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The Riebeek Valley Magical Times

The
Riebeek Valley Tourism
office is staffed by Valda, who
is happy to assist you. Please
support her and make sure your
information is always up to date.

WINTER 2018

The RVT committee 2018

Dear RVT member

You may be a current member of RVT, or perhaps, you have previously been a member? – or even better, you are a potential new member – The following is exciting news that RVT wants to share with you!!

Rvt is pleased to communicate, that at the annual RVT AGM held on Monday 23 July, at “Die Bruid, die Pixie en die Vaalhond” theatre, a new committee, of 6 members, was elected. On Monday 30 July this committee convened, elected an executive, co-opted two more members and held their first meeting. The new committee now is: Eric Venter (Chairman), Don King (Vice Chairman), Michael Meredith (Treasurer), Chris Murphy, Vincent Bleyaert, Zakkie Bester, Samantha Suddons (co-opted), and Michelle Smith (co-opted).

We thought you would be interested to learn a bit more about each of the committee members:

Michelle Smith

Michelle works as a senior mechanical draughtsman in Durbanville. She together with her husband Tremayne and daughter Isla live in the Valley Tremayne is the winemaker and owner of The Blacksmith wines.

Samantha Suddons

Samantha is the CEO of Terracura wines, a small winery, run by her and her fiancé, Ryan Mostert – they form part of the Swartland independent group of cellars. Having studied art in the UK, she also spent time in the USA and the Netherlands and settled down in the Swartland, 8 years ago. Apart from plying her winemaking trade, Samantha is extremely well versed in using social media – FB, twitter and Instagram, as marketing tools.

Zakkie Bester

Zakkie is a well-known winemaker that swopped the Breëde Valley for Riebeek Kasteel in 1999. In his career as CEO and wine master at Riebeek Cellars he received many awards and numerous opportunities to see marketing and tourism in action in many different countries. In representing Riebeek Cellars on the Olive Festival committee, Zakkie has a sound knowledge and experience about this event and tourism in general. Today, now retired, he manages his own wine brand, Bester family wines, as well as a liquor outlet. Zakkie is married to Sandra and they are parents to Anna-Bet, Mona and Manus.

Vincent Bleyaert

Vincent grew up in the French part of Belgium as well as Switzerland. Although his fore-fathers were Flemish, his mother tongue is French. In Belgium, Vincent owned a guest house, and was also involved with organic farming. After getting married in the Kruger Park, Vincent and his wife Nath, started considering moving to South Africa. After staying in Hermanus and Greyton, they bought the Merindol Estate in 2016 and currently run the Merindol Manor guest house. They have one son, Eliot.

Chris Murphy

Chris, a graphic designer/photographer, has lived in Cape Town, London and Riebeek Kasteel and now lives, with his partner Karin, near Hopefield. He has a passion for history and heritage and has been involved in tourism in the Valley for more than 20 years. Chris brings corporate exposure, vast experience and knowledge to the “table” and is well versed with the tourism structures in which RVT fit – eg Swartland, West Coast regional and WesGro. Karin and Chris are grandparents to Kari and Luka.

Michael Meredith

Michael, and his wife, Juliana, created the Olive Boutique and in fact initiated the Olive Festival, chairing that committee for many years. Michael is an IT network professional and above average versed in financial matters. Between Michael and Juliana, they have been board members of numerous RVT committees. Michael brings to the committee a strong sense of financial diligence. They are parents to Morgan and Merlyn.

Don King

Don and Moira moved to the Valley in 2012. Don was MD and board member of several companies in the hospitality and services industries



Main photograph, from left to right:
Samantha Suddons, Zakkie Bester, Chris Murphy,
Vincent Bleyaert, Don King and Eric Venter.
Inset: Michael Meredith and Michelle Smith.



and managed the International Hotel School. Don and Moira are the owners of Villa Augusta guest house and have a passion for the hospitality industry and tourism. They have two children, Roslyn and Ian.

Eric Venter

Eric is a qualified plant health specialist, and a partner in Expifin / Nexus, a company he started in 1998. He created De la Plaine Square and was a partner in De Jonge Café for many years. Eric is also a musician (“Fanie Velskoen”) and is married to Melindi, also a singer, whose passion is rescuing and caring for animals. They, together with their daughter, Schya Pixie, created the theatre, “Die Bruid, die Pixie en die Vaalhond”

We sincerely hope that the new committee will meet with your approval and confidence. We also hereby invite you to contact the RVT office or any committee member you feel comfortable talking to. Currently our Tourism officer position is vacant, but Valda, who is “standing in” on a temporary basis, is more than willing and able to assist.

The committee has much to discuss and have already scheduled the next meeting for the 7th of August at which occasion, committee members who are working on the website, social media and the Olive Festival will report back. The RVT office and the committee members envisage a much stronger interface with the members and invite them to, at all times, feel free to present us with your problems, and suggestions. If one statement is to be applicable, the main objective of RVT and its members must be to attract tourists and travellers to our Valley, have them enjoy a great experience which will ensure that they return, and or spread the good news.

Although not primarily the responsibility of RVT, we cannot ignore problems such as the “street kids” on the Square, crime in the villages and the social problems that led to recent unrest – we thus also, when and where asked for or the opportunity presents, will contribute our inputs on those forums.

We trust that with more water in the dams, good acceptance of the municipal housing plans and the return of the Olive Festival, we all can look forward to a better tourist season, and we wish you all of the best in your tourism activities!!

Kind regards
Eric Venter, on behalf of the RVT committee



Times have never been better for adding **tourism** to a small town's economic mix.

One of the biggest objections to tourism is that residents don't want their small town to be 'discovered'.

In the past five years tourism has seen some big changes. Large numbers of travellers have lost interest in cookie cutter restaurants, lodging and attractions.

Instead, they want local food, local attractions and connection to the lifestyles of local people. This has led to huge new trends – the Slow Food Movement, Authentic Tourism, Geotourism, Agritourism, Heritage Tourism and more.

Geotourism is all about preserving local culture. Heritage tourism is getting visitors onto the backroads looking for historic churches, quilt barns and traditional crafts. Authentic tourism attracts visitors who like to see things just the way they are. The Slow Food Movement is getting people off the highway and into small town restaurants, where local cafes serve up their own specialties.

There is a ready market of interested visitors for small towns that are prepared to grow a tourism sector. Preparing for tourism requires that a rural community take a critical look at itself. It isn't necessary to hold big scoping sessions and do SWAT analysis to get started moving slowly to incorporate tourism into your economic mix.

Look at your region with a tourism lens. Do you already have visitors coming to fish, hunt, river raft, bike and hike? Without that tourism lens, it is easy to miss the value and opportunity of the traffic that outdoor recreation is already generating. One resident opened a bed and breakfast, and offered birding driving tours, capturing enough of these travellers to make a good living.

Local volunteers are trained to identify their town's assets in eight areas, architecture, art, commerce, cuisine, customs, geography, history and people. Townspeople begin to see their old buildings, their local art and customs with new eyes. They do it because it helps local residents of towns as small as 600 or 800 see the value in their own communities. Sharing these gems through tourism is one possible outcome.

Looking at the tourism potential of a region can lead to collaboration with communities too small to offer all visitor services coming together to create a Regional Flavour Destination.

- Rural tourism is vastly different from urban tourism.
- Rural tourism is about small locally owned businesses that support families.
- Urban tourism is mostly about big businesses creating low wage service industry jobs.

Rural tourism is about community and economic development. The reality for small towns and rural regions is that there is no money for business attraction.

The good news is that by building a tourism sector, a town is also implementing a business attraction strategy. Most business owners in small towns who aren't born there, are first attracted to the community as a visitor. Check this out by asking business owners in any successful small town with an active tourism economy.

These successful towns focused on strategies for welcoming new businesses and making it easy to open up shop, and the tourism industry took care of the marketing.

Agritourism is providing small family farmers another income stream, by capitalizing on their way of life as a product. U-pick opportunities, farm tours, dude ranch type programs, and community supported agriculture bring urban dwellers who live a few hours away onto farms to learn more about where their food comes from and to buy local.

Taking the first steps toward tourism can be simple.

1. Look for visitors who are already coming to your region and determine what is attracting them.
2. Identify what the community can do to gain more benefit from these visitors. It can be improving signage, providing more community information at places or businesses these people are already frequenting, or looking at services these visitors need that it would be easy to provide.
3. Look at your assets. This is a fantastic activity. It doesn't look at what's needed or what small towns wish they had. It looks at what is already there. That catalogue of assets helps rural regions see how they fit into the new tourism sectors mentioned above.
4. When a town is clear about what they have and know what they would like, it's time to ask for help from regional and state tourism offices.

Once a town has taken steps to evaluate its tourism assets and interests, a tourism industry can be created that serves the town while honouring local traditions and lifestyle.

Don King
Vice Chairman

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