

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Image and Hiking Guide Attached

One Avid Hiker's Passionate Project Leads to A Unique Local Hiking Guide For All to Enjoy

Haywood County, NC – It started as a simple project to obtain a certification but quickly grew into a passionate venture for one avid hiker to share his unique vision of a Haywood County hiking jewel, Purchase Knob. At first, Ken Czarnomski, a recently certified Blue Ridge Naturalist, didn't know exactly what path his final project to obtain his certificate of merit would take. However, he knew it had to encompass his three greatest passions: hiking, cataloging, and sketching. "It wasn't clear to me how I would combine these passions, but my goal was to create something useful to the community that would further the connection that people could develop by exploring our wonderful mountains," Czarnomski said. Then after much contemplation, the idea of the illustrated Purchase Knob Hiking Guide was born.

Czarnomski chose to settle in the Southern Appalachian region of North Carolina, particularly Waynesville because of its close proximity to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Because of his love for the area, it was only fitting that he highlight one of Haywood County's unique hiking areas for his final project. Purchase Knob offers a wide range of biodiversity and other appealing aspects all encompassed in a four-hour or less walk. "I was encouraged to make this choice due to its winter accessibility, summer butterfly and wildflower abundance, and amazing panoramas, which are among the best in the county," said Czarnomski. His love of hiking has taken him far and wide, including the United Kingdom. While in Ireland this past summer, he was offered a complimentary illustrated hiking map that brought an element of fun to the experience and this concept was his inspiration for the Purchase Knob guide. Along with his beautifully hand drawn illustrations of Purchase Knob and the surrounding area, he promotes its history and heritage while including family-friendly components of the hike. His favorite aspect of the project is the artistic quality of the poem and illustrations, which not only make it an intriguing guide, but a work of art.

This exclusive guide was unlike anything currently available in Haywood County so Czarnomski knew it was a project worth promoting. He reached out to the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority, which immediately pledged their support and

excitement for the project. “When I learned about Ken’s project and saw the finished product, I was not only blown away but couldn’t wait to start promoting the guide,” said Anna Smathers, Communications Manager at the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority. “This is a fresh concept that is unlike anything we currently have available so we are eager to share it with visitors and locals alike,” Smathers said. The Purchase Knob hiking guide is available exclusively at the HCTDA Visitor’ Centers in Waynesville, Maggie Valley, and Canton and online at www.visitncsmokies.com.

Czarnomski is equally excited about his final guide and partnership with the HCTDA and sees more potential for future hiking maps. He wants to continue to uncover cultural and historical backgrounds of other Haywood hiking areas, which he hopes to use to develop a series of illustrated maps and maybe even books. “These types of illustrated walks currently do not exist in our Southern Appalachian counties and I believe they need to in order to preserve our local ecological history and promote hiking with ease and joy. There is so much in Haywood County; I don’t really need to leave home to continue my enchantment with the abundant natural wonders that surround me,” Czarnomski said.

For more information on the Purchase Knob Hiking Guide and to help plan your next trip to the North Carolina Smokies go to www.visitncsmokies.com or call (800) 334-9036.

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Along with its picturesque beauty, Haywood County offers year round cultural, music, family fun activities and special events. For more information click www.visitncsmokies.com