



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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Tourism: Great Destinations Close to Home

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FROM OUR MANAGING PARTNER

Tom Heywood is Managing Partner of Bowles Rice. He has significant experience in health care, corporate, finance and commercial law, and leads the firm's Government Relations Team.

Heywood was the recipient of the YMCA's 2017 Spirit of the Valley Award. In 2016, he was named to the inaugural class of "Sharp Shooters" by *West Virginia Executive* magazine. *The State Journal* named him one of the state's "Ten Most Influential Business Leaders" in 2012.

He served as Chief of Staff to the Honorable Gaston Caperton, former Governor of the State of West Virginia, from 1990 to 1993, and was chairman of Governor Earl Ray Tomblin's election campaigns in 2011 and 2012. In 2016-2017, he was a member of the Jim Justice Inaugural Committee.

Heywood serves on numerous charitable and nonprofit boards, including the West Virginia University Board of Governors, the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, the West Virginia Roundtable and the Discover the Real West Virginia Foundation. He also participates actively in various business and trade associations.

In recognition of his many contributions to the legal profession and community, he was named a Fellow of the American Bar Association. He also is a past recipient of *The State Journal's* "Who's Who in West Virginia Business" award.

Travel is the best education.

I learned this long ago from my parents. Avid travelers, they helped instill in me and my sister a wonderful sense of excitement every time we would hop in a car or on a plane for a new adventure. Many of our travels were to destinations close to home. What fun, and what worlds opened up to me on each of those trips! To this day, whether traveling near or far, I always enjoy the opportunity to learn something new. And, on the occasions when I've been able to share the experience with my own family, we've always had a great time.

Increasingly, state and local leaders and economic development officials across our region are embracing, promoting and investing in tourism as the economic engine that it is. Hats off to them for their vision!

The articles that follow excite me all over again about the great destinations we can enjoy close to home. Each of our authors exude pride and enthusiasm for their respective communities, which is clearly evident and especially important for those of us who make our homes in Appalachia. Too often, we overlook all that we have and fall victim to the negative narrative articulated by others (and sometimes ourselves) about our region.

I salute each of our authors, not only for their outstanding contributions to this issue, but also for their careers of accomplishment and innovation, identifying possibilities and making good things happen.

Several common themes emerge in the articles that follow.

Stories are important. Narrative is important. How we think about, talk about, and present ourselves and our communities is important. We can and do shape attitudes and possibilities by how we talk about ourselves and our region. Promoting tourism and welcoming visitors offers us an unlimited ability to create positive and lasting impressions of our region and seize the boundless opportunities that lie before us. Let's all join with our authors in sharing our stories and creating bright futures.

Tourism is a team effort. Different types of tourist attractions complement and do not detract from one another. Sharing our experiences and assets with others is the foundation of growth, investment and success. Let's all participate in weaving the quilt of fun and discovery that will continue to grow a successful tourism industry in our region.

I have visited most, but not all of, the attractions featured in this edition of *Views & Visions*. Our authors have inspired me to visit and enjoy the many wonders in our region that I have not yet experienced and to enjoy anew those that I have visited before.

A world of adventure is at our doorstep. Join me in stepping through the door and enjoying all the delights that await. I'll see you there!