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Rockwood's New *The Hostel on Main* Celebrates Opening With A Ribbon Cutting Sept. 9; Public Open House on Sept. 12

The Progress Fund's Trail Town Program Helps Three-Time Entrepreneur

Rockwood, PA – Sept. 8, 2009 – The Hostel on Main will hold a ribbon cutting on Wednesday, Sept. 9, at 11 a.m., and invites the public to tour the century-old building on Saturday, Sept. 12. The Hostel on Main fills an important gap in the hospitality offerings in Rockwood, which sits at a key point on the Great Allegheny Passage. The Hostel is located just across the river from the trail's Rockwood Trail Head in Somerset County.

"We already have our camping. We have our B & Bs," says Judy Pletcher, owner of The Hostel on Main. "This is the middle of the road – affordable, clean lodging."

Hostels are popular in Europe although only about 10 can be found in Pennsylvania. Hostels are known for providing no-frills, clean, inexpensive overnight accommodations for travelers. Guests typically sleep in bunk beds in shared areas.

Wednesday's ribbon cutting will feature representatives from The Progress Fund, its Trail Town Program, the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, the Somerset County Chamber of Commerce, the Rockwood Area Merchants Association, and others.

On Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., members of the public are invited to tour the hostel. The facility has a total of 24 bunk beds. Guests can reserve one of two private rooms or spend the night in a common room. Three separate bathrooms are available as well as a kitchen, coin-op laundry, and living room where travelers enjoy television, games and books. There will be cookies and punch, and children are welcome.

The hostel gives cyclists, hikers, skiers, hunters and visitors to the Laurel Highlands a place to lay their heads in Rockwood, on the Great Allegheny Passage trail from Pittsburgh to Cumberland. It also offers a unique spot for a family reunion, birthday party sleepover or scout troop outing, says Ms. Pletcher.

For Rockwood, the close-to-the-trailhead amenity could provide a big boost to the growing hospitality industry. In nine weeks since its soft opening in mid-May, it has attracted more than 100 guests, including travelers from Korea, Taiwan, the Netherlands and Montreal. A Colorado guest couple stayed there for a portion of their three-week exploration of the trail.

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, which she has instead preserved. 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.

Energy efficiency was top of mind with Ms. Pletcher, whose husband Terry guided much of the renovations. Energy efficient windows, doors, lights, ceiling fans, insulation and appliances were installed. In addition, a tankless hot water heater and air-to-air heat pump with air conditioning further reduces energy consumption. 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@verizon.net, 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, Appalachian Ohio and West Virginia. The Progress Fund was founded in 1997, and has made 275 loans totaling more than \$28.8 million to 173 enterprises, creating or preserving more than 2,047 jobs.

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