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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **TDA Announces Development of “Stakeholder Services”**

*Program Seeks New Avenues to Aid and Promote All of Rutherford County*

**Rutherfordton, NC** – Called TDA Stakeholder Services, the Tourism Development Authority is developing a new approach for marketing Rutherford County to tourists.

A portion of the multi-faceted approach would replace the previous grants program. Over time, the TDA determined the grants method wasn't fully accomplishing the mission set for the TDA: to bring in outside, overnight visitors.

The centerpiece of the new Stakeholder Services plan would be the branding and “bulk marketing” of events. “For example,” says Ann Almond, TDA Executive Director, “we aren't going to say, ‘Come here this summer. We're great.’ We are going to give people a reason why they should come. Branding our summer ‘Endless Summer’ and promoting events as a group — everything from dragon boats to street dances to Owls baseball — gives us a much stronger presence in the tourism marketplace.”

Additionally, the TDA is receiving input and evaluating another portion of the plan: a program to select and promote key events to draw individuals and families to Rutherford County.

Overall, the TDA team believes the Stakeholder Services program will enable the TDA to work more directly with county organizations. “The intent is to aid area lodgings, attractions, restaurants, event organizers, elected and civic leaders, small businesses, chambers of commerce, and citizens — all are our stakeholders,” says Donna McElrath, TDA Board Chair.

The TDA feels the new program will attract more people to visit and stay overnight within Rutherford County.

“Although the approach isn't driven solely by the current economy, its economic impact will be important to all of us,” says Almond.

The board will continue to gather information and refine the plan before unveiling final details. “It's a work in progress,” says Almond, “still a draft — but we're very excited about it.”

*Lake Lure & The Blue Ridge Foothills operates visitors' centers in Forest City and Lake Lure, N.C. The area is home to filming locations for the blockbuster movies “The Last of the Mohicans” and “Dirty Dancing.” It is also the site of HGTV's Dream Home 2006.*