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Pittsylvania County Adds New LOVE sign to Wayside Park

CHATHAM, VA – With the help of several of the Pittsylvania Career and Technical Center (PCTC) students who helped research, design and build it, Pittsylvania County's newest LOVE sign is now greeting visitors to the newly renovated 50-acre Wayside Park in Hurt. Four PCTC students and their welding instructor, Travis Wood, installed the 8-foot-tall by 25-foot-wide, 2-ton sign April 2. The towering sign lines the pull-off road at the front of the park that serves as the trailhead entrance connecting visitors to the park's new trail system.

Each of the four letters in the sign represent a piece of history in the Hurt community. The "L" was built with brick to represent the smokestack at the adjacent former Klopman Mills textile manufacturing plant. That smokestack was brought down in January 2020. The "O" has a steel heart-shaped center with a graphic showing the iconic swinging bridge with stacked stone abutments traversing Sycamore Creek. The graphic also shows a black bear that are known to roam the park. The back of the heart pays tribute to the PCTC students that worked on the sign as well as acknowledgements of businesses that contributed to the sign. The "V" is fashioned out of old railroad ties with small pieces of railroad track attached. The Hurt community is known as a hub for train activity. Finally, the "E" is fabricated out of steel and resembles the steel support structure of the 75-foot-tall train trestle sitting across Main Street from the sign. Trains coming down the tracks can be seen and heard from anywhere in the park.

"Having previously working with Travis and the PCTC students to build and install the metal dog park sign that faces Route 29, Travis met with us in the summer of 2019 to discuss another project," said Mark Moore, Parks and Recreation Director. "After much discussion about needs at Wayside Park, we landed on the LOVE sign project. From there, Travis, students and staff at PCTC worked to make it happen. We couldn't be more pleased with how it turned out. It is a wonderful greeter to park visitors."

The PCTC principal, Jessica Dalton, is pleased to partner with the parks and recreation department to provide real world projects for her students, "We are ecstatic to be able to provide our students with projects like this that will be fixtures in the county long after they graduate. These are projects that pare community and academic value and help prepare our students for their careers and enhance our workforce development program."

The Wayside Park LOVE sign was made possible by grant funding from the Virginia Tourism Corporation LOVEworks Reimbursement Program and grant funding obtained for the renovation of Wayside Park. The park project is a nearly \$1 million renovation that will add a playground, trails, amphitheater, picnic shelters, restrooms and two pickleball courts to the nearly 90-year-old park.

The official unveiling of the LOVE sign was originally scheduled for March 18 but had to be cancelled due to the current COVID-19 public health crisis. A formal ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held at a later date this year to recognize the addition of the sign to the park as well as the 25 PCTC students and staff that made the sign a reality.

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