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Anakeesta's NEW Black Bear Village Elevates Fall Experience in Smokies Anakeesta completes largest expansion ever on Gatlinburg mountaintop

(Gatlinburg, TN – Oct. 8, 2020) – Just in time for Fall's splendor in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Anakeesta opens the new Black Bear Village, adding even more unique experiences to the Gatlinburg mountaintop destination.

Live music floats from a new bandstand through a spacious gathering area and overlook with seating for more than 150 people. Nearby, the new village's namesake black bear stands atop a mountain-themed waterfall with water play area for children below. And a glowing fire pit warms those sitting in its circle, surrounded by a local artist's river-rock creation and panoramic bar seating.

Each new addition – including a climate-controlled destination restaurant – offers priceless views of the Smokies, and together they amount to the greatest and final phase of Anakeesta's \$6.5 million expansion this year.

"Black Bear Village brings together our vision for Anakeesta as a place to play and relax together outdoors while taking in the incredible beauty of the Smoky Mountains," Co-Founder and Managing Partner Bob Bentz shared. "When you reach the top of Anakeesta, you first see that we created an authentic and picturesque landscape, and then you find dozens of opportunities for experiences – from fun adventures to shopping and dining. But when you sit down or look out across the valley, it's just you and the mountains."

Together, Bob, his wife Karen, and their son Bryce thoughtfully designed and built Anakeesta to reflect the essence of the Smokies.

"My family has a long history of visiting and hiking in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park with family and friends," Bryce Bentz shared. "At Anakeesta, we share our passion for the outdoors and give families all kinds of ways to experience the Smokies together. Building Black Bear Village was more than a project. It's a reflection of our hearts and souls – and this area's heritage."

Anakeesta even named a new take-away café after the explorer acclaimed as the father of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Kephart Café offers gourmet hot dogs, flatbreads and brightly-colored frozen yogurt with rainbow edges for guests who order and pick up from its serving windows.

“I know that my family – like many families with young ones who visit Anakeesta – will want to play at our charming mountain creek splash pad with salamander and river otter shooting jets of water, so we planned for parents to be able to pick up snacks at the adjacent Kephart Café and sit by the waterfall and watch all ‘the wildlife,’” Karen Bentz light-heartedly explained.

“Of course, the new outdoor bar with walk-up window is on the other side of the waterfall and also in sight, with a selection of local craft beers on tap, so adults can choose to cozy up to our firepit or grab a seat at the bar overlooking the pristine mountains,” Karen Bentz added.

Anakeesta is literally “elevating” the dining experience for everyone in the Smoky Mountains with its new Cliff Top restaurant which offers indoor and outdoor seating – plus sweeping mountain views with every bite. Cliff Top is serving local flavors and modern American cuisine, featuring hand-cut steaks, entree salads, savory appetizers, scratch made sauces and desserts – with everything made to order from 11 a.m. until one hour before Anakeesta closes.

“Cliff Top is opening just in time for mother nature’s incredible display of Fall foliage in the Smoky Mountains. While a little harder to imagine, we’ll also appreciate the phenomenal views of a winter wonderland, looking out the restaurant’s wall of windows,” Karen Bentz shared. “This is a destination restaurant for the casual diner with a slightly elevated menu featuring a 32-ounce bone-in Cowboy Ribeye and gourmet burgers. The unparalleled views of Mt. LeConte make it unlike anything in Tennessee.”

Shoppers will delight in throwback toys, amusing home décor, and local curiosities like a Gatlinburg beard-care line carried inside the new Mercantile attached to Cliff Top restaurant. Anakeesta offers totally unique shops in its Firefly Village, where the Smokehouse restaurant will now serve house-smoked meats, wings and southern barbeque classics.

The adventure to the top of Anakeesta starts with a scenic ride on the Chondola or Ridge Rambler from the Gatlinburg Parkway (near traffic light #5). Guests riding the open-air vehicles on Anakeesta’s private road now arrive in Black Bear Village – even closer to the new AnaVista Tower that opened this summer with 360-degree vistas from the highest point in downtown Gatlinburg.

This Autumn is also the perfect time to experience Anakeesta’s Tree-Top Skywalk, the longest tree-based skywalk in North America; Haunted Rail Runner; Night-Time Ziplining; and Movies on the Mountain (Fridays and Saturdays in October). Visit www.anakeesta.com or call 865-325-2400 for tickets and more information, including current hours.

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About Anakeesta Anakeesta is an authentic outdoor mountaintop experience for all ages located on 70 acres of pristine forested land nestled in and above the heart of downtown Gatlinburg at 576 Parkway, Gatlinburg, TN 37738 (traffic light #5). Anakeesta is a Cherokee Indian word referring to high ground, chosen to capture the authentic Smokies heritage that guests will experience. Play, eat, shop and relax surrounded by the Great Smoky Mountains National Park at Anakeesta, voted the best attraction of the year in 2018 by the TnHTA. Visit www.anakeesta.com or call 865-325-2400 for tickets and more information.