



Alleghany Foundation Supports Railroad Heritage Center in Clifton Forge January 18, 2008

At a time when American rail travel was uniting a country and shaping the destiny of a nation, Clifton Forge, Virginia, was a cultural and economic boomtown, the division headquarters for the Chesapeake and Ohio (C & O) Railway, and a gateway through the first mountainous barrier to western expansion.

Today, thanks in part to a \$275,000 grant awarded by The Alleghany Foundation, visitors can buy a ticket to the past and experience once again the rich history of Clifton Forge and the C & O Railway. May, 2008, marks the grand opening of the Chesapeake and Ohio Historical Society's Railroad Heritage Center, an interpretive museum and educational center designed to bring the story of the railroad, community, and people of the region to life.



“The C & O Historical Society is passionate about helping the community tell its story in a powerful way,” says Rick Tabb, Railroad Heritage Center Executive Director. “We are extremely grateful to The Alleghany Foundation for helping us reconnect Clifton Forge to its past as a great railroad town, and for making it possible for us to share with the public the American railway experience.”

The Railroad Heritage Center is located at the former Smith's Creek Yard next to the CSX main line in historic downtown Clifton Forge. The heart of the Center is the 1898 Freight House, restored and open to the public as a museum and visitor's center. Attractions also include a restored dining car, two restored cabooses, and a restored combine car, with plans to feature a troop sleeper car to help tell the story of the railroad's supportive role in World War II.

“We see the opening of the museum as step one of about a twelve step expansion process,” says Tabb. “We'll continue to add features and attractions, and eventually hope to host an excursion service to Staunton and Charlottesville, which will increase exposure and accessibility to the region.”

Clifton Forge has been the home of the Chesapeake and Ohio Historical Society since 1987, when the society established a permanent location to archive its extensive collection of

historical documents. The Railroad Heritage Center is an expansion of the activities of the society's 2000 members, whose vision is to share its vast resources in a unique and engaging way.

Tabb notes that the Center will work in close partnership with the town of Clifton Forge, the city of Covington, Alleghany County governments and local civic and business organizations to draw business to the area, and will also collaborate with regional school systems to create educational opportunities for school groups.

“With support from funding sources like The Alleghany Foundation, we conservatively estimate that in our first year, we'll have 20,000 to 50,000 visitors,” says Tabb. “And we anticipate that number will grow within a few years to 80,000 to 100,000. The whole community will benefit, not only from access to a high quality experience, but also from the increased business activity, exposure, and historical opportunities the Center will create.”

Beth Webb, Alleghany Foundation Executive Director, agrees. “The Foundation's mission is to improve quality of life in the Alleghany Highlands, and quality of life is measured not only by the standard of living enjoyed by our citizens, but by the cultural and historical resources available, which provide a sense of pride in our communities. The Alleghany Foundation is pleased to support the C & O Historical Society in its effort to draw visitors to the Alleghany Highlands, and to celebrate the historical significance of Clifton Forge.”

Since its inception, the foundation has granted nearly \$26 million to the following worthy, 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations with the purpose of improving the quality of life in the Alleghany Highlands:

- Alleghany County
- Alleghany County Parks and Recreation
- Alleghany County Public Schools
- Alleghany County Sheriff's Office
- Alleghany County United Fire and Rescue Association
- Alleghany Health District
- Alleghany Highlands Arts & Crafts Center
- Alleghany Highlands Arts Council
- Alleghany Highlands Community Services Board
- Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Authority
- Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation
- Alleghany Highlands Free Clinic
- Alleghany Highlands Genealogical Society
- Alleghany Highlands YMCA
- Alleghany Historical Society
- Alleghany Humane Society
- Alleghany Mountain Radio
- American Diabetes Association
- American Red Cross
- Appalfoiks of America
- Art Museum of Western Virginia
- Bath County
- Bath County Health Department
- Bath County Historical Society
- Blue Ridge Public Television
- Boiling Springs Elementary School
- Boiling Springs Fire Department

C.O.P.E.
C & O Historical Society
Callaghan Elementary School PTO
Charles P. Jones Memorial Library
City of Covington
Clifton Forge Little League
Clifton Forge Main Street
Clifton Forge Nursery School
Clifton Forge Public Library
Clifton Forge Volunteer Fire Department
Covington City Schools
Covington Fire Department
Covington Rescue Squad
Dabney S. Lancaster Community College
Diabetes Education Support Group
Falling Spring Elementary School PTO
Falling Spring Fire Department
Falling Spring Rescue Squad
Greater Alleghany Highlands School Health Consortium
Jackson River Enterprises
Jackson river Technical Center
League of Older Americans
Mill Mountain Theatre
Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District
Mountain View Elementary School PTO
Rockbridge Area Community Services Board
Safehome Systems
Science Museum of Western Virginia
Scott Hill Foundation, Inc.
Sharon Elementary School PTO
Sharon Volunteer Fire Department
Shenandoah Autism Center
Southwest Virginia AHEC
Southwest Virginia Second Harvest Foodbank
Special Olympics
Total Action Against Poverty
Town of Clifton Forge
Town of Iron Gate
Unified Human Services Transportation System (RADAR)
West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine
Western Virginia Emergency Medical Service Council