

Scenic Viewscapes



St. Ignace, Michigan

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Scenic America launches ViewFinders

Scenic America is proud to announce the launch of ViewFinders, the first and only educational program aimed at teaching youth how to critically examine the visual environment.

First developed by the Dunn Foundation, ViewFinders is designed to help us look at the streetscape around us and ask questions like: Do I like the way this looks? What do I like? What don't I like? Is there anything I would change?

Scenic America worked with the Dunn Foundation to redevelop the ViewFinders curriculum for the digital age, resulting in a website that is fun, interactive and visually appealing. While aimed at youth in grades 5 – 8, the program can be enjoyed by people of all ages.

Among the features of ViewFinders is the chance to be mayor of

“Youville” and decide how you want your town to look! By choosing from a series of different options you can watch the town change right before your eyes. Want to change the view? Just click “reset” and choose different options!

You can find ViewFinders online at www.view-finders.org. We welcome your feedback about the program at viewfinders@scenic.org or call 202.463.1294.



Future of Scenic Byways at stake in next transportation bill

Scenic America was one of the driving forces behind the creation of the National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP) by Congress in 1991. A critical part of the success of the NSBP has been its competitive grant program, which had awarded roughly \$25 million a year to local scenic byways groups to fund infrastructure improvements, interpretive kiosks, “bricks and mortar” roadway projects and strategic marketing programs. The grants often spurred matching funds from regional governments and foundations and helped tie together community, state and various organizational resources.

In 2012 Congress eliminated the competitive grant program, making it extremely challenging

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Future of scenic byways at stake (continued from page 1)



Studies show scenic byways like Utah's Scenic Byway 12 provide direct economic benefits to the communities they traverse.

for byway organizations to implement projects and programs that improve traveler experiences. Congress is expected to consider a new transportation bill in 2015 and Scenic America is leading the effort to ensure that scenic byways are able to compete on a level playing field for funding to continue locally driven economic development efforts.

While it is unlikely Congress will reinstate funding for NSBP grants in this bill, we need your support to clarify byway projects' eligibility for Transportation Alternative (TA) funds. Projects eligible for TA funds include many with relevance to scenic byways such as: corridor planning, safety improvements, construction of interpretive

facilities, resource protection, development of byway traveler kiosks and byway marketing. To send a message to Congress in support of funding for Scenic Byways please go to: www.scenic.org/byways2014.

The economic benefits of Scenic Byways have been well established. A 2013 study of Scenic Byway 12 in Utah found that the roadway provided a direct impact of \$12.7 million to the communities it traverses. A 2010 study of the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway in Minnesota found that byway travelers spent \$21.6 million while in the region. For additional information about the impacts of Scenic Byways go to: www.scenic.org/issues/scenic-byways.

Insurance industry concerned about digital billboard safety risks

The October 2014 edition of *Best's Review* investigates concerns in the insurance industry about the traffic safety risks presented by roadside digital billboards. *Best's Review* is a publication of A.M. Best, a rating agency that focuses on the insurance industry.

Scenic America President Mary Tracy was interviewed for the article and said the insurance industry has a role to play in promoting driver safety. "Carriers care about safety and property values, things that are definitely impacted by the proliferation of digital billboards, so they can become an important voice for reasonable policy making in this area," Tracy said.

"Certainly any distraction that takes a driver's eyes off the road is dangerous and can lead to increased crash risk," said Bill Windsor, vice president of safety for Nationwide Insurance. "And there is, through research,

evidence that digital billboards do get drivers' attention."

The insurance industry would be "well-thought to conduct studies of its own on whether digital signs are causing accidents, not just for the

protection of consumers but also to protect carriers' own pocketbooks, because they are ultimately the ones paying for this," added James Ballidis, president of the law firm Allen, Flatt, Ballidis and Leslie. To download the *Best's Review* article go to: www.scenic.org/bestreview.



Martha Fuller Clark re-elected in New Hampshire

Scenic America Board member Martha Fuller Clark was recently re-elected to the New Hampshire Senate by a resounding 2-to-1 margin. Fuller Clark has served in the state Legislature for 20 years and was twice a nominee for the U.S. House of Representatives.



Scenic America featured on NPR



National Public Radio reporter John Burnett reached out to Scenic America as he assembled

a story about the ongoing abuse of America's roadsides by the billboard industry and the public's growing resistance to it. Our Vice-Chair Margaret Lloyd was featured in the piece, which aired recently on NPR's Weekend Edition and was heard by more than 2 million listeners, bringing significant attention to these issues. If you missed the story on NPR you can listen to it online at www.scenic.org/npr.

Scenic America appealing dismissal of digital billboard lawsuit

On June 20 a federal judge dismissed Scenic America's lawsuit challenging the 2007 Federal Highway Administration decision to allow digital billboards along roadways governed by the Highway Beautification Act. In August Scenic America filed an

appeal to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals.

"Scenic America's mission compels us to fight for the public's interest in America's roadways and landscapes rather than stand idly by while our own government hands them to

the outdoor advertising industry," said Mary Tracy, president of Scenic America.

For an overview of the case to date go to: www.scenic.org/lawsuit_summary.

Scenic America recognizes beautification efforts in Rhode Island

Awards were given to two Rhode Island-based organizations in recognition of their efforts to beautify area landscapes during a recent meeting of Scenic America's Board and Affiliates at Bellevue House in Newport, home of the group's Chairman Ronald Lee Fleming.

The first award recognized the Scenic Aquidneck Coalition for securing more than \$800,000 in

federal funding to put power and utility lines underground at Second Beach in Middletown. The effort to underground the utilities has been a long-term partnership led by the Coalition, which is comprised of the Aquidneck Land Trust, Preserve Rhode Island, The Preservation Society of Newport County, The Townscape Institute, and the van Beuren Charitable Foundation.



John Hirschboeck (left) accepts the award from Ronald Lee Fleming for the Daffodillion Campaign

The second award was given to the Daffodil Project for its Daffodillion Campaign, an effort to plant one million daffodils across Newport. Nearly a quarter-million flowers have already been planted. "Each Spring these daffodils will create a kind of golden necklace all across the city," said Fleming.

Governor Lincoln Chafee recently announced the creation of the Rhode Island Highway Beautification Advisory Committee, which will help further guide the highway beautification efforts initiated by Gov. Chafee several years ago and for which he received Scenic America's Stafford Award in 2013.



Scenic Hero award for Margaret Lloyd

Scenic America President Mary Tracy (left) recently traveled to Houston to help honor Scenic America Vice-Chair Margaret Lloyd (right) with the prestigious and well-deserved Scenic Hero award during the annual dinner and awards ceremony hosted by Scenic Houston.



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