

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 2, 2009

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TOURISM COUNCIL KICKS OFF “PASSPORT TO BARRY COUNTY”

HASTINGS, MICH. – A group of interested parties including representatives of non-profit, for-profit, government and community partners under the auspices of the Barry County Economic Development Alliance and the Barry County Chamber of Commerce have partnered together to form the Barry County Tourism Council. The mission of the Tourism Council is to engage local and regional partners to create a dynamic and integrated approach to promote tourism and recreation that values local assets and contributes to the economic vitality of Barry County.

Over the past few months the Tourism Council has been working on a fun and innovative way to connect our county’s recreational resources with our business community as a destination to enjoy: a Passport to Barry County! Phase one of the Passport promotion is underway with the actual “Passports” having been introduced and distributed at Charlton Park Day on May 23. The Passport program includes three levels of partnership: Destination Partners, Reward Partners and Support Partners. Each partnership level includes an annual fee to participate and allows for recognition and promotion on the Tourism Council’s new website www.explorebarrycounty.com.

In order for the Tourism Council to do an effective job in understanding which Destinations tourists and/or residents are frequenting, the County has been segmented into four sections with each area and each Destination location receiving a corresponding colored stamp. The NW quadrant’s stamps are green; NE quadrant’s stamps are blue; SW quadrant’s stamps are red; and SE quadrant’s stamps are black. Validated passports do not need to have each quadrant’s color represented but do need to have stamps from six different Destinations. Look for the Passport emblem in participating store fronts.

The Passport has space on the back for each of the six different stamps to be collected when you visit any of our Destination Partners. When the passport is validated with six unique stamps, you can cash it in for a discount and/or benefit with a Reward Partner of your choosing,

which includes many Destination Partners as well as other Barry County businesses opting to participate as a Reward Partner. Listings of up-to-date Destination and Reward Partners can be found on-line at www.explorebarrycounty.com or for a hard-copy listing, please visit the Barry County Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, redeemed passports must be completed with a zip code and email of the visitor to help us better understand where our visitors are from.

Passports are available free of charge at any of the Passport Destination locations or at the Barry County Chamber of Commerce. Valerie Byrnes, President of the Barry County Economic Development Alliance and Barry County Chamber of Commerce indicated that “The hope of the Tourism Council is that the Passport Program helps to raise awareness of the unique tourism destinations, businesses and natural assets we are blessed to have in Barry County while increasing traffic and purchases at these and other locations and throughout the County.”

If you would like to participate in the Passport program at any of the Partnership levels, please contact the Chamber at 269/945-2454 with questions or to obtain an application.

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