

Headwaters region re-branded as spot for tourists to get REAL

The Headwaters region is inviting tourists and day-trippers to connect with the farm-fresh food, unspoiled nature and simple pleasures of the area now branded as the place "Where Ontario gets real."

The new brand was unveiled last Thursday at a ceremony at the Caledon Pan Am Equestrian Park in Palgrave. The new identity was launched in front of 200 dignitaries, business people and media.

Named for being the source of some of Ontario's biggest rivers, Headwaters is also home to more than 23,000 horses and is one of the most concentrated equestrian areas in Ontario.

Michele Harris, executive director of Headwaters Tourism, said they are anticipating attracting a lot of visitors from Toronto and the surrounding areas. The aim of the new brand is to promote Rural Enjoyment, Authentic Living (REAL). She added it was inspired through consultations with numerous people throughout the area.

"Whether it's the tug of a fish on your line, the taste of a carrot picked just hours ago, or a view of rolling hills that goes on forever, Headwaters offers endless things that people are really seeking right now," she said. "Those things also include connecting to each other, to nature and to the moment."

The centerpiece of the new brand is Headwaters 2015 Visitors' Guide, a 68-page magazine with information on the year-round food and dining, activities, cultural and community events and natural attractions waiting for visitors. The guide also introduces 30 local people who embody the creativity and independent spirit of the region's many entrepreneurs. Fiddlers to farriers (horse foot and shoe experts), restaurateurs to ranchers, stone masons to farmers are presented in bold black-and-white photographs by award-winning Caledon photographer Pete Paterson. The guide was included in 65,000 GTA copies of the Globe and Mail last Thursday, and will be available in hundreds of hotels and other tourist-friendly locales province-wide.

The new brand has been included in a series of posters that were unveiled at last week's event, with photographs of various people throughout the area. They included Melinda McArthur of Heatherlea Farm Shoppe on Winston Churchill Boulevard, near Belfountain, and Philip De War of Soulyve Caribbean Kitchen in Orangeville

"The word 'real' means something different to everyone," commented Shawn Murenbeeld, principal at Touchwood Design in Orangeville, who designed the new brand. "Some say it's feeling connected, or appreciating the simpler things and the moment. But 'real' is also what happens to people when they come up here. Their pulse slows, their minds clear, they forget about meetings and mortgages, and they start to enjoy things as they are in their true, natural state. Including themselves."

In addition to the Guide, Headwaters Tourism also plans to promote the region through its website, social media and ongoing events that bring together Headwaters' food, arts and culture, natural beauty and other elements, showcasing the region's many talented people and unique attractions.