Having attempted a wide assortment of downtown tour options, the downtown ghost tours offered by the Mount Airy Regional Museum of History still remain the most popular. According to Matt Edwards, executive director, the museum has tried several different types of downtown tours over the years, but none of the tours have received the fanfare and attendance as the original ghost tours that Mark Brown was instrumental in putting together. “Mark was really the perfect person to take charge of the program,” Edwards said. Brown comes from a theatrical background and did the majority of the research and scripting of the tours to ensure local historical accuracy. “We were pleasantly surprised, there was a lot of success right when we started,” Brown said. Terri Ingalls served as the tour guide on the Friday night ghost tour, having started as a tour guide during the second year of the program. Throughout the tour, Ingalls carried a lantern and regaled the group with stories of Mount Airy’s past. Ingalls doesn’t refer to ghosts as ghosts, rather “permanent residents.” Two of the permanent residents that she spoke of were Edgard and Mary, both of which reside in the building that houses the Mount Airy Regional Museum of History. The Friday night tour attracted people from Ohio and Charlotte, with the people from Charlotte driving up specifically for the tour. Ingalls stressed the fact that the permanent residents of downtown Mount Airy are benevolent and have no ill will about them.

Edwards explained that the tours draw in roughly 1,000 participants during its season, which typically runs from Memorial day to the end of October, however this year the museum has decided to lengthen its season to the end of November due to the regular demand for the tours, as well as the generally mild November temperatures. The museum offers a Downtown History and Architecture Walking Tour and the more popular Historic Downtown Mount Airy Ghost Tours on Fridays and Saturdays. Edwards explained that the Downtown History and Architecture Walking Tours are in fact “good tours,” but have failed to capture as wide of an interest base as the Historic Downtown Mount Airy Ghost Tours have. “We’ve been fortunate over the success of the ghost tour concept,” Edwards said. “Everyone that has been on them have loved them, but they haven’t had as large of turn outs as the ghost tours have,” Edwards said of the history and architecture tours. Edwards explained that the addition of the Downtown History and Architecture Walking Tours was made following urging from the tourism center to add such a event, and the museum wanted to duplicate the success of the ghost tours. The history and architecture tours can be customized to either focus on the residential or business districts. “The downtown walking tours is a great way to delve into the history of the town,” Edwards said. A tour that the museum tried out for a period of time, but ultimately decided to cease operation were guided tours by costume clad period characters. “It was a great theory, but it just didn’t materialize,” Edwards said of the period character tours.

A new concept that the museum is working on and hopes to have up and running in the next six weeks are the addition of guided tour bus tours, in which a guide will step onto the bus and provide a tour of the town as the bus drives along. “In addition to serving the tourism facet,

we’re also a great resource to the local community,” Edwards said of the tours that the museum provides to local school groups. When the tours initially launched, there was a core group of 13 stories that the guides would tell, but now offerings consist of 20 stories. Edwards explained that each tour is different and allows a lot of flexibility in terms of what stories the six tour guides that work for the museum tell. The tours last for 90 minutes and spans roughly 0.3 miles. The Historic Downtown Mount Airy Ghost Tours cost $13, whereas the Downtown History and Architecture Walking Tours cost $11.

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