

The best in local tourism celebrated at association's AGM

The tourism dollars spent at local restaurants, stores, galleries, theatres, golf courses and conservation areas supplement local spending and help to sustain local businesses and our quality of life. Tourism development fosters conservation and preservation of a community's natural, cultural and historic resources, and encourages community beautification and revitalization. It also helps enhance a community's sense of place through the development of festivals, historic attractions and other interpretive activities that document and celebrate a community's resources.

This is why excellence in tourism and hospitality was celebrated by the Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association at their annual general meeting June 21. Held at the Albion Hills Conservation Area, tourism association members and special guests were first treated to dinner and wine provided by Chef Talk Bistro and Chesslawn Vineyard and Winery followed by guest speaker Patrick Carson, former VP of Loblaws and strategist behind the introduction of the highly successful product lines No Name, Too Good to be True and President's Choice. Award winners were selected based on customer service, quality of the tourism product/experience, contribution to the local community, level of commitment to tourism, and

on contribution to the well-being of the local natural environment.

Recipients of the Hills of Headwaters 2006 Tourism Awards include:

Best Attraction: Credit Valley Explorer Tour Train.

Best Festival/Event: Shelburne Fiddle Contest.

Best Restaurant: Hiding Inn Hockley.

Retailer of the Year: Harmony Whole Foods Market.

Best Accommodation (over 10 rooms): The Millcroft Inn & Spa.

Best Accommodation (under 10 rooms): Hockley Hills Bed and Breakfast.

Artisan of the Year: Hills of Erin Studio Tour.

Best Outdoor-Agricultural Experience: Orangeville Agricultural Society.

Best Service: A.D.E.P.T. Computer Services.

Ambassador of the Year: Don Smith.

Best Web Site: Theatre Orangeville.

Best Brochure: North of 89 Studios.

For more information about the events, attractions, restaurants and accommodation in the Hills of Headwaters visit www.thehillsofheadwaters.com or call 1-800-332-9744 to obtain a copy of the Hills of Headwaters Visitor's Guide and map.

Since its first public run in 2004 the Credit Valley Explorer Tour Train has been experienced by thousands of Ontarians. It is a popular activity for local residents, for people throughout the province, and

for visitors from the United States and Europe. Each weekend, their train trips carry 100s of passengers to view the region's scenic landscape, and it allows them restful inspiration while they sit & enjoy a fine meal. Passenger feedback has unanimously been that "any season is a great time to ride the rails."

Travelers can book their voyage right on their Web site or they can call the Hills of Headwaters office to confirm their reservation in person. The train's following is so popular that some days the Orangeville office answers dozens of inquires and has been known to sell out a train excursion in just one day.

Best Accommodation (over 10 rooms): The Millcroft Inn & Spa. Wolfgang Stichnothe, the innkeeper, has played an integral role in the development and success of the Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association for more than 10 years now. He became involved with Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association in 1995 when he first took over the Millcroft. He has been an active board member over the years, including holding the chair, vice-chair and treasurer positions. He generously offers the use of his facilities for many meetings and events that sincerely encourage growth in tourism for the whole region.

Wolfgang practices business philosophies that are reflected by offering clients the best possible

experience to encourage repeat business. The service staff (both front desk and in the dining room) are continuously acting ambassadors for tourism. They regularly offer suggestions to their guests about local attractions from theatre to shopping, antiquing, golfing and beyond. A very busy Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association brochure distribution box also sits right in their front lobby. The amenities of the inn are absolute top quality - from the Four Diamond, award dining, a state-of-the-art European-style spa, several unique accommodations, beautiful grounds and gardens plus on site hiking and cross country skiing trails, this truly is an outstanding property and aptly named the *Definitive Country Retreat*.

Ambassador of the Year:

Don Smith. A founding member of the tourism association, and treasurer for some 12 years, Bolton accountant Don Smith has contributed tirelessly to the well-being of the tourism industry. Since its beginning in 1994, when the tourism association was little more than a traveling road show distributing brochures and extolling the virtues of tourism from a van, Don has guided the organization to its current level of operation

resulting in 406 million media impressions into the GTA marketplace (the number of times people either heard or saw the Hills of Headwaters Tourism message) over the past three years at an estimated value of close to \$1 million. Always a visionary and a great advocate for a regional approach to economic development, Don steps down from the tourism association board of directors this month.



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e-mail addresses to reach:

Mark Pavilons, editor	editor@caledoncitizen.com
Alan Liczyk, staff reporter	alan@caledoncitizen.com
Administration (classified word ads)	admin@caledoncitizen.com
Sales, Aileen Robbins	aileen@caledoncitizen.com
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