



## Lane Welcome Center is New in a Vintage Village

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In its official capacity, the George P. Lane Visitors Center has been open in the Theatre Building since early spring. But Lane, the late mayor of the Village of Pinehurst, loved people so much that his personality was large enough to make him a friend to everyone he met. Some might say he was the unofficial welcome center in just meeting and greeting folks.

Lane created the concept for the Welcome Center in 2010, suggesting that it be housed in the front rooms of the historic Sandhills Woman's Exchange. Ironically Lane had his sights on the Theatre Building in the early talking stages, but Village Manager Andy Wilkison offered thoughts on why that didn't pan out.

"I think the ladies at the Woman's Exchange won him over, because they named one of their sandwiches after him," Wilkison smiled. A beef hot dog with chili, cheese and all of the trimmings is named for Lane, a tireless supporter of the Exchange, as well as the Village as a whole.

The new Lane welcome center is easily accessible on the first floor and exudes a warm, relaxed feel in its 875 square feet of floor space. And if visitors feel like they are still outside as they enter – well, it might look as if they are with the floor-to-ceiling photograph of the Village Green taking center stage. A panoramic shot of life-size pine trees offer a landscape view like no other.

Soft lighting enhances the main room, focusing on a unique circular table topped by a hand-drawn map of the Village, perhaps a whimsical throwback to Frederic Law Olmsted's 100 year-old plans. But most importantly, first-time visitors will be met by one of 53 specially trained volunteers who will be on hand to answer questions.

“You are going to be greeted by a smiling face, first and foremost,” said Assistant Village Manager Natalie Dean, “a resident who loves their community and is passionate about it.”

Dean worked closely with the Village Center Enhancement Committee to choose just the right place when the move was made from the Woman’s Exchange.



“At the time (2010), it was a good partnership and space was available at the Exchange,” Dean explained. “It was very important to Mayor Lane to help the Exchange succeed, bring in more traffic and make the public more aware of what the cabin had to offer. He recognized that such a large part of our local economy is based on visitors and tourists, and we wanted to make sure they all felt welcome.”

The Committee also recognized that most residents were first-time visitors at some time in their lives, so one of their

strategies focused on the benefits of having the welcome center more centrally located, inviting folks to the center of town. Several locations were vetted, and with the Village Council’s approval, the Theatre Building location was selected and retro-fitted into three beautifully distinct areas.

Dean described the trio of rooms. Along with the 48” round table and tall stools, the central room has other artwork and photography, a guest book which is gathering new names on a daily basis and an information wall holding brochures and pamphlets. The volunteer desk is staffed from Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. On the interior wall is a special bronze plaque which was brought from the Woman’s Exchange, commemorating the 2010 dedication honoring the late Mayor Lane.

For just the correct touch, Tufts Archives volunteer Jack Farrell helped design the History Room, which is like a small, comfortable den in someone’s home.

“This is the place that, if someone wanted to sit down, have a cup of coffee in a comfy chair,

relax and look through the materials, they can,” said Dean. “In terms of historic photography on the walls, this spot is a great representation of our community.”



There are old photos from the 1900s, information about the Tufts family, Annie Oakley and others who have made the Village so special. A TV runs a Village information video loop, including the PBS documentary which was created about Pinehurst.

Down a few steps, the perimeter space is open, airy and bright, with lots of windows. Dean thinks this is a great spot if a small group wants to hold a meeting at the six-person table or just sit, have coffee and enjoy the public wi-fi.

In the short time that the center has been open, folks from all over the country, as well as international guests, have stopped in and signed the guest book, and the response has been positive.

“A lot of people are happy with how comfortable the space feels and how cheerful and welcoming it is,” Dean added, “but we’re glad that the most common comment is how beautiful our Village is and that it is such a special place.”

Both Wilkison and Dean knew of Lane’s great enthusiasm for the Village.

“Though the new Welcome Center is a step up in space and amenities from the initial one, George would love it just as much as he would have loved the one at the Woman’s Exchange,” observed Wilkison. “George was no stranger to bigger and better plans, so expanding the Welcome Center would be something he would be very happy about.”

There is always room for “bigger and better” but Dean doesn’t see much changing down the road, although the Village is printing a Pinehurst welcome brochure which focuses on the community. Village visitors who also are attending the twin U.S. Opens should find that information readily available. Signage to the Visitors Center and the Village is now installed.

Dean thinks Lane would be proud of the final product because he recognized that the history of

the Village was so important.



“I know he would be pleased with the entire operation – the commitment, the community and the dedication of the volunteers,” she said with a smile. “He would especially like the way it’s physically a warm and inviting space and also the amount of information that is distributed today.”

The unique location and style of the Visitors Center sets it apart. The Theatre Building is located between the Village Chapel and the heart of the Village.

Wilkison says Lane would also be very gratified by the large number of volunteers who work at the Welcome Center.

“Overall,” he said, “George would be very proud to have his name attached to this very special Welcome Center.”