

Article in the: **Jamestown Post Journal** — February 27, 2004

Southern Tier West Develops New Web Site

By SHARON TURANO

SALAMANCA —

The area's best-kept secret is out. Southern Tier West's Regional Planning and Development Board has developed a Web site allowing visitors to take virtual tours of about 850 locations throughout the area. The site — www.DiscoverSouthwestNY.com — was launched during a Thursday press conference.

"We believe that this is a very important day for the future of our three-county region," said Don Rychnowski, executive director of the agency. "Today, we launch a program to market Southwest New York — to ourselves and to the world."

Rychnowski said he has hosted a variety of visitors to the area, who are amazed at what Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Allegany counties have to offer. Realizing that, staff from the agency put together the Web site, which offers more than 8,500 pictures in business, living and recreational categories from which visitors can choose to view. Community profiles of municipalities, events and more are listed as are links to numerous other sites regarding the area.

Unlike any other Web site known, site visitors can then take virtual tours of sites using PixEarth Technology.

"DiscoverSouthwestNY.com is the largest deployment of PixEarth technology on any Web site in the world," according to information regarding the site. This will help visitors plan trips to the area; real estate agents show prospective buyers neighborhoods and schools; developers look into sites being considered for business; recruitment efforts; or even help students looking for where they would like to pursue degrees.

The latter is an item Gregory DeCinque, Jamestown Community College president, admires. He, along with Jane Eshbaugh of Holiday Valley and Andrew Nixon, Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau director, spoke of the site's advantages during the launch.

"If we can grow the economic pie, then there is a bigger slice for everyone," said Mrs. Eshbaugh. She said 500,000 visitors come to the resort for which she works annually and helping that grow is helpful to others.

"Being able to show off the region and provide background on our communities will attract more people to invest in the area," she said.

Nixon said it will also prove important to marketing tourism for the area.

He said 2001 employment figures show 11,023 people work in 900 tourism-related businesses, making \$118 million annually in the three-county area.

The impact of that, he said, totals \$250 million and has effects on sales tax, property tax and new investment. Those figures, he said, can be grown, using the site to help accomplish that.

DeCinque said the site will serve as invaluable tool to help recruit people to the area, selling it to them similar to how he was sold on moving to the region.

"This new site will give all of us who live and work here, as well as those considering visiting or moving here ... an easy way to explore our wonderful area of the country," DeCinque said.

This time, however, that may be able to be done by virtual tour.

The site also contains links to other local government resources and provides information on everything from taxes to shopping, lodging and dining.

"It's time to show the world our best-kept secret," said Rychnowski. He hopes the new Web site will do so.