

The Tributary



A Newsletter of The Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association

Autumn 2004

Message from the Chairperson

As the fall colours fade, it seems a good time for some reflecting. The tourism industry in our region has had a busy summer and fall season. Although the summer weather didn't exactly co-operate, the beautiful Indian summer weather has had visitors out in droves. The Hills of Headwaters postcard marketing campaigns have been a resounding success and we are planning yet another for release in mid November that will promote *Christmas in the Country*. Our target market, the Greater Toronto Area, is visiting our region more and our approach seems to be working.

Recently, our Board of Directors spent some time reviewing our strategic plan and updating our goals for the coming year. With the help of Paul Samson, our representative from the Ministry of Tourism, we looked at the current trends and direction that the tourism sector is heading in Ontario. Current research is showing that visitors plan their getaways based first on experience and second on destination. In order to take advantage of this trend, the Tourism Association will be getting more heavily involved in the development and marketing of *experiences* that complement the Hills of Headwaters as a *destination*.

With more prospective visitors researching their tourism options based on what they want to do (instead of where they want to go), the Hills of Headwaters region has several distinct advantages. First, we already have an excellent website in place offering many unique experiences. Second, as members of the Hills of Headwaters Tourism, we are already working collaboratively based on similar experiences. Third, we are just outside Toronto's back door!

Over the next couple of months, we are meeting with the Economic Development Departments and Committees of our municipal partners in preparation for funding requests for the upcoming year. Municipal partnership funding is an integral part of our financial sustainability and we need your support. Contact the members of your local EDC and your local councillors and let them know how important their financial support is in continuing to grow the local tourism product.

Work has begun on the 2005 editions of our popular Visitors' Guide & Map and our annual membership drive is under way. We are looking forward to continued tourism growth here in the Hills of Headwaters.

As we are now poised for the holiday season, I wish you busy times and look forward to working with you in 2005.

Jo Fillery

Your Hills of Headwaters Board of Directors for 2004/ 2005

Jo Fillery, Chair – What's Cookin'
Jocelyn Klemm, Vice-Chair – The Wine Coaches
Don Smith, Treasurer – Wedgbury, Smith, Bonebakker LLP
Geoff Chandler, Secretary – Old Downtown Gallery
David Baldwin – County of Dufferin
Lesley Burns – Country Host
AJ Grace-Cavey – Town of Shelburne
Jeff Duncan – Town of Erin
Julie Fredenburg – Orangeville Concert Association
Brenda Fowler – Town of Mono
Nancy Huether – Town of Orangeville

John Jeffery – Kilbirnie B & B
Rajeev Khanduja – Hockley Valley Resort
Ken Manwell – Town of Orangeville
Jefferson Mappin – Headwaters Arts Festival
Kelly Myles – Caledon Country Club
Dorothy Pedersen – Writing Done Right
John Platz – HR/IR Satellite
David Pounds – RE/MAX Select Realty Ltd.
Ben Roberts – Town of Caledon
Cheryl Spalding Brand – Country Manor Antiques
Allan Thompson – Town of Caledon

Marketing Update

It's been an exciting year for the Hills of Headwaters, with many collaborative marketing initiatives underway to promote our special region and build the local tourism industry. The following summarizes the major marketing activities undertaken over the past nine months:

- Launched a state of the art website, www.thehillsofheadwaters.com, aimed at the 60% of Canadians who plan their getaways online.
- Produced 100,000 copies of the 2004 Visitors Guide, 60,000 of which were distributed to Toronto residents through the Globe and Mail.
- Produced 150,000 copies of a road map to the region.
- Launched two direct marketing campaigns (Summer & Fall) in the Toronto market with a total distribution of 400,000 print pieces and over 100 radio spots.
- Hosted 11 Ontario journalists in June who visited the region as part of the Association's on-going media familiarization tours.
- Promoted the region during one-on-one interviews with 50 Canadian journalists at the Canadian GoMedia Market Place in Montreal.
- Launched the region as a destination for meetings and special events through the production and distribution of a corporate lure brochure to meeting planners in Ontario.

The Tourism Association continues to build on its strength as a sophisticated rural destination only 45 minutes northwest of Toronto. To hammer this home in the marketplace, the Tourism Association promotes the region using the tag line, "Step outside Toronto's backdoor". To reinforce our geographical location, partner communities Caledon, Erin, Orangeville, Dufferin, Shelburne and Mono have been appended to the Hills of Headwaters logo in all external marketing materials.

For a sample of how some of the local businesses and attractions are partnering with the Tourism Association to take advantage of collaborative radio and print advertising, visit the Hills of Headwaters web site, look for the *documents* area under *Tourism Association*.

New Focus on Experience-Based Marketing

Based on feedback from members, the public-at-large and others in the industry, it is apparent that the Hill of Headwaters brand is starting to get noticed in the Toronto market. Although generic regional marketing will continue, the marketing committee will be making a shift in focus over the coming year towards *experience-based marketing*.

Current research indicates that visitors make their travel decision based *first* on experience and *second* on destination. Visitors are actively seeking to be fully engaged versus being observers. Accordingly, tourism suppliers and destinations that can provide total immersion in an experience will have a competitive advantage over

others. A destination's success in a competitive marketplace requires that it offer distinctive *experiences* tied to resources or programs *unique to that destination*, and delivered with high service quality.

In order to take advantage of this trend, the marketing committee will focus its attention over the next year on facilitating the development and marketing of several 'Hills of Headwaters experiences' taking into consideration customer (visitor) needs and product readiness. Following a series of planning sessions, the Marketing Committee has identified the following experiences for further research and action: The Arts, Golf, Equine and Towns of Villages.

Summer in the Hills of Headwaters

This summer we were fortunate to get funding for three University students. SOTO (Southern Ontario Tourism Organization) funding enabled us to hire Amanda Lehmann & Amanda Rossignol. Provincial funding through the Summer Jobs Services Program, allowed us to hire Julie Vanderwerf, who was a returning Tourism Ambassador from 2003.

We opened our full service Bolton visitor information kiosk in June in partnership with Prudential Select Realty on Mill Street. All of our member brochures have been displayed there, plus a selection of other Ontario destination information to assist visiting travelers. This location will remain a year-round outlet for all our member brochures.

Two other high-traffic locations, Belfountain & Erin, were uniquely serviced this summer with twice weekly re-fills of all of our member brochures. Specifically, these two locations were at the Belfountain Country Store in Belfountain and at Judy's restaurant at the NE corner of Trafalgar Road and County Road 124. Brochure contents at these two locations have now been returned to only those in the optional Brochure Box Program. For more information on this program please contact the office at 519-942-0314 or 1-800-332-9744 or online at info@thehillsofheadwaters.com. On behalf of all our 280 plus members, we express our sincere thanks to Prudential Select Realty, the Belfountain Country Store and Judy's Restaurant for their generous cooperation in this summer program.

From the Executive Director

Lisa Hohban Brusse

The Hills of Headwaters Tourism represents a geographic area roughly 10,000 square kilometers in size, encompassing 10 local municipalities with (combined) as many as 20 villages and hamlets, and close to 300 member businesses. With a region of this scope and size, communications can sometimes be a daunting task. Not only must we keep member businesses and partner municipalities up-to-date, informed and active, but the Tourism Association also has a role to play in keeping local residents informed of the benefits of a strong local tourism industry and of the effectiveness of a collaborative marketing initiative.

The Hills of Headwaters Board of Directors took a special look at communications this September during their annual strategic planning session. Both the membership committee and the marketing committee were tasked with the job of improving communications. The membership committee will concentrate on improved communications with our members and partners; the marketing committee on improved communications with our local communities and residents.

This new format for *The Tributary* is the start of better communications to you, our members and partners. This edition and all subsequent issues will be posted on the Hills of Headwaters web site in the *Documents* area under *Tourism Association*. *The Tributary* provides an update on the activities of the Tourism Association and the tourism industry in general on a quarterly basis corresponding with the seasons. Assisting us with this is new volunteer, Sally Rideout, who, starting with this issue, will be the editor of *The Tributary*.

(As an aside, I encourage all of our non-profit members to use the volunteer recruitment tools on the new web site. Volunteer postings from the Tourism Association have been successfully received)

Having said all this, let's not forget that communication goes two ways. The Tourism Association also needs feedback, input and encouragement from you. This can happen in a variety of ways including using the "feedback form" on the Hills of Headwaters website or by simply giving any one of our Board Directors or staff an informal phone call.

Occasionally, feedback from the membership is solicited in a more formal way as was done this past September through a special survey that was posted on the Hills of Headwaters web site. I wish to extend many thanks to all of you who took the time to complete this survey.

While the tabulated results were overwhelmingly positive (averages for all categories were greater than 7 across the board), the comments section proved to be the most telling. The general feeling is that our members are encouraged by what the Tourism Association has been doing so far. Several members felt that growth and activity has been substantial and that the Association should focus on keeping these existing services running well. Others would like to see more opportunities for networking and cross-promotion as well as better representation of the smaller operators and villages in our marketing materials.

I hope that you enjoy the new look and expanded content of *The Tributary* and that our efforts to keep you informed are working.

Future of the Arts in the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative

The Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association is thrilled to be one of over 15 regional organizations (mostly artisan-based) that have come together to develop an action plan for the 'Future of the Arts in the Hills of Headwaters' based on the four central themes of:

- Collaborative marketing
- Communications (internal and external)
- Professional and business development
- Education of the next generation of artists

On behalf of this collaborative, the Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association has submitted to the Trillium Foundation an application for funding for the implementation of a region-wide strategic planning process focused on the arts. The expected outcome of the session is to achieve broad-based consensus and 'buy-in' to an action plan aimed at enhancing and expanding the prosperity and well-being of the arts community of the Hills of Headwaters area based on the four central themes listed above. Should the collaborative be successful in their application to Trillium, it is expected that the project will begin early in the New Year.

Baseline Study Being Conducted to Measure Growth of Local Tourism Industry

The services of Erin Research have been commissioned by the Tourism Association to conduct a study of the tourism activity in the Hills of Headwaters in order to provide a foundation for planning and developing marketing strategies in the region.

The researchers will be collecting historic data from the region's accommodations, flagship attractions and events and golf courses. The final report is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

If you are contacted to participate in the study, please know that your participation will help tremendously in making the case for tourism to our municipal partners as well as other senior levels of government and funding agencies.

All information provided to Erin Research will be kept completely confidential.

Ad Space in the 2005 Visitor's Guide Now Available

Production of the 2005 Visitor's Guide and Map has begun! The rates sheet and contract has been sent to all Hills of Headwaters members by email or fax. If you have not yet received your copy, please contact the Hills of Headwaters office immediately. Details can also be found on the Hills of Headwaters web site. Under *Tourism Association*, go to *Marketing Opportunities*.

This year's guide will take on more of a consumer magazine format through the use of in-depth articles and feature stories. Editorial content will be provided on Golf, Equine, Towns & Villages and Mountain Biking in order to align the Guide with the experience-based marketing activities being pursued by the Marketing Committee.

Limited sponsorship space available on Visitor Map (150,000 copies produced!)

There are limited sponsorship opportunities available on the 2005 Hills of Headwaters Map. For those who want additional exposure you may want to consider a full panel sponsorship on the Map. For more details contact Cynthia at the office 942-0314 / 1800-332-9744.

Membership Update

Over the past year, the Hills of Headwaters has welcomed 83 new members to the Association: 22 from Caledon, 9 from Dufferin County, 7 from Erin, 34 from Orangeville, and 11 from outside the region's official boundary.

The new members break into the following categories: 9 Accommodation, 8 Artisans, 4 Dining, 5 Farm Fresh, 10 Recreational/Fitness, 4 Health & Well Being/Spas, 21 Community & Business Services, 22 Shopping.

The fall is when we get the greatest number of new members. As we gear up for production of the annual Visitor's Guide, businesses line up to be included. If you know of anyone who could benefit from this as well as be included on the region's number one website, we encourage you to send them our way. We are told by Ontario Tourism that having a broad diversity of experiences available makes a region more attractive as a destination. Hence, our goal is to invite and attract as many businesses as possible to join the Hills of Headwaters regional membership. If you know of anyone whom you think would be interested, please let us know and we will contact them.

New Visitor Information Centre Still Part of Plans

The Tourism Association is looking forward to moving into a new and professional Visitor Information Centre. However, due to a delay with plan approval from the Ministry of Transportation, the anticipated move-in date has been postponed to the fall of 2005.

As the primary marketing agent for the region, servicing in excess of 5000 visitors each year, we look forward to developing a facility that will truly reflect the unique diversity of our community and that will provide local businesses and community groups with a common place to promote their products and services.

Visitor Information Centre Statistics

Inquiries:

June 2004:	455
July 2004:	535
August 2004:	524
Sept. 2004:	455

Referrals

(June – Sept)

Caledon:	550
Erin:	285
Orangeville:	1092
Shelburne:	258
Mono:	401
Dufferin:	567

Referral Categories

(June – Sept)

Accommodation:	384
Shopping:	206
Attraction:	453
Special events:	267
Service:	269
Restaurant:	135
Recreation:	645
Arts & Culture:	107
Directions:	853

Web site activity by month

June 2004

Hits:	352,795
Unique visits:	2810

July 2004

Hits:	417,432
Unique visits:	3349

August 2004

Hits:	402,401
Unique visits:	3468

September 2004

Hits:	529,295
Unique visits:	4324

Hills of Headwaters Partner in Katimavik Program

The Hills of Headwaters is pleased to have been selected to participate in the Orangeville Katimavik Program for the second consecutive year. Katimavik is a federal program that selects young Canadians, ages 17 to 21, to volunteer and live in communities across Canada. The Town of Orangeville is one of many host communities throughout Canada that welcomes 11 young Canadians to the community for three months, three times per year.

The Tourism Association participates in the Katimavik program by offering a work placement opportunity at the Information Centre and Office to one of the young participants. This trimester, we welcome Kristin Lewis to the Hills of Headwaters team. Kristin's home is on Lennox Island, an aboriginal community in PEI. Kristin will be providing front-line service at the information centre, fielding all phone and walk-in inquiries as well as assisting with other administrative functions.

Welcome to the following members who have joined the Hills of Headwaters this past year:

Access Fitness, Achesons, ACTS - Headwaters Family Fitness, Add'em Up Accounting, Ashton Ridge Golf Course, Back To Normal Inc., Bolton BIA, Brenda Newton's Clay Studio, Broadway Farms Market, Budget Car Rental, Caledon Community Services, Caledon Enterprise, Cobwebs & Caviar, Community Living Dufferin, Concerned Citizens of Caledon, Cookstown Chamber of Commerce, Credit River Company, Creek Side Clothing Co., Creemore Picnic Café, Dish & Dat Rentals, Dr. N. Richard Pragnell, Dragonboat Festival/Amaranth Lions Club, Dufferin Farm Tour, Earl Rowe Provincial Park, Eramosa Elk Country Store, Erin Agricultural Society, Erin Country Inn & Conference Centre, Even Erin B & B, Evergreen B & B, Families & Fun in Dufferin County, Fieldstone B & B, Four Sticks Framing, From Head to Toe Spa, From the Kitchen to the Table, F-Stop Cameras, Galaxy Cinemas, Grainne O'Maille, High House Antiques, Hill-Billy Hack, Hockley Hills B & B, Hockley Valley Hot Tub Company, Il Corso Ristorante, In Tir Na Nog B & B, Inglewood General Store, Irvine House B & B, Island Lake Estates, Island Lake Traditions, Jo Seston Fine Home Accessories, K & G Engraving & Gifts, Kings Buffet, kitchENvision, Kutting Korner, Lorraine's Getaway, Maggiolly Art Supplies, Margi Taylor Self, Mayfield West Secondary Plan, Nicolston Dam, Once-A-Tree, Orangeville Blues & Jazz Festival, Orangeville Christian School, Orangeville Farmers Market, Orangeville Health & Wellness Centre, PB Print & Litho Ltd., Prudential Select Realty, Renaissance, Royal LePage - Cindy Ness, Royal LePage - S Young & J Imrie, Shaws Creek Furniture, Sign Needs Inc., Simpler Times, Terra Cotta Woodworks, The Gallery at Arabella Pines, The Interior Touch, The Manhattan Bead Company, The Maples Independent Country Day School, The Spa at Belfountain, The Weathervane, The Williams Mill, TJ's Hangar Sports Grill, Toronto Montessori School, Tournament of Champions, Wilson's Orchard & Market & Winners.