

VISITORS INFORMATION CENTER (VC) - SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

(A) 2015 Year's Analysis --

(1) Data re: visitors:

(a) Number of "recorded" visitors = 516

Visitors were from Arlington (many), the Boston Region, Western Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York City and various New York State locations, Richmond and various Virginia locations, Chicago, Florida, Michigan, Tucson AZ, San Francisco CA, England, France, Germany, Spain, Austria, Colombia, Nepal, China and other Asian locations.

Recorded reasons for stopping by included: tourism data and attractions information; restaurants information; maps and directions (bike path data for many); new Arlington residents; curiosity and browsing; water availability; restrooms availability (many); parking information; historical interests, including Uncle Sam connections; and many others.

(b) Estimated number of visitors to Uncle Sam Plaza – Town Day = 300 minimum.

The Uncle Sam Plaza site had live music by The Hardy Boys, and an art show by 2 artists (George Jovellas and Mary Hilt). Many of the visitors stayed at the site for the music and art show and many visitors came into the VC and took promotional brochures and information. A formal record and count was not practical.

(c) Estimated number of individuals stopping by during activities at the Performance Terrace in front of the Uncle Sam Statue = 700 minimum.

Many visitors stopped by the VC. However, available VC staff was not sufficient to record numbers (impractical in any event) plus to employ active outreach to visitors to step into the VC.

There were 6 activities, other than Town Day, including: art/poetry/lawn sign display (Adria Arch and Jessie Brown); Whole Foods/Nourish to Flourish/Cathy Zolner activity (free refreshments); Traveling Memorial of Military Photos display (Gina Johnson); craft jewelry activity (Kiki's Jewelry Box/Karen Daly); Friends of the Arlington Council on Aging promotion, including for the 5K fund-raising race (promotion remained on site for several weeks plus sign-up

availability at VC); and promotional slide show presentation by Arlington Historical Society (Stuart Brorson).

(d) Estimated numbers of visitors who stopped by to peruse VC's "informal lending library" items display but moved on without significant visits to the VC = 75 minimum

(e) Grand total of above (a) to (d) = 1591 (including 1075 minimum estimates described above). Note there could be some minor duplication because some visitors included in minimum estimates may have been recorded also and included in the count under (1) (a) above.

(2) Estimated hours VC was open to visitors (manned by volunteers on weekend days from May 2, 2015 to late September 2015) = 510 hours minimum.

Estimate was based on average time opened 5 hours per day, often staffed by 2 volunteers, plus sometimes a 3rd volunteer.

(3) Estimated hours mostly provided by ATED members, outside of the VC open hours, for site and VC clean-up, VC maintenance and improvements, stocking items and related activities, volunteer recruitment and communications = 140 hours minimum.

(4) Estimated value of equipment and promotional items donated, e.g. Smart TV, video, posters, banners, etc. (does not include promotional materials provided by restaurants, attraction sites, sponsors, and other interested entities). These items represent primarily start-up equipment and ongoing needs, and include items from before the Grand Opening on Town Day 2014 = \$8,000 minimum.

(5) SUMMARY of results and estimated values of related efforts by ATED members and other volunteers and equipment donated (includes some 2014 equipment values):

(a) Estimated number of visitors for 2015 season = 1591

(b) Donated hours (650 estimated hours minimum) by volunteers directly related to VC.

(c) Donated equipment, etc. (estimated value) = \$8,000

(B) 2014 Year's Analysis --

This section summarizes 2014's key activities. On September 13, 2014, Town Day for 2014, the VC held its Grand Opening. The event featured Town and State elected officials, as well as other Town officials and included an art show by an artist (Mary Hilt) and live music by The Hardy Boys. It was well publicized locally and regionally, and included photos of the formal ribbon-cutting.

(1) The recorded counts for the approximate one and half months the VC was open on weekends exceeded 150 visitors, including visitors from New Hampshire, two of whom authored the Uncle Sam Booklet "Who Was Uncle Sam" and maintain the Uncle Sam Museum, located in the original Wilson Family Home in Mason, NH. Also, included in that number were a group of Cub Scouts plus their local Troop Leaders, and that visit to the VC, considering the children's exuberance, compares favorably to and resembles an imaginary visit to Munchkin Land as depicted in The Wizard of OZ Film.

(2) In addition, the number of visitors to the site on that Town Day exceeded 300 minimum. A formal record and count was not practical although lots of visitors stopped in the VC.

(3) A second Special Gala Opening was held a few weeks later for members of the Arlington Chamber of Commerce at which officials and Directors of the Chamber, along with Town and State elected and appointed officials, at which over 40 individuals participated. Most stopped in the VC but were not recorded.

(4) There was 1 event at the Performance Terrace by the Friends of the Arlington Council on Aging which attracted about 20 individuals.

(5) On Halloween, the VC collaborated with the Chamber and greeted as many as 100 costumed children, accompanied by their parents (estimate at least 50). Five piñatas were donated and all were aptly destroyed by the children as part of the day's festivities. In addition, other Halloween candy was provided to the children. Almost all the activities occurred at the VC's outside porch area. The children and parents generally did not stop into the VC as they continued their rounds after the piñata activities.

(6) Summary of the estimated number of visitors to the Uncle Sam Plaza and the VC during the time period the VC was open in 2014 exceeded 660 individuals representing people from various local and not so local regions, including several recorded visitors from Germany.

(7) The hours donated by volunteers, including ATED Members, in the planning, approvals routines, designing and overseeing construction of the VC, along with input from other Town volunteers, including the Finance Committee Chair and Members, plus the hands-on assistance and labor provided by the Town Manager, many Town officials and the Departments of Public Works and Engineering and other Departments were and continue to be invaluable. The values of the hours and actual dollars run into the thousands and are inestimable for this Summary.

CONCLUSIONS:

The above summaries reflect a new Town tourism and economic development promotional initiative that in the opinion of ATED members and others represents a resounding success, in which many individuals participated. It qualifies as such especially considering its limited number of open months and hours plus its primary reliance on volunteers for the related services.

It should be noted that hundreds of Uncle Sam Pins (donated by Laurence McKinney and the Uncle Sam Committee) were distributed to children after accompanying parents' permissions and literally thousands of brochures, marketing pieces, maps, etc. promoting the Town and its attractions and activities were taken by visitors. Also, ACMI generously provided copies of the ATED Town promotional video

The VC was featured as part of the cover photos on the Town's Annual Report for 2014, has been advertised on websites and has been referred to many times over the last year or so, including in a recent interview the Town Manager gave for a History Magazine article featuring the Uncle Sam story.

Building upon that success is well worth the effort and the related future funding required. The Town's attractions' representatives and local business establishments and organizations have endorsed the concept and its progress thus far. And some day, the Town should consider establishing a really permanent Visitors Center, with heat and air conditioning, restroom facilities and other traditional building advantages.

ATED Committee

April 25, 2016