



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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NEW WELCOME CENTER CELEBRATES 10,000th VISITOR
CANADIAN GUESTS RECEIVE GIFT BASKET

(Bedford, VA) – Within six months after it’s opening on October 29, the Bedford Area Welcome Center welcomed its 10,000th visitor on March 30. Jacques Marcoux and Jacques Hebert, both of Mansonville, Quebec, were the 9,999th and 10,000th visitor. Avid cyclists, they came to Virginia to ride the Blue Ridge Parkway. Arriving in Roanoke on Saturday, they were able to make only short trips along the Parkway due to weather. This day dawned beautifully however, so their long ride was planned from Roanoke to Otters Creek and back.

At breakfast, Hebert (pronounced Abair), suggested changing their plan and coming to Bedford. “I did the research and planning for our trip, mainly using the internet, and Bedford kept popping up,” said Hebert. “Bedford was also mentioned by contacts we have in cycling associations.” Arriving early morning, they stopped in the Center for route suggestions. Staff member Rob Jarvis consulted with them on type of ride they were looking for and mapped out Rte. 43 from Bedford to the Parkway at the Peaks of Otter, then north on the Parkway to Rte. 501, through Big Island and back to Bedford on Rte. 122, suggesting several scenic stops along the way and a late lunch in Big Island. Not wanting to hold the pair from starting out, staff sent them on without mentioning their distinguished visitor status.

At 5:15 pm, Marcoux and Hebert returned to the Center expecting only to load their bikes on the car and return Roanoke. Instead, they were greeted by hearty applause and a huge basket filled with gifts from area attractions and businesses. “Today was worth our whole trip,” exclaimed Marcoux. “This honor and the gifts are just icing on the cake. We had the most beautiful and scenic ride, the traffic was light and polite, and the people we met along the way were warm and welcoming. We will return soon to Bedford and will recommend a holiday here to all our friends at home.”

Describing the 59 mile, 94.4 km ride (now called the *Jacques Leg* by Center staff), Marcoux and Herbert stated it was “a great, do-able days ride for the average cyclist in good shape. The first leg is a 2 to 2½ hour climb but the remainder easy. The pavement is excellent and smooth. Just amazing conditions but you need good brakes.” Their average speed with 15-17 km per hour. Marcoux, Mayor of Mansonville, rides approximately 7,000 miles per year and Herbert, former Mansonville Town Manager and now Business Manager of Stanstead College, rides 2,000-3,000 miles per year.

The Bedford Area Welcome Center is operated by the Bedford City and County Department of Tourism and open daily from 9 am to 5 pm.

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Media Note: Hubert and Marcoux can be reached for comments by cell phone at 819-578-5272 or via email at jmarcoux@hotmail.com.



Jacques Hebert (L) and Jacques Marcoux learn they are the 9,999th and 10,000th Visitor



Welcome Center staff present gift basket

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