

Thousands discover Oconee on website

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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SENECA — Thousands of people throughout the USA and hundreds worldwide are getting to know about Oconee County through a website put together by a couple that fell in love with the area the first time they set foot here about a decade ago.

Gene and Bette Borman launched OconeeCountry.com in 2006 and have been amazed at the thousands of "hits" to their website from all corners of the country and the globe.

From Europe to the Far East and our Canadian neighbors to the north, OconeeCountry.com has become a popular window for many to see for the first time the assortment of treasures that makes the Golden Corner an attractive destination.

The website brings to life the sights and wonders of Oconee County with colorful photographs of beautiful lakes, majestic mountain views, cascading waterfalls and lush golf courses. OconeeCountry.com includes links that contain lists of restaurants, shopping destinations and attractions.

According to a website usage report generated by Google Analytics, OconeeCountry.com received more than 64,000 visits from March 5, 2010 through the beginning of this week.

Bette Borman is almost certain that many of those visitors are scouting Oconee because they either want to move here, vacation or perhaps start a business.

The Bormans did not have the luxury of a resource such as OconeeCountry.com when they first thought about moving to the area from Minnesota in 2001

Gene Borman said the move was imminent once their daughter graduated from Toccoa Falls College in Georgia, married soon after that and the grandchildren started coming.

The couple did not want to move to Georgia, so they set their sights in the Golden Corner. They knew nothing about South Carolina and nothing about Oconee, so they turned to the Internet for more information.

The search for information frustrated Bette Borman. She said information was scanty, and information found on one site was often contradicted in other sites.

The Bormans made a trip to Oconee to look for a lot they could buy.

"We were getting frustrated with the prices in Lake Hartwell," Gene Borman said. "Our son-in-law said, 'if you think that's expensive, you should go out to Keowee.'"

The Bormans did not know their son-in-law was being sarcastic, so they visited a real estate agent who gave them a map, told them to drive around the lake and see if there was



something they liked.

They did and were awe-struck.

"I think when we drove around Lake Keowee, the blue water, the islands and pine trees, we said: 'This is what a lake should look like,'" said Bette Borman.

"It just stole our hearts," Gene Borman added.

They purchased a lot and returned to Minnesota to plan their custom-built home.

Not knowing whether there was a niche in Oconee for their profession as film and video producers, the Bormans hatched the idea for a website to help future visitors to Oconee.

The Bormans moved into their Lake Keowee

home by Thanksgiving 2005. Less than a year later, they launched OconeeCountry.com.

The website has become the Bormans' calling card. It has opened many doors for them that have led to many friendships in the community.

The Bormans have used OconeeCountry.com to further their GBA Productions business that offers video production, website design, photography, video streaming and more.

Gene and Bette Borman have produced several videos promoting Oconee history and attractions. They are currently lining up support for their next project — a video on the history of Stumphouse Tunnel.

Not surprisingly, Stumphouse Tunnel is one of the most-viewed pages on OconeeCountry.com.

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Gene and Bette Borman have been promoting all the natural beauty that Oconee County has to offer to the world through their website, OconeeCountry.com.