



Washington

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News Release

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GIFT BASKET BUSINESS INITIATED WITH \$50,000 GRANT

The Washington County Community Foundation (WCCF) is pleased to announce that it has received a \$50,000 grant from a source that wishes to remain anonymous, to initiate a gift basket and novelty item business known as *Washington's Wonders*. The grant will be used to cover start-up costs of the business, including staffing, development of an e-commerce website, and marketing expenses.

Washington's Wonders gift baskets features products made by businesses located in Washington County. The Commemorative *All-Aboard Trolley Box* for instance, includes items from Sarris Candies, Popcorn Willy, The Toffee House, Pennsylvania Trolley Museum and Channel Crafters. The box itself was designed exclusively for *Washington's Wonders* by *Observer Reporter* artist, John Luginski, utilizing a pencil sketch by PA Trolley Museum volunteer artist Andrew Lynn. Luginski colorized the original sketch of the former Pittsburgh Railways Streetcar #4398 and added scenery depicting both the city and rural landscapes of Washington County.

Since learning that it would receive the grant, Foundation volunteers and staff have been working diligently to get the business up and running for the holiday season. Adrienne Shettler, a Trinity graduate who recently obtained a degree in Business Management from Robert Morris University, was hired as the Project Manager. Shettler and Project Volunteer, Susan Donahue, premiered *Washington's Wonders* at the Washington County Chamber of Commerce Business Expo earlier this month. The website, www.washwonders.com, has been developed and includes items ready for purchase, such as the *All-Aboard Trolley Box*, *Comforts of Home* gift basket and the *Fun FORE All* golf bucket. Greeting cards, clothing items, and Westerwald pottery are also available. Over time, Shettler and Donahue will add additional baskets and are interested in speaking with businesses that have products suitable for inclusion in the baskets.

“The idea of a charity utilizing a business approach to raise funds is not new - museums and hospitals have been doing it for years through their gift and hospitality shops,” states Betsie Trew, executive director. “Having someone provide a grant to cover the start-up expenses for such an endeavor is relatively new and is part of a

national effort to encourage charities to be more entrepreneurial in their day to day operations. Known as social enterprise, the effort seeks to change the paradigm by which not-for-profits operate and generate the capital they need to carry out their missions. In Pittsburgh for example, the Pittsburgh Social Enterprise Accelerator was founded in 2002 to support emerging social enterprise ventures. Among other services, the Accelerator helps with the development of social enterprise ventures through financial support, knowledge sharing and networking.”

In developing its business, the WCCF has relied heavily on its Trustees with retail expertise, including Bruce Bartolotta, whose family owns and operates several Giant Eagles in the Mon Valley area. Bartolotta helped to write the business plan to obtain the grant and has made the *All-Aboard Trolley Box* available for purchase in several of the stores he manages. Foundation Trustee Ken Donahue has provided in-kind warehouse and packaging space at rose plastic, in California, PA. Donahue, president of rose plastic, has also provided golf ball and tee containers made at the company for use in the *Fun FORE All* golf bucket.

The purpose of this business venture is threefold. First is that of satisfying WCCF’s need to create an ongoing revenue stream to supplement fees, contributions and special events designed to support the operational needs of the Foundation. The second purpose of Washington’s Wonders is to heighten awareness of the WCCF’s existence to the community in general. The final purpose of Washington’s Wonders is to promote products, services, and businesses unique to Washington County, helping to improve economic conditions within the community, which in turn will help to improve quality of life issues in Washington County – a core component of the WCCF’s charitable mission.

The Washington County Community Foundation, a 501(c) 3 charitable corporation with endowed assets approaching \$3 million, has distributed more than \$500,000 in grants and scholarships. Proceeds of *Washington’s Wonders* will enable the Foundation to build upon its charitable services to the community. To learn more please visit www.wccf.net or www.washwonders.com or call 724-222-6330.

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