

## BURKE AREA DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

### PROJECT REVIEW

In the fall of 2012 the Burke Area Chamber of Commerce was granted partial funding for one year from USDA Rural Development for the Burke Area Destination Development Initiative. The goal of the project was to attract more visitors to the Burke area in a strategic and responsible way that benefits the community as well as our visitors.

#### **In the last year the following has been accomplished and paid for with grant funds:**

- **A new brochure for the Burke Area was created.** It reflects the new ad campaign created by Flek of St. Johnsbury and highlights the Burke Area offerings including recreation, arts, culture, lodging, dining and local events. It includes a QR scan code for mobile devices that links to the Burke Area website, [www.BurkeVermont.com](http://www.BurkeVermont.com) which lists all Chamber member businesses. The brochure is now in distribution at:
  - 6 of the busiest Welcome Centers in Vermont
  - over 50 locations in metro Boston
  - over 50 locations in suburban Massachusetts
- **The brochure was also translated entirely into French-Canadian** and distributed to:
  - 50 locations in and around the Greater Montreal area of Canada
- **Print Ads** which include a link to [www.BurkeVermont.com](http://www.BurkeVermont.com) were placed in:
  - Kingdom Guide – Summer issue
  - Vermont Sports – June issue
  - Singletracks – May/June issue
  - Vermont Mountain Bike Guide – Annual issue
  - Adirondack Guest Informer – summer issue
  - Vermont Winter Vacation Guide – Biannual issue
  - Vermont Vows – Biannual issue
  - Bike Magazine – July issue
  - Burlington International Airport Guide – Summer issue
  - Cycle Presse – A Canadian publication – Summer issue
- **Online Ads** which include a link to [www.BurkeVermont.com](http://www.BurkeVermont.com) were placed on:
  - The Mountain Report Winter Edition – the 10 minute video ad was featured on their website as well as on national outlets including NESN, The Sports Channel, Comcast Sportsnet and other media outlets
  - The Mountain Report Summer Edition – the 13 minute video ad was featured on their website as well as on national outlets including NESN, The Sports Channel, Comcast Sportsnet and other media outlets
  - Vermont Great Outdoors Online Magazine
  - Vermont Mountain Bike Guide Online Edition

- **In the last year, the Burke Area was represented at three Travel Shows:**
  - Boston Ski & Snowboard Show – attendance of 45,000 people
  - Montreal Bike Show (Salon du Velo) – attendance of 20,000 people
  - Bike Expo New York – attendance of 40,000 people

**The grant also included funding to create new area events, improve on existing events and better promote area events. New events in the area include:**

- **The Burke Wine & Art Snowcase** – showcasing the work of 13 local artists with a wine tasting.
- **Coyote Scramble Trail Run** – non-competitive 25 and 50 mile trail run challenge.
- **Flicks on the Green** - A series of family friendly, outdoor film nights in East Burke.

In addition, we were able to greatly enhance key area events such as:

- **NEMBAfest Mountain Bike Festival** – expanded to begin earlier and offer three full days of activities including the addition of Friday Expo hours, music on Friday and improved food offerings including some from local food vendors. **Attendance in 2013 increased 28% from 2012.**
- **4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks Celebration** –The Chamber increased our promotion of this event and featured it in the new Burke Area brochure. **Attendance in 2013 increased about 15% from 2012.**
- **CircumBurke Mountain Bike & Trail Run Challenge** – In 2013, the Chamber increased our participation in this event and aided in promoting it. Attendance has risen dramatically since this event began three years ago. **It began with about 40 participants and increased 525% to 250 participants in the fall of 2012.**
- **Burke Fall Foliage Festival** – improved to include music at the beer tent and an educational live raptor presentation from VT Institute of Natural Science in 2012.

Attendance at other area events has also increased including:

- **WinterBike on Kingdom Trails** –**Attendance this year increased about 40% from last year.** This event is so popular that it led Kingdom Trails to create permanent biking trails available for use in the winter months. Even more trails are expected to be available for winter biking in the 2013/2014 season.

## **RESULTS**

To determine if tourism to the Burke Area has increased in the last year, the *2013 Burke Area Visitor Survey* was sent out and responded to by a sampling of almost 100 people. The full results of the survey are available on [www.BurkeVermont.com/](http://www.BurkeVermont.com/) Numbers of note include:

- 75.8% of those who responded said they visited the Burke Area in the last year
- 12% had never visited the Burke Area prior to the last 12 months
- 14.2% responded that on their last visit to the Burke Area they stayed longer than previous visits
- 76.9% responded that they plan to visit the Burke Area within the next year
- 20.9% responded that they visited the Burke Area in the last year to attend an event

In addition, many respondents reported seeing ads or reading local or national articles about the area. Comments about the Burke Area were mainly positive with many writing about their appreciation for our outdoor recreation offerings, friendliness of the community, small town atmosphere and many noted their enjoyment of area events including the Burke Fall Foliage Festival and NEMBAfest Mountain Bike Festival.

Other numbers that prove there has been an increase in tourism to the Burke Area include:

- Kingdom Trails usership has increased 18% so far this summer versus last summer
- Skier visits to QBurke Mountain Ski Resort increased 23% this past winter
- Local Occupancy for the first quarter of 2013 increased 8% over Q1 of 2012
- Local Occupancy for the second quarter of 2013 increased 13% over Q2 of 2012
- The steady increase of attendance at area events

Other Key Stats that indicate an increase of general interest in the Burke Area include:

- Traffic to the Burke Area website, [www.BurkeVermont.com](http://www.BurkeVermont.com) increases an average of 46% each month in 2013 versus the same month in 2012
- In the last 6 months subscribership to the Burke Area monthly e-newsletter has increased over 30%
- Burke Area Twitter followers have doubled in the past year
- Burke Area Facebook followers have increased over 110% in the past year

To determine if there have been changes to the local economy within the last year, the *2013 Burke Area Business Survey* was sent to all 130 Chamber members. Numbers of note from the 43 responding businesses include:

- 4 new businesses have opened in the Burke Area within the last year including an Inn, a Mountain Bike Day Camp for kids, and several vacation rentals
- 15 businesses in the Burke Area have increased employee wages in the last year
- 15 businesses in the Burke Area reported an increase in net profit in the last year

Questions about the importance of tourism in the Burke Area were also asked in the survey. Numbers of note include:

- 55.8% of responding businesses stated that tourism directly and positively impacts their business
- 23.2% reported that tourism indirectly and positively impacts their business
- No businesses reported a negative impact of tourism on their business
- Over 90% reported that tourism benefits the Burke Area as a whole

Please note, the Chamber does not take full credit for these positive numbers. We recognize that the reason for the increase of interest in the Burke Area and improvements to the local economy are due to many factors including efforts of individual businesses to promote the area as well as expand & enhance their offerings, the support of the local community including volunteerism at local events and business sponsorship of local events among many other factors. These efforts combined with the Chamber's work to promote the area have all worked together in a true community effort to improve the local economy and invite more visitors to experience all the Burke Area has to offer. Please contact the chamber at 626-4124 or [burkechamber@burkevermont.com](mailto:burkechamber@burkevermont.com) with any questions pertaining to this report.