



Be a tourist in your hometown

Introducing the Lackawanna Heritage Explorer Train

By **Natalie Gelb Solfanelli**

Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA) has been offering a popular Ambassadors Tour for the past five years.

The program features a full day of visits to historic venues, and cultural attractions, sharing a perspective about the national significance of the Lackawanna Valley. The program encourages new “ambassadors” to view their heritage as a point of pride and to join LHVA in “telling our story.”

This program has been a great success and boasts more than 500 alumni, including each year’s class of Leadership Lackawanna. One Wednesday each month, during the spring, April through October, LHVA staff members have escorted the “ambassadors” to the sites within our heritage area that attract people from points near and far.

Local participants are asked to think of being “a tourist in your own home town.”

As word of the program spread, there has been an increasing demand for the tour. During the past few years, LHVA has expanded its activities, developing a growing list of projects and programs designed to accomplish its mission and goals.

As much as they enjoy the opportunity to interact with members of the community, the staff is busier than ever. The necessity of turning away requests for the day long tour has been a source of consternation.

The Ambassadors Tour is an effective and successful program to achieve LHVA’s goal of telling the story of the Lackawanna Valley.

In addition to the staff’s busy schedule, it has become clear that many would-be participants cannot miss a full day during the work week to enjoy the tour.

These factors resulted in a new approach to the Ambassadors program that will make it more accessible to a wider range of residents as well as outside visitors.

In recent years, with new and exciting things happening throughout the region, from the Office Convention, the Yankees, the Steamtown Marathon, conferences and conventions, homecoming weekends, to family reunions and weddings, area hotels and restaurants are often filled with visitors who do not reside in the area. Most important, cities or tourist destinations, offer the opportunities to learn about their history and heritage to people visiting for business, pleasure or a combination of the two.

With all of these considerations in mind, LHVA is proud to announce the “Lackawanna Heritage Explorer,” a new name for the former Ambassadors program.

The Heritage Explorer will be offered on one Saturday a month in June, July, and August, with the potential to expand its capacity depending on demand.

In an effort to accommodate a wider audience, LHVA has engaged Canterbury Tours and Services, a professional tour company, to operate the Heritage Explorer program.

The tours will be a per person charge, subsidized by LHVA to keep it affordable, that will cover a seven hour tour via the Lackawanna County Trolley Bus, a ride on the Electric City Trolley, entrance fees for Steamtown, the Coal Mine Tour, and the Anthracite Museum.

Also included in the price are light onboard refreshments, a full buffet lunch at Carmen’s at the Radisson, and discounts for downtown establishments and future site visits.

A professional, knowledgeable guide will accompany the group every step of the way, providing historical facts and anecdotal stories about the people and places of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley.

The Heritage Explorer will be a wonderful opportunity for residents hosting visiting relatives and friends, heritage tourists, or anyone interested in learning more about the region. Tickets will be available in advance on a first-come, first-served basis for the 22-seat Trolley Bus.

Local hotels will be creating Heritage Explorer weekend packages.

Watch for additional information in the new future!

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