



## **Mercer CVB Unveils State's First Interactive Tourism Map**

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The Mercer County Convention and Visitors Bureau announced this week its new interactive web-based marketing project, which began approximately four months ago, according to Beverly Wellman, executive director to the Mercer County CVB.

"This is a new technology," Wellman said. "We are the first in the state. It's just very gratifying to see this come to fruition."

The interactive website, which is now active, will lead users to find attractions, activities and businesses in the area. It offers an interactive map to pinpoint sites and trails before an actual visit.

One objective of the Web site, Wellman said, is to keep people on the site longer. The longer they are on the site seeking happenings in the area, the better chance they will remain here longer during their visit.

Wellman said a news conference at the CVB office earlier this week included a tutorial to show users just how the site is utilized. She describes the site as "easy to navigate."

The site -- [visitmercercounty.com](http://visitmercercounty.com) -- is the first of its kind in the state. Wellman said the GIS mapping information will be sent to the state and in turn will be visible through state Web sites.

A user can click on a business or lodging facility, and the Web site will show where the property is located, as well as provide text information such as a link to the facility's Web site and telephone number. It also will provide detailed directions from an address to the destination.

The site will show 20 categories of interest to a visitor, including automated teller machines, shopping locations, restaurants, medical facilities as well as grocery stores and service stations.

Another benefit, she continued, is it will show cities, parks and hiking trails.

Wellman explained the technology idea arose when she was working with the Coal Heritage Trail on mapping. Wellman thought the mapping of various locations through the CVB would be valuable to prospective visitors.

"We talked about it and that is how we started (the) process," she said, adding the mapping serves several counties.

As for the trail, the original plan for mapping would include 40 miles, but when the mapping was completed, it actually included 70 miles of trail.

“(It) was done as a service to all of the parks in the county,” Wellman said. “The message is that the site is easy and quick, and we hope to get more visitors because of this information on our Web site. We have identified hospitals and educational services, so we just have a whole host of topics listed.”

“For visitors seeking exercise on their trip, the website provides additional information on the trails -- surface, distance, difficulty -- information which can be accessed from the home before making final decisions "as to where they are going.”

“We were just extremely pleased with the way the project turned out,” Wellman emphasized. “This is exactly what I wanted.”

Wellman said the Web site is a “work in progress” in that businesses may submit new information and changes surrounding their business through the site.

The map tutorial helps users to understand how to navigate the site.

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