

## Creative Solutions Topics

1. Brian Becker, Presenting for The Center for Natural Capital

Title: The Appalachian Wood Energy Hub – a driver for healthy forests, rivers and communities

The Appalachian Wood Energy Hub will restore the health of Southwest Virginia’s forests by converting low-grade wood from timber stand improvement and wild-fire fuel load reduction operations, invasive species management and storm debris clean up into heating fuels, charcoal and biochar. Using hardwood chips and wood pellets for heating homes, businesses and institutions instead of fuel oil or propane keeps our energy dollars in the local economy. The hardwood lump charcoal preferred by grilling enthusiast currently available in most grocery stores comes primarily from Mexico! Biochar is a product with growing interest and demand as a soil amendment for agriculture and mine land reclamation and for cleaning up water pollution and contaminated sites. It is the forests of Southwest Virginia that supply the water to the rivers that are driving the new eco-tourism economy in the region. The Appalachian Wood Energy Hub will be an early manifestation of the emerging bio-economy, where chemicals, plastics and products produced from fossil fuels will eventually be replaced by bio-chemicals, bioplastics and other bio-products. The Appalachian Wood Energy Hub will be at the center, connecting healthy forests and river with resilient communities leading the way to a restorative economy!

2. Hal Craddock, Presenting for Creative Boutique Hotels

Title: Hospitality as a Strategy to Rejuvenate Small Town St. Paul

St. Paul, VA, population 903, has a story to tell..... a story about the incredibly bio-diverse & beautiful Clinch River that runs through it; about its two hundred miles of ATV trails; its interesting heritage of coal mining and unique crafts, food, and music. St. Paul just didn't have a way to attract and keep an audience to hear it's unique story. Enter a group of local women and men committed to developing a unique boutique hotel and restaurant to serve as a base for telling the region's exciting story. Their first step was to acquire a historic building on the town's most important corner. The 1914 Willis Building was a charming 25,000 square foot two story "E" shaped apartment building, built over a six-bay retail complex. Next the group hired an experienced boutique hospitality development team, Creative Boutique Hotels of Roanoke to help make their dream a reality. After a long and challenging design and construction process, The Western Front Hotel and Milton's opened on February 12th 2018 as a 30 guest-room hotel and a 90 seat restaurant. Named for native Travis Milton, its creative & nationally known chef, Milton's is committed to establishing a 21st Century "Appalachian Cuisine".

3. Wally Smith, Terry Vencil, presenting for Clinch River Valley Initiative

Title: Tapping Our Greatest Resource: Youth

Ongoing economic diversification efforts in southwest Virginia and the larger central Appalachian region present novel opportunities for youth to become involved in their communities and engaged with economic development efforts. However, little information currently exists regionwide in terms of best practices for involving youth in these efforts. We will present lessons from several years of work to engage youth in economic diversification activities through the Clinch River Valley Initiative, a pioneering effort to build creative economies around the biodiverse Clinch River in the Virginia coalfields. This work has involved a two-pronged approach: (i) K-12 educators have been trained in how to integrate place-based learning into their classrooms to better engage students in community-driven efforts, and (ii) K-12 students have been given active leadership roles in their communities through an annual youth summit and mini-grant program designed to fund student-led community improvement projects. We will discuss these initiatives, including ongoing work to engage high school and college-aged youth in community-based efforts, and outline a model for future engagement that can be used in communities throughout the region.

4. Theresa L. Burriss, Presenting for Radford University

Title: Community Health Workers: Honoring Local Values and Utilizing Local Talent

A variety of individuals and organizations have been discussing whether / how to use Community Health Workers (CHWs), or Patient Navigators, to assist people to improve their health and the health of their loved ones or otherwise meet their health-related goals. This is a variation of the current peer program implemented in the mental health and substance abuse areas. The CHWs may be focused on different areas, such as a specific condition (e.g., Black Lung Disease), a general category (e.g., cancer), chronic conditions (e.g., diabetes), or groups of people (e.g., repeat utilizers of emergency departments). Other states have established certification processes for Community Health Workers and have approved reimbursement for their services. The primary purpose of this presentation is to outline some of the efforts in Southwest Virginia and encourage ongoing participation and discussion among a larger group of interested stakeholders. Thus, although the idea of CHWs in and of itself is not novel, this concept has the potential to help address the health challenges of the region and, if reimbursement is achieved, would be a sustainable way to utilize local assets (i.e., people), while also providing the CHWs with some income and a sense of purpose within their communities.

5. Courtney Cacatian, Presenting for Discover Bristol

Title: Tapping into Local Talent for Tourism Promotion

The best tourism ambassadors are local residents with an enthusiasm for your destination. When visitors hear the local perspective on why a destination is interesting, they are more likely to be lured there to find out more. Learn more about how to tap into local talent - musicians, photographers, videographers, store owners and more - to create mutually beneficial partnerships and promote tourism to Southwest Virginia.

6. Cora Gnegy, Presenting for Giles County Tourism

Title: Giles Wedding Network | Creative Action Oriented Impacts

The wedding industry generates over \$72 billion dollars in revenue. In many rural communities that are focusing efforts on creative solutions to economic concerns, the wedding market can be a boom. That's what is happening in Giles County, VA. The Giles Wedding Network is a unique, action-oriented group that fosters growth, development, and economic impact in the New River Valley region. With the 15 wedding venues and various quality vendors, harnessing the wedding market is supporting business owners and recruiting visitors to the region. This also has identified gaps in services and caused property development. Giles County facilitates the GWN and welcomes participants from the larger geographical region. Using those engaged participants it was determined that the wedding industry in Giles conservatively makes up ~8% of overall tourism expenditures. Just from visiting wedding guests alone, direct spend equates to \$2,058,000. Giles is then in a unique position to capture wedding parties as a destination. Packaging, cooperative marketing, and networking allow the talented entrepreneurs to better position themselves for growth. We are also introducing the New River Valley to repeat visitors to come back for their own wedding or event, or to explore more of this magnetic region.