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"Decision-Making Tool Kit"

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# ROCK-PAPER-SCISSORS

## Introducing VFTCB's New "Decision-Making Tool Kit"

*New Creative Marketing Tool Establishes Montgomery County as a Unique and Special Destination for Event and Meeting Planners*

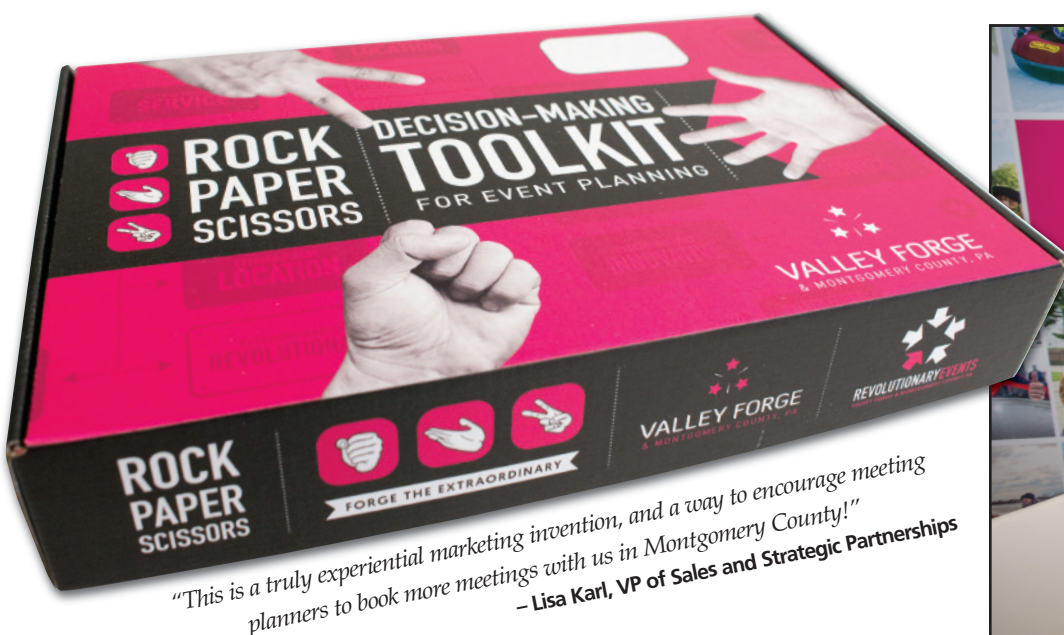
Capitalizing on the universal familiarity of the "rock-paper-scissors" game, the creative sales team at Valley Forge Tourism & Convention Board (VFTCB) has come up with a clever twist on the classic game to advance their efforts to attract conventions, meetings, weddings, and other groups to Montgomery County. VFTCB's new "Decision-Making Tool Kit" is packaged attractively in a colorful box and delivered individually to event and meeting planners — either as a unique introductory piece, or as a follow-up to a meeting or encounter at a trade show.

"We wanted something universal," said Scott Higgins, VFTCB Associate Director of Sales, about the tool kit. "Regardless of your age, you know how to play the rock, paper, scissors game. We didn't want something that (meeting and event planners) would look at, say it's cool, and throw it away. We wanted something that's going to live on your desk for a while."

The object, of course, is to establish a unique identity and make an impression in order to stand out from the crowd.

"We know that planners get tons of phone calls," Higgins said. "They get emails all throughout the day. They get mailings. We think there's nothing out there like this that's going to 'wow' them and peak their curiosity to see what's inside and see what VFTCB is all about."

(L to R) Lisa Karl, VP of Sales & Strategic Partnerships; Scott Higgins, Associate Director of Sales; and Marc Kaminetsky, CTIS, Director of Sports, Tourism & Convention Sales.





The VFTCB Decision-Making Tool Kit contains chocolate “rocks,” a “paper” note pad with an embossed cover, and a VFTCB-branded pair of “scissors.”

**T**he VFTCB Decision-Making Tool Kit contains three symbolic yet practical and useful items — a generous portion of premium chocolate “rocks,” a sturdy standard-sized “paper” note pad with an embossed cover, and a VFTCB-branded pair of high-quality “scissors,” along with a personalized handwritten note to each recipient. “We all need that personal connection still,” Higgins points out, “and a handwritten note still goes a long way.” Colorful copies of VFTCB’s 2017 *Visitors Guide* and *Meeting Planner Guide* are also included in the package.

“You always need a solid foundation whenever you start to plan a meeting, hence the chocolate rocks,” Higgins explains. “We have that solid foundation here in Montgomery County with 75 hotels, more than 1,600 restaurants, 150 wedding venues, five major malls, 140 shopping centers and Main Streets, 54 golf courses, and a wide range of other services and attractions.

“We also believe that whenever you plan a meeting, you want to make sure it’s noteworthy,” Higgins said. “That’s why we include a pad of paper. And Montgomery County is cutting edge, hence the pair of high-quality scissors.”

The Decision-Making Tool Kit is an extension of VFTCB’s **Revolutionary Events** brand.

“This is a truly experiential marketing invention, and a great way to encourage meeting planners to book more meetings with us here in Montgomery County!” said Lisa Karl, Vice President of Sales and Strategic Partnerships.

“We want meeting and event planners to know we’re not doing things the same as every other city or destination,” adds Higgins. “We’re doing things differently here. Our unique properties are all doing things differently as well. This is our way to say, ‘We’re different. Come here and talk to us.’”

The box also has a “call to action.” Meeting and event planners who receive the box are encouraged to use the hashtag #decideonmontco, and post a photo of themselves “playing” with the box, or playing the rock, paper, scissors game on social media, to be entered to win a gift card.

Valley Forge Tourism & Convention Board (VFTCB) is a non-profit, membership-based sales and marketing organization that actively promotes Valley Forge and Montgomery County as a convention site and leisure visitor destination by encouraging patronage of its hotels, restaurants, attractions, shopping, and other services. Each year, the VFTCB team attends more than 50 trade shows, mainly in the New York-to D.C. Northeast Corridor, and 20 international programs. The team also cultivates prospects through LinkedIn, Snapchat, and other social media platforms.

*(Continued on page 8)*



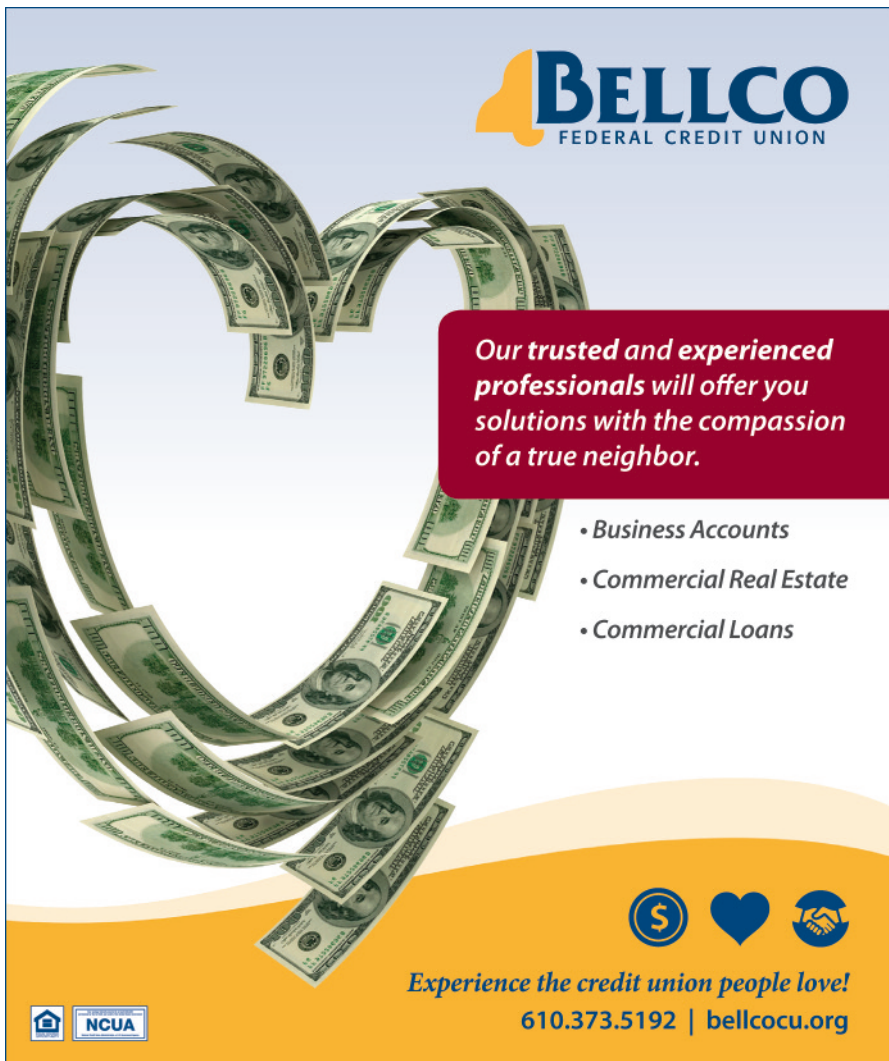
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VFTCB's Mini Cooper.

## COVER STORY

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Three years ago, VFTCB rebranded itself and brought on the dynamic duo of Mike Bowman, President and CEO, and Edward Harris, Chief Marketing Officer. Bowman, who was on the VFTCB board for three years, comes from the hospitality industry, and Harris was an executive at online retail giant eBay. Together, they've brought in some excellent talent and a creative and innovative approach to marketing.

Bowman and Harris' first order of business was to strategically align sub-brands under their **Valley Forge Tourism** brand, that take the position of various economic blocks for Montgomery County. Those sub-brands include:

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**Montco 360** ([www.MontCo360.net](http://www.MontCo360.net)) — a partnership with Google Street View to give website users a 360-degree view of Montgomery County's attractions, historic sites, hotels, restaurants, and shops.

**Crave Montco** ([www.cravemontco.com](http://www.cravemontco.com)) delves into dining opportunities throughout Montgomery County, including a magazine, a blog featuring different restaurants or types of foods, and special offers.

**Shop Montco** ([www.shopmontcopa.com](http://www.shopmontcopa.com)) — Montgomery County has five major malls (including the world-renown King of Prussia Mall, which welcomes 22 million visitors per year) and more than 140 shopping centers and main streets throughout the county.

**Montgomery County Weddings** (<http://www.valleyforge.org/weddings-celebrations/>) is a website dedicated to couples getting married in Montgomery County. Visitors can find free planning assistance and information about wedding venues and vendors in Montgomery County.

**Valley Forge Sports** ([www.valleyforge.org/sports/](http://www.valleyforge.org/sports/)) — a sales and marketing organization within VFTCB that is committed to ensuring that youth, collegiate, and adult sports-related events held in Montgomery County are a success — on and off the field.

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## COVER STORY

(Continued from page 8)

**Patriot Trails** ([www.valleyforge.org/revolution/](http://www.valleyforge.org/revolution/)) allows you to follow in the footsteps of George Washington on web-based itineraries that take you on a journey from Valley Forge National Historical Park to historic sites throughout Montgomery County.

**The Valley Forge Revolutionary 5-Mile Run** (<http://www.valleyforge.org/revolutionary-run>), held in the spring, is a unique challenge for runners of all skill levels.

VFTCB's marketing efforts have paid off handsomely with dramatic increases in website page views, and more significantly, double-digit increases in "Room Night" statistics over the past several years. VFTCB membership has increased tremendously as well. Tourism spending in Montgomery County reached \$1.5 billion in 2016, with an average 130,000 visitors each day patronizing hotels, restaurants, shopping, and recreational venues. Tourism spending supports nearly 20,000 jobs in the county.

Thanks to the efforts of VFTCB, those numbers continue to grow, and if the proposed SEPTA King of Prussia Rail project, which VFTCB supports, comes to fruition, the economic impact could accel-

erate the county's growth and prosperity even further.

To that end, and others as well, the VFTCB team has cultivated strong working relationships with their legislative partners. "Our Montgomery County delegation members do recognize what we do," said VP Lisa Karl. "Scott does an amazing job on the sales side, talking to our business leaders and our elected leaders, so they understand what tourism contributes to our economy, and they can also tell us what's going on that will affect our community. We pride ourselves on being in the know about the latest attraction or a new restaurant, and that's only helped by having a great relationship with our elected leaders who are sharing what they know with us."

"The Montgomery County Commissioners have also been very supportive of what we do," added Higgins. "They're great partners and great allies. We can't do it without their support, so we're excited to have them. The three commissioners we have right now are all amazing. They want to be at our events and it's really great to see them there. I think it helps connect all of our members with the County of Montgomery."

(Continued on page 12)

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## COVER STORY

*(Continued from page 10)*

Thanks to a talented, creative group of individuals, and innovative marketing efforts like VFTCB's Decision-Making Tool Kit, the sky is the limit for what this organization can achieve. "We still expect growth with our members, and the productivity out of this office too," said Scott Higgins. "We're excited about what 2018 has to offer. We have a really creative team here that helps us think about things differently. We're not going to follow the leader. We want to do things differently, and then watch them follow us. We're lucky to have the talent we have here. The things that are put out by this office always amaze me."

"We're not afraid to be different and unique," adds Rachel Riley, Communications & Media Relations Manager, "speaking

about VFTCB's innovative Decision-Making Tool Kit. "We're not afraid to take that risk and take a chance on something that might make people question 'What is this?' It is getting attention. Meeting planners are taking notice. Leading publications in the industry are responding, saying 'What a great idea!' People want to steal it!" she jokes.

As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

**For additional information about Valley Forge Tourism & Convention Board, please call 610.834.7990, and visit: [www.valleyforge.org](http://www.valleyforge.org).**



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