

Executive Director's Message

It has been a busy spring as we have had to readjust our marketing budget to include information that Hot Springs was named as one of America's Dozen Distinctive Destinations. We have developed a Distinctive Destination marketing budget of approximately \$25,000, and we have submitted a proposal to the South Dakota Department of Tourism for a matching grant from the Governor's Million Dollar Challenge to stretch those funds to \$50,000.

As a result of this effort we will be able to be a part of a new national "heritage travel" website. We also will have a professionally produced video focusing on Hot Springs that will be uploaded to several travel websites along with our own chamber site. The video will also be available for showing at our Depot Visitor Center. Our billboards just outside of town will also be freshened up.

The Chamber has had an opportunity to purchase additional print advertising in national publications at a significant price reduction. We are also planning a Hot Springs Media Familiarization Tour that invites national freelance writers to visit Hot Springs, with the opportunity for them to write articles for various publications about our community and its attractions.

Our goal with all of these efforts is to increase visitor spending in Hot Springs by one million dollars, which would increase city sales and BBB Tax returns by over \$30,000. As you can see, these aggressive efforts will benefit all of our citizens.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that the Chamber has been given a wonderful opportunity to bring additional visitors into Hot Springs. A generous benefactor has donated a finished kiosk that we can use as a Visitor Center at Maverick Junction. Typically, we lose many potential visitors who continue to head north on Highway 79 instead of traveling along the more scenic Highway 385 through Hot Springs on their way up to Mount Rushmore. If we can direct them into Hot Springs, we know they will stop and spend time and money in our community.

Again this is an unbudgeted item, but it was just too good to pass up. The Hot Springs Band has offered to man the center as a fund-raising opportunity for them. We also plan to have wireless internet available so people can make their plans and reservations online at their favorite Hot Springs motel and attractions. The band volunteers will receive comprehensive customer service training along with thorough instruction on all there is available to do and see in Hot Springs. As in the past, we will also have our Depot Visitor Center open to serve our guests throughout the summer.

Even with the doom and gloom national economic news, there is excitement that our summer season will be a good one. At last check, visitor inquires show that our advertising is working; now we must pray that people will come. I think, more and more people are realizing all that Hot Springs does have to offer. We sometimes take that for granted and downplay all that we have as commonplace. But it is important to realize, we did not designate ourselves as a national "Distinctive Destination," someone outside of Hot Springs looked at what we had, and they made that determination. As we remain optimistic concerning our summer season, we will help insure that the best is yet to come for Hot Springs.



George Kotti
Executive Director