



**VisitMercerCountyPA.... "Celebrating 50 Years" By Peggy Mazyck Community Contributor (2014-01-01)**

In 1963 five community leaders saw the need for an agency to promote tourism in Mercer County. Through the efforts of Harold Mehr, Karl Christy, Frederic Brockway, James Davis, and Edward Kochis, the articles of incorporation for the Mercer County Tourist Promotion Agency were approved and the Agency was created. For many years the agency operated on a small budget receiving support from members, the Mercer County Commissioners, and the State of Pennsylvania. Reports show that in 1996 the agency had annual revenue of about \$120,000.

Peggy Mazyck, the newly named executive director of the agency in 1996, decided that the agency had to do more. There was no way that the agency could effectively market the county and manage an office on a budget of \$120,000.00. Today the agency has a budget of over \$800,000.00. With the help of the tourism board, the Pennsylvania legislators and the Mercer County Commissioners, in 2000 the agency successfully sought and secured a hotel excise tax to support the tourism industry in Mercer County.

Thanks to the support of these three groups we had a lot to celebrate at our 50th anniversary. Today, approximately \$293 million dollars is being spent by visitors to Mercer County. Over six million visitors come to the County annually. The tourism industry supports almost 4,000 jobs and provides \$50 million in taxes (federal, state & local).\*

Under the direction of a dedicated board, the agency spends almost 80% of their budget to promote and develop tourism attractions in Mercer County. The Mercer County Tourist Promotion Agency doing business as VisitMercerCountyPA has 160 tourism related members that are passionate about promoting the wonderful tourism assets in the County.

The overall goal of VisitMercerCountyPA is to promote and develop the economic well-being of Mercer County through tourism. Furthermore the purposes of the agency are:

- (a). To foster, promote and encourage the development of attractions, shopping, resorts, accommodations, restaurants, and places of historical interest within Mercer County.
- (b). To provide and assist in producing promotional literature and information concerning the advantages and desirability of Mercer County as a destination for conventions, recreation, vacation and travel.
- (c). To effect ways of increasing the scope and intensity of tourist development and promotion.
- (d). To assist in a program of community coordination in the best interests of tourism.

VisitMercerCountyPA provides a comprehensive advertising program to build tourism and to keep Mercer County at the forefront as a travel destination. We run a targeted media campaign, produce quality publications, maintain a responsive website, promote the county at marketplaces and provide ongoing PR efforts for Mercer County. In addition we offer a cooperative advertising program to match our funds with member's funds enabling us to expand our advertising reach. We also implemented a Tourism Attraction Development Grant (TAG) to assist with new tourism developments or the expansions of tourism related properties

Our thanks go out to all those who helped us to celebrate the 50 year milestone. Four of our wineries (Conneaut Cellars, Webb, Wilhelm and Volant) gave samples of their distinctive wines. The hors d'oeuvres and food



presentation by Weber Catering was fantastic. The Hickory Grille and Bar and Elephant and Castle provided their signature desserts. Daffin's Candies gave delicious chocolate covered treats. Wonderful displays were presented by Anderson Coach and Travel, Grove City Premium Outlets, Hampton Inn Grove City, Holiday Inn Grove City, the Winner Group, Wendell August and Joden Jewelers. The wine, music, food, displays and giveaways were outstanding. About 130 people attended the event. The agency received proclamations from the PA Senate, the PA House of Representatives, the Mercer County Commissioners and The City of Sharon. Business and Civic leaders came to commemorate the occasion and to offer their congratulations. The event was a wonderful tribute to the agency and to all those who support tourism in Mercer County. We look forward to the next 50 years of growth.

\*Source: PA Department of Community and Economic Development 2012 Report

For more information about events in Mercer County, log onto [www.VisitMercerCountyPa.com](http://www.VisitMercerCountyPa.com) or call 1-800-637-2370.