel Anderson	Robert Beadle	Mike Boday
Capt. Doreen Andrade	Mayor Chris	Alison Bologna
Ron Anselone	Beauchamp	Justin Bonoyer
James Anthony	William Beaudoin	David Bordieri
Capt. Alex Antonivich	Albert Beauparlant	Mary Lynn Bosiack
Wilder Arboleda	Irene Beauregard	Maggie Botelho
Michael Arcisz	Normand Beauregard	Tony Botelho
Ranger Chuck Arning	Denise Bedford	Lisa Bouchard
Joe Arnold	Gordon Beeton	Roger Bouchard
Sarah Arpie	Roger Begin	Christine Boudreau
Roxanne Arruda	Leo Beliveau	Jacqueline Boudreau
David Atkinson	Nicole Belk	Louis Boulanger
Paul Audette	Rick Bellaire	N. David Bouley
Robert Audette	Chantel Bemah	Elaine Bourbonniere
Eric Auger	Bob Berard	Veronica Bowen
Scott Avedisian	Jacob Berard	Jean Boyle
Steve Averson	Johnathan Berard	Mary Lynn Boziak
Jonathan Babiec	Mallory Berard	Mary Anne Branmeyer
Ray Bacon	Deb Berardis	Charley Breagy
Don Baker	Thomas Bercher	Sue Brescia
David Balfour	Kip Bergstrom	William Brew
Nic Balzano	Sue Bernier	Jim Briden
Diane Bannon	Kelsey Berube	Jennifer Brien
Mike Bannon	Paul Bettencourt	Jon Brien
Pat Bannon	Rick Beyer	Nicole Brien
Gina Barbosa	Kenneth Bianchi	Howard Bristow
Manny Barbosa	Bob Billington	Mark Brodeur
Dylan Barbrick	Debra Billington	Jennifer Brodt
Ivy Barclay	Joanne Billington	Marian Brodt
Corine Barclay	Joseph Billington, Jr.	Chet Browning
Geraldine Barclay-King	Mary Billington	Alison Bruck

Sally Bruckshaw
Meaghan Bruneault
Jay Brunell
Michael Bryce
Suzanne Buchanan
Anne Buckley
Emely Bueno
Dallas Bullard
Jim Buma
Richard Buma
Kendra Bunting
Gerry Burgess
Madison Burke
Edward Burlingame
Sam Butera
Joe Cabana
Veronica Codappi
Robert Cahill
Karen Cahir
Kim Calcagano
Rose Caldwell
Michael Campbell
Peter Campbell
Maria Cano
Sandra Cano
Anthony Capuano, Jr.
Gerald Carbone
Charley Carey
Heather Carey
Judy Carlson
Helen Carney
Eileen Carr
Margaret Carroll
Alex Carter
Bia Carter
Christine Carter
Frank Carter
Natalie Carter
Al Cartier
Skylah Caruso
Dawn Carvalho
Paul Carvalho
Rep. Steve Casey
Matt Caspari
Mike Cassidy
Lisa Castellone
Ken Castle
Eddie Catucci
Jerilyn Caya
Jenny Cayer
Sen. John Chafee

Zach Chafee
Louise Champigny
Jevon Chan
John Chan
Pierre Chan
Catrina Chandler
Melissa Chaput
Cheryl Charbonneau
Allan Chatterton
Patricia Chavier
Joyce Choiniere
Celine Choussy
Kay Chute
Jose Cihpron
Charlene Cipollone
Jim Clark
Cliff Clear
Brenda Clement
Alice Clemente
Kirstie Clemente
Leonard Clingham
Steven Coan
Rep. Elaine Coderre
Tom Coderre
Ranger Peter Coffin
Linda Coletta
Derek Collamati
Randy Collins
Joanna Colon
Victor Comacho
Gail Conley
Dr. Patrick Conley
Beth Conneally
Sarah Connell
Gia Conti
Anne Conway
Peter Conway
Robert Conway
Marianne Cook
Sandra Cooney
Christine Corah
Brianna Cornell
JoAnne Corriea
Gayle Corrigan
Ann Cote
Deb Cote
Kevin Cote
Ann Cournoyer
Mason Cournoyer
Janette Cousineau
Larry Coutu

Pauline Coutu
Jack Covino
Bob Cowsill
Chris Cox
Robert A. Cox
Ranger Mike Creasey
Margaret Crowell
Sen. Betty Crowley
Martin Crowley
Capt. Fred Curtis
Mark Cutler
Clarence Cyr
Thomas D'Agostino
Ben Daignault
Bev Daignault
Richard Danforth
Rosemary Danforth
Lori-Ann D'Antonio
Robert D'Arezzo
Amy Dark
Irving Dark
Josef DaSilva
Mayor Roberto DaSilva
Jessica D'Avanza
Joann Davis
Roger Davis
Diane Dean
Mike Debrouse
Eric Delin
Tom Deller
Matt DeMello
Mark Dennen
Karen Frisch Dennen
David DePetrillo
Stevan Depointe
Christian DeRezendes
Russ DeSimone
Irene Desimpelaere
Ray Deslauriers
Margie Desrosiers
Grace DeStefanis
Kristin DeStefanis
Gregg Devlin
Jean DeWitt
Richard DeWitt
Ron Deziel
Katie Dion
Ray Dion
Ronnie Dion
Mayor James Diossa
Silvio DiPippo

Gov. Edward DiPrete
Megan DiPrete
Barbara Dixon
Brian Doherty
Dominique Doiron
Samuel Doiron
Capt. Bob Dombrowski
George Donnelly
Mr. & Mrs. Gayl Doster
Amos Douglas
Kathleen Doura
Brianna Doyle
Capt. Mary Pat Driscoll
Bob Drouin
Betsy Drumm
Jenny Dube
Matthew Dube
Dan Dufault
Connie Duffy
Nancy Dufresne
Diane Dupre
Claire Duprey
Jean Dutton
Ewa Dzwierzynski
Ed Egan
Myles Ellison
Mary Jane Emidy
John Emmin
Molly Endler
Walter England
John Eno
Paul Eno
Robin Erickson
Paul Evans
Stephen Evans
Adrian Farmer
Susan Farnum
Brittany Faubert
Keith Fayon
William Fazioli
Nancy Feeley
Pearl Ferland
Robin Ferra
Capt. Andy Ferranti
Jan Ferry
Mike Ferry
Brad Fesmire
Brad Figel
Dr. Michael Fine
Jillian Finkle
Judy Fischbach

Mark Fisher
Yvonne Fitts
Chris Fitzpatrick
John Flaherty
Kathryn Flannery
Marina Flannery
Tim Flannery
Lt. Gov. Charles Fogarty
Roland Fontaine
Marcel Fortin
Debra Fournier
Emma Foxon
Stu Freeman
Mimi Freeman
Carl Freedman
James Freschette
Lori Freschette
Russell Freudigmann
Peter Fuller
Gary Furtado
Jim Fusco
Joseph Gadbois
Lori Gagnon
Mike Gagnon
Arik Galle
Chris Gallonio
Christian Galpin
Capt. Vinny Galvin
Jeff Gamache
Thomas Gamache
Peter Gangler
Nayley Garcia
Ted Garille
Bobby Garland
Joe Garlick
Alex Gasbarro
Will Gates
Constance Gauthier
Michael Gazdacko
Frank Geary
Milton P. George
Greg Gerritt
Jamisen Geyer
Lloyd Gibbons
Kathy Gibson
Gayle Gifford
George Gifford
Denise Gigliotti
Corinne Giguere
Lorraine Gilbeault
Brigid Gilberti

Tammy Gilpatrick
Robert Gilson
Peter Giossi
Joshua Giraldo
Amanda Girard
Peter Glancoff
Peter Glenkoff
Scott Gobielle
Richard Godfrey
Yvonne Godin
Maurice Godin
Tony Goes
Mark Goldsmith
Mindy Goldsmith
David Goldstein
Rick Goldstein
Amy Gollenberg
Donna Gomes
Kevin Good
Mary Ann Gorelczenko
Brit Gorman
Andre Goulet
Martha Goyette
Matt Goyette
Richard Graff
Betty Grayson
Mayor Donald Grebien
Cory Green
Marcia Green
Mark Green
Theodore Green
Capt. Vinny Green
Dr. Morgan Greffe
Dick Gregory
John Gregory
Diane Grenon
John Grenon
Michelle Grenon
Christina Guadagno
Amanda Guenette
John Guevremont
Jaclyn Guglielmo
Russ Gussetti
Michael Gwynn
Judy Hadley
Michael Haywood
Barbara Hainley
Keith Hainley
Judson Hale
Andrea Hall
Catherine Hall

Ron Hall
Richard Halpern
Erik Hamel
Paulette Hamilton
Oscar Hancock
Mary Harrington
Michael Harrison
Kathy Hartley
Natalie Havens
Charlie Hawkins
Dr. Don Hawkins
Ron Hayden
Patrick Hayward
Mark Haywood
Carl Hedberg
Jenny Hedberg
Karla Hedberg
Mark Hellendrung
Aaron Hertzberg
Rhonda Hiltz
Mindy Hindenfelter
Sophie Hobson
Deb Hoff
Eric Hogan
Martha Honey
Yumi Hosono
Donna Houle
Jeannette Houle
Richard Houle
Roger Houle
Deb Howard
Vicky Huang
Capt. Kenneth Hudson
Pam Hughes
William "Billy" Hulme
Jim Hummel
Lillian Hung
Deb Hunt
Keren Hupp
Phyllis Hutnak
Angela Hyllested
Jason Iannone
Courtney Iannuccilli
Grace Iannuzzi
Fernando Ibanez
Veronica Ibanez
Samantha Jackson
Paul Jacob
Ann Jalette
Wendy Jencks
Kimberly Jernegan

Betty Johnson
Susan Johnson
Clinton Johnson
Mrs. John E. Johnson
Steve Johnson
Herb Johnston
Jarred Jones
Maureen Jones
Linda Jzyk
Donna Kaehler
Jackie Kaehler
Wally Kaehler
Daniel Kaehler
Emily Kaplin
Julia Kaplin
Lilly Kayamba
Richard Kazarian
Steve Kearns
Bea Keene
Jeff Keithline
Jannie Kelleter
Stephen Kelleter
Heron Kennedy
Shailyn Kennedy
Don Kennet
Edna Kent
Ethan Kent
Meg Kerr
Elizabeth Kerrigan
Christine Kilmartin
Rep. Peter Kilmartin
Mayor Henry Kinch
Charles King
Stephon Kinn, Jr.
Sarah Kite
Kevin Kitson
Albert Klyberg
Kevin Klyberg
Captain Tom Koolen
Joyce Hindle-
Koutsogiane
Dennise Kowalczyk
Tom Kravitz
Capt. Howard Labitt
Daniel Lade
Jennifer Lade
Miranda Ladouceur
Mike Lafond
Tammy Laforest
James Lambert
Diane Lamontagne

Mark Lamontagne
Mayor Francis Lanctot
Walter Langlois
Roger Lapierre
Beverly Laprade
Nancy Lareau
Matt Largess
Aimee Larkin
John Larrabee
Steve Larrick
Kara Larson
Neville Lassotovitch
Peter Lassotovitch
Rose Lavoie
Dave Lawlor
Mayor Thomas Lazieh
Barbara Leach
Robert Leaver
Leo Leclerc
Lorraine Leclerc
Tracey Ledoux
John Lefrancois
Dorinda Leigh
Donald Leighton
Lisa Lemieux-Doiron
Lucy Lenkiewicz
Sophia Lepre
Madeline L'Esperance
Jerry Leville
Lara Lewis
Tom Leziah
Qimin Li
Louise Lind
Kristen Littlefield
Krystal Littlefield
Linda Lizotte
Michelle Lizotte
Dennis Lloyd
Donna Longo-Kumes
Joan Loos
Susan Loos
Jeannine Louro
Carol Lussier
Chuck Lussier
Emily Luther
Jack Lyle
Jane Lynch
Patrick Lynch
Jerrie Lyndon-Sylvia
Ken Lyon
Mike Lyons

Ruth Machie
Steve Maciel
Sue Tessier MacKenzie
Carol Majeau
Dianne Mailloux
Louise Mailloux
Dr. Pat Malone
Nora Man
Garrett Mancieri
Pat Manheim
Dennis Mann
Thomas Mann
Juan Mariscal
Don Marshall
John Marsland
Cameron Martin
Christopher Martin
Erial Martin
George Martin
Jake Martin
Mike Martin
Phil Martin
Robert Martin
Scott Martin
Thom Martin
Tracy Martin
Gabrial Martinez
Patricia Martinez
Donna Mascio
Capt. Raymond Massey
Ashlee Masterson
Karen Mateleska
Mary Ellen Mateleska
Margaret Mathias
Frank Matta
Otto Maurer
Glen Maurice
Cameron Maynard
Patti McAlpine
Mike McBurney
David McCauley
Edwin McDermott
Ruth McDermott
John McDevitt
Fiona McDonagh
Capt. Sue McDonald
Molly McDonough
Joe McGill
Ryan McGreevy
Janice McHale
Toni McKay

Gov. Dan McKee
Sue McKee
Lesley McLaughlin
Tim McLaughlin
Donna McMann
Maureen McMannis
Laura McNamara
Ranger John McNiff
Barry Mechanic
Christie Mecurio
Wendy Medina
Patricia Mehrtens
Steve Menatian
Kristine Mendes
Sam Mendlinger
Jim Mendrek
Eileen Mendrek
Phyllis Meras
Dan Mercer
Cheryl Merchant
Frederick Merlan
Carol Metivier
Mayor Robert Metivier
Paul Michael
Joan Milas
Alexis Magna Miller
Tressa Miller
Jeffrey Miner
Capt. Bill Mitchell
Tony Miquel
Amanda Mograss
Gail Fowler Mohanty
Ben Mondor
Pam Monohagen
Christopher Monteiro
Claudette Moore
Jim Moran
Jackie Moran
Mary Lou Moran
Steve Moran
Anita Moreau
Gee Moreau
Michael Moriarty
Armand Morin
Lisa Morin
Deb Moroney
Helen Moroney
Melinda Morris
Thomas Morrisey
Michael Motta
Scott Motyka

Larry Mourajian
Bill Mulholland
Carrie Mullin
Brian Murphy
Francis Murphy
Francis Murphy, Jr.
Mary Murphy
Najwa Murphy
Richard Murphy
Joe Nadean
Abe Nathanson
Morris Nathanson
Phyllis Nathanson
Ryan Nault
Irene Nebiker
Mayor John Nelson
Gloria Nerney
Dana Newbrook
Dave Newton
Jay Newton
Muriel Newton
Sunny Ng
Wendy Nicholas
Joseph Nield
Brianna Nirk
Dawn Nirk
Heidi Nirk
Gerry Noel
Krystal Noiseux
Bob Noll
Simon Norridge
Maria Norris
Manny Nunes
Stu Nunnery
Sylvester Nyeswa
Daniel O'Brien
Muriel O'Connor
Janice O'Donnell
Joseph O'Donnell
Jill Ohara
Capt. Frank O'Keefe
Kristin Olivieri
Ann O'Neill
Howie O'Neill
Mark O'Neill
George Ortiz
Robert Oster
Paul Ouellette
Christine Ouellette
Ruth Pacheco
Mia Padula

Anthony Paiva
Andria Palange
Paul Palange
Carol Jean Palavra
Victoria Palkon
Lisa Palmer
Leonard Panaggio
Angela Panichas
Denise Panichas
George Panichas, Sr.
Paul Papineau
Ella Paquette
Capt. Sheila Paquette
Ariana Parent
Lauren Parmelee
Alex Parmenidez
Mary Lee Partington
Elaine Partridge
Reese Payne
Ray Pelletier
Nicholas Pelletier
Gene Peloquin
Lillian Peloquin
Roger Peloquin
Ray Pendergast
Ranger James Pepper
Christopher Perez
Tom Perkins
Denise Perreault
Deokie Persaud
Capt. Herbert Peters
Beverly Pettine
Rep. Bob Phillips
Mike Phillips
Andrew Pierson
Richard Piette
Rob Pilkington
Captain David Pinson
Kimberly Pinto
Bernadet Pitts-Wiley
Ricardo Pitts-Wiley
Bernie Plante
Jaclyn Plante
Dr. Arthur Plitt
Cathy Plourde
Virginia Plourde
Kim Polson
Mark Poole
Louise Potter
Steve Potter
Capt. Matt Prendergast

Rose Preston
Maddie Prickett
Amanda Proia
Lorraine Provencher
Richard Provencher
Anne Prymak
Earl Queenan
Tom Queenan
Larry Quick
Michael Quick
Chris Quillette
Paul Quillette
Ray Rabidoux
Bob Radlow
Jeff Rand
Denise Randles
Linda Rannacher
Ella Rataic
Wally Rathbun
Mary Rathier
Luca Rebussini
Olon Reeder
Avery Reiff
Jan Reitsma
Suzanne Rheume
Chris Rice
Gary Rice
Alyssa Richard
Dave Richards
Tracy Richardson
Patricia Richmond
Suzanne Richmond
Julie Riendeau
Janice Rigano
Celeste Riley
Frances Rivard
Lucy Rivera
Mayor Maria Rivera
Gianna Rizzotti
Matt Robert
Minn Robidoux
Jasmine Rodrigues
Ramon Rodriguez
Santos Rodriguez
Capt. Benny Rogers
Cole Roman
Michele Romeo
Moe Rondeau
Will Rosser
Rick Roth
Rob Roy

Alessandra Ruggiero
Mike Sabitoni
Dan Sadwin
Donna Sakkinen
Matt Salisbury
Pat Salisbury
Ted Sanderson
Francisco Santiago
Soraya Santiago
Jessica Santoro
Stephanie Santoro
Stephanie Santos
Liz Santucci
Paul Santucci
Dave Sarletto
Mayor Brian Sarault
Louis Sauzedde
Joe Sawyer
Ronnie Schofield
Charlie Sciaraffa
Capt. Kenneth Scott
Beth Scribner
Craig Sculos
Mika Seeger
Pete Seeger
Yvonne Seggerman
Lori Shaken
Rep. Mary Ann
Shallcross
Thomas Shanahan
Tiffany Shaw
Susan Shea
Kevin Sheahan
Rudy Sheahan
Chuck Sherba
Consuelo Sherba
Joe Silva
Mike Silva
Beth Silvia
Kevin Silvia
Samantha Silvia
Ashley Simmons
Terry Simpson
Heather Singleton
Alix Sisti
Eric Sjoblom
Clover Slaughter
Jacqueline Slaughter
Cristina Smart
Evan Smith
Ken Smith

Morgan Smith
Captain Randy Smith
Steve Smith
Emily Sorel
Deborah Sousa
Ronnie Sozek
Brad Spear
Ellen Spilewski
Ellen Spilka
Burton Stallwood
Roberta Staples
Val Stegemoen
Ranger Christopher
Stein
David Stein
Barbara Steinbrick
Anna Stetson
Jonathan Stevens
Janice Stispak
Ranger Walt Stockwell
Richard Stone
Dan Sullivan
Christine Sullivan
Alex Summers
Robert Sutton
Jeff Swanlund
Jon Sweet
Brett Sylvia
Jill Taladay
Michael Tamburro
Kristin Tanasio
Barbara Tattersall
H. Russell Taub
Ranger Teri Teller
Ruth Tetreault
Keith Thibeau
Lynn Thibeault, RN
Ann Thorndike
Bruce Tillinghast
Charlotte Tisch
Steve Todaro
Loren Toepper
Tony Tomasso
James Toomey
Jonathan Tourtellot
Kevin Tracey
Jim Tracy
Lauren Trad
Roger Trahan
Corey Trainor
Matthew Trainor

Sandra Tremblay
Barbara Trinidad
Robin Trotman
Rachael Trowbridge
Veronica Trudeau
Phana Tum
Estelle Turgeon
Bonnie Lee Turner
Bonnie Tyler
Dr. Timothy Tyrrell
Nancy Ursillo
Lori Urso
Joan Valaitis
Carlos Valverdi
Chris Van Allsburg
Lisa Van Allsburg
Louise Van Houw
Chris Van Orsow
Bob Venturini
Spencer Viner
Glee Violette
Tim Viveiros
Kerri Vizzacco
Capt. Joe Walkden
Tim Walker
Cindy Walker-Gingell
Mark Walsh
Ann Wang
Qingya Wang
Katelyn Ward
Kim Ward
Thomas Ward
Peggy Wardle
Pamela Ware
Ranne Warner
Sen. Joan Weisner
Herb Weiss
David Westcott
Andrew Whalen
Jim Wheaton
Eric Whitacre
Rae White
Reginald Whitworth
Jim Wilbour
Sally Wilbour
Mike Wilcox
Keith Wilkinson
Brittany Williams
Kristen Williams
John Wolcott
Scott Wolf

Jennifer Wolfe
Amanda Wood
Bonnie Wood
Bruce Wood
James Wood
Megan Epler Wood
Millie Wood
Stephen Wood
Dr. John Worsley
Amanda Wright
Ted Wright
Herman Yip
Louise Yip
Zachary Yip
Deb Yorke
Samantha Young
Steven Zarcaro
Barbara Zdravesky
Joe Zito



“The people of the Valley took an idea, and with absolutely no money, built a \$3 million non-profit organization that became the oldest tourism development agency in Rhode Island. Using unorthodox tactics they have brought the industrialized Blackstone River Valley into focus, to become an internationally recognized destination.”

Dave Richards, Chairman of the Board

Published by

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council

1420 Broad Street, 3rd floor, Central Falls, RI 02863 | (401) 724-2200

blackstonevalleytourismcouncil.org