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New Rockwood Hostel offers respite along the trail

The Progress Fund's Trail Town Program helps three-time entrepreneur

Rockwood, PA – May 18, 2009 – Cyclists, hikers and visitors to the Laurel Highlands now have a place to lay their heads in Rockwood, a key point on the Great Allegheny Passage trail from Pittsburgh to Cumberland.

The Hostel on Main, opening this month, sleeps 28 in three rooms configured for anything from a family to a scout troop. For Rockwood, the close-to-the-trailhead amenity could provide a big boost to the growing hospitality industry. “In conjunction with our two B & B’s and our campground, and our hostel accommodating 28 people, hopefully we can become a destination for larger groups,” says Judith Pletcher, owner of The Hostel on Main.

Ms. Pletcher is a local success story, founding the Rockwood Mills Shoppes & Opera House, then launching an antique store, and finally purchasing the third building in the row – an old grocery store that had become a residence.

She thought about turning it into apartments, but saw that would entail covering over much of the original beauty of the building, including the woodwork and the tin ceilings. “We would be destroying all of this,” she recalls thinking.

She realized that the nearby trail head held the answer. “I was like, let’s try a hostel. I had never been in one or stayed in one. It was just one of those things.”

She contacted the Trail Town Program, a project of The Progress Fund. There she got help landing a \$75,000 First Industries Fund loan from the state, a bridge loan, and help financing the purchase of energy-efficient appliances.

The Hostel on Main features a kitchen, three private bathrooms, television, high-speed Internet access, games, books and laundry machines. Ms. Pletcher expects to employ three people, and to generate overnight stays that benefit Rockwood’s eateries, stores and bike shop.

For directions or interviews, call (814) 926-4546, e-mail rockwoodmill@shol.com, or visit www.hostelonmain.com. For further information on The Progress Fund, call (724) 216-9160, or visit www.progressfund.org. For more information on the Trail Town Program, check out www.trailtowns.org.

The Progress Fund is a vigorous non-profit loan fund that creates jobs and improves communities by providing entrepreneurial coaching and capital to small businesses in the travel & tourism industry. The Progress Fund serves 39 counties in Pennsylvania and the entire state of West Virginia. The Progress Fund was founded in 1997, and has made 259 loans totaling more than \$23.8 million to 164 enterprises, creating or preserving more than 1,820 jobs. The Progress Fund is an Equal Opportunity Lender. Discrimination is prohibited by Federal Law. Complaints of discrimination may be filed with the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington , DC 20250 .