



# Travel Lane County Annual Report

# FY20







## THE ROAD TO RECOVERY BEGINS



What began as a year focused on the rebirth of Hayward Field, and the excitement of hosting collegiate meets, the Nike Prefontaine Classic and the 2020 U.S. Olympic Team Trials for Track and Field, was upended by the COVID-19 pandemic. The hospitality industry was, and continues to be, one of the hardest hit in terms of furloughed and unemployed workers and industry projections for sector recovery is years away. Even so, the resiliency of our industry has never shone more brightly. Restaurants quickly pivoted to serve customers through take-out and delivery, area distilleries began manufacturing hand sanitizer to aide essential workers and the community stepped up to help businesses remain viable.

A 10th straight year of transient room tax growth was within reach as 2020 began — and then the “stay at home” protocol began and travel all but ceased. Over one-third of Lane County hotel rooms went offline for months, and at fiscal year-end our largest conference center hotel had yet to reopen. Even in the midst of these struggles we see several lodging projects coming to completion, development of exciting retail, housing and sports facility projects becoming a reality, and a riverfront park blossoming before our eyes. Vital transportation infrastructure projects will serve local residents and visitors in coming years and important conversations are occurring around race, equity and diversity.

The pandemic has been hard on our industry and our organization, but the hospitality industry has bounced back before and will again. I've never been prouder of the Travel Lane County staff. What you see illustrated in this annual report is a display of the professionalism and focus of a team that is moving ahead one reopening phase at a time to ensure Lane County is well-positioned for the return of visitors to the Eugene, Cascades & Coast region.

Kari Westlund

President/CEO

### Mission

Travel Lane County's mission is to increase the number of overnight visitors. We market and promote the Eugene, Cascades and Coast region as a destination for travel, conventions, sports, meetings and events. We are a private, nonprofit association dedicated to economic development through visitor spending, which pumped more than \$783 million into Lane County, Oregon's economy in 2019.

### Vision

Travel Lane County's vision is to be a recognized leader in achieving year-round economic growth throughout the Eugene, Cascades & Coast region through innovative destination marketing, product development and exceptional visitor experiences. We are focused on positioning Eugene, Cascades and Coast as one of the most preferred travel destinations in the Pacific Northwest.

### Brand Promise

Our brand promise is enriching, authentic, approachable experiences for all ages and abilities.

### Why We Do What We Do

We believe our work inspires people to experience and appreciate Lane County, creating opportunities, a sense of place and stronger communities.



## YEAR IN REVIEW

Fueled by a strong summer fair and festival season, including the 50th anniversary of the Oregon Country Fair, and a record-breaking season of University of Oregon women's basketball, fiscal year 2020 was on record pace through February 2020. A major push was underway to complete Hayward Field construction prior to the PAC-12 Track & Field Championships, and final preparations for hosting TrackTown20 were being finalized. Calendar year 2019 set another record for visitor spending as total direct travel spending in Lane County exceeded \$1 billion dollars for the second straight year.

Beginning in March, the effects of the pandemic began to emerge. Travel Lane County closed both its visitor centers and furloughed visitor services and partnership sales staff. All other Travel Lane County staff began working remotely and were furloughed one day per week, but have been retained throughout the pandemic.



Total Direct Spending **\$1.04 BILLION**

Direct Visitor Spending **\$783 MILLION**

Industry Earnings **\$308 MILLION**

Local & State Tax Receipts **\$42 MILLION**

Jobs **11,140**





## YEAR IN REVIEW

Direct visitor spending in Lane County topped \$783 million in 2019, with an additional \$258 million by county residents traveling in and out of the region. This resulted in total travel spending of over \$1 billion in 2019.

\$783 million in direct visitor spending positively impacts the Eugene, Cascades & Coast region. Spending on accommodations contributes around 18 cents of each dollar spent by visitors. But not all visitors stay in commercial accommodations. Visitors, whether staying in commercial accommodations or with family and friends, have something in common: they all eat and drink, and this means the food and beverage sector garners the largest part of each visitor dollar spent. 39 cents of each visitor dollar spent went toward food and beverage purchases.

It is projected that the pandemic may result in some restaurants shutting their doors, but most are holding on by changing their model to provide more take-out and delivery to make up for losses in dine-in guests. Local government worked creatively to provide food pick-up zones and expanded outdoor eating opportunities. Our strong food and beverage sector is something we are hoping can weather this storm and emerge stronger in 2021.



Transportation

\$136.6M



Arts, Entertainment & Recreation

\$96M



Food & Beverage

\$306M



Accommodations

\$143M



Retail

\$102M

Total

\$783M

Source: Dean Runyan Associates, LaneCo2019p



## YEAR IN REVIEW

Lane County's record of 9 consecutive years of transient room tax growth came to an end in FY20.

More than 33% of Lane County hotel rooms went offline in late March and early April, and room demand and average daily room rates fell. Projections for Q4 were that room tax receipts would bottom out below 10% of prior year totals and that year-end receipts would be nearly 25% below the FY19 total. Fortunately, occupancy throughout the county, and especially on the central coast, exceeded projections and FY20 room tax receipts were only 18% below the prior year.

As shown in the chart below, TRT funds provide support for destination marketing throughout the county. Travel Lane County's investment of \$2.3 million of TRT resulted in more than \$35 million in economic value – \$1 invested > \$16 generated.

### TRT funds benefit all of Lane County

Lane County \$3.8 million

Eugene \$2.4 million

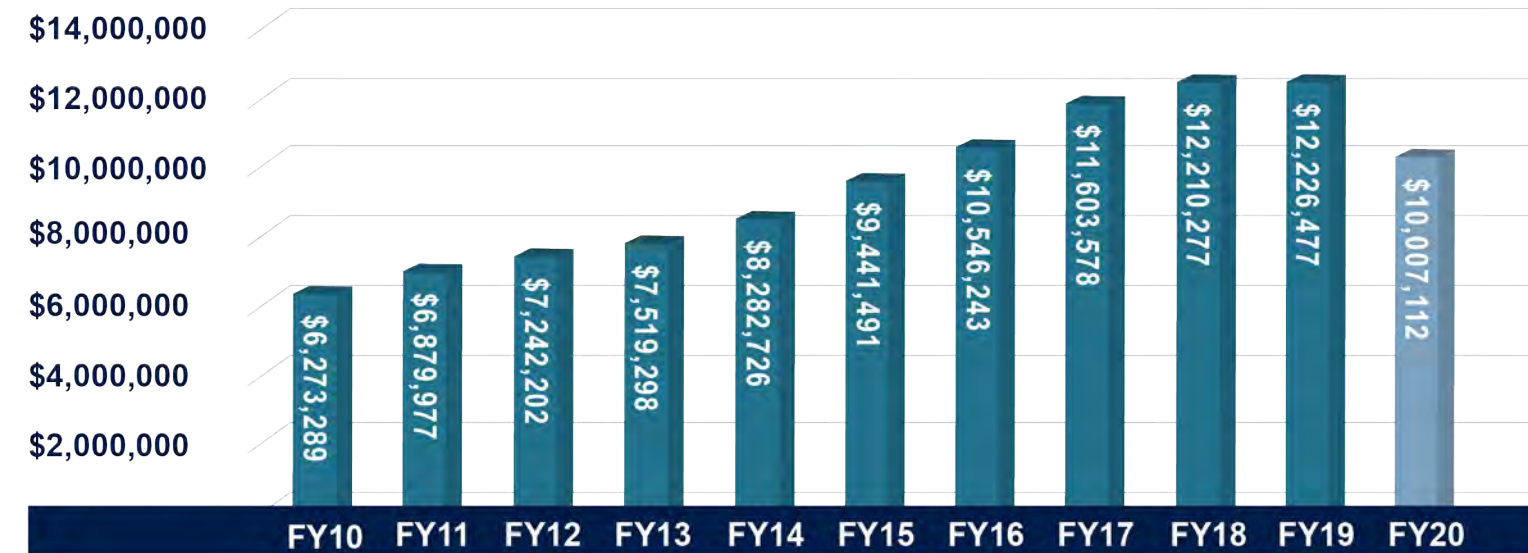
Travel Lane County \$2.3 million

Springfield \$1.1 million

Florence \$356,000

Cottage Grove \$102,000

## Lane County Room Tax by Fiscal Year



The ReVision Florence project was partially funded by transient room tax





## TOURISM RECOVERY- A PHASED APPROACH



Our primary goal in the Wait phase (Governor's Stay at Home Phase) was to communicate accurate and timely information to our local audiences and support local businesses.

Travel Lane County partnered with our ten Lane County Chambers of Commerce to offer resources informing locals on what businesses were open and to provide our business partners the resources they needed to navigate the state guidelines.

We developed a campaign called #LoveLane to foster a sense of community pride and togetherness, and keep Lane County top-of-mind as a travel destination for future trips.



Our Ready phase (Governor's Phase One) goal focused on easing fears and preparing communities, businesses and visitors for future travel. Travelers had concerns about where the safest places were to travel and how businesses would ensure their safety. Residents had fears around visitors coming into their communities and what that might mean for introduction of the virus and how essential services will be impacted. To ease concerns, Travel Lane County and our partners created lists of open businesses, provided resources for how businesses could take advantage of safety protocols and regularly provided safety content on our website, in social media posts and through videos.

Following a series of rural community discussions, staff developed an Instilling Confidence campaign featuring social media, radio and television public service announcements. This campaign was implemented as we moved into the Set phase.

#LoveLane was broadened into #LoveLaneBiz as Travel Lane County and the Chambers of Commerce provided additional resource tools and important business and customer pledges that illustrated how important it was to be patient, respectful and thoughtful as communities prepared to reopen.

## TOURISM RECOVERY- A PHASED APPROACH



The Set phase coordinated with the state's phase 2 reopening, which provided an opportunity for residents to begin moving around the state and for greater business operations. Our goal during the Set phase was to position Lane County to appeal to travelers looking for a less congested travel experience.

Using a hyper local focus, Travel Lane County introduced the 'staycation' concept and positioned remote experiences at rural lodges, cabins or B&Bs or by selecting a metro area hotel to pamper yourself with a night away.

Throughout the Set phase our key messages have included taking care of yourself and the communities you visit and enjoying yourself as you respect the places and people you visit. With a focus on the Lane County drive market we have worked with our partners to develop staycations packages and itineraries that provide residents a way to enjoy a safe summer experience.

For group markets, support to local promoters and producers and maintaining key client relationships has been our focus and our team has worked hard to help rebook events into future months and coming years. Early summer sports events began to take shape as staff worked with planners to develop effective safety protocols. These events contributed to overnight stays in commercial lodging properties and set the stage for additional events in FY21.



As we plan for the Go phase our goal will be to return to a full program of promoting communities and businesses for leisure visitors, sports and convention attendees.

The boundaries of our target marketing will expand beyond drive markets to direct air routes and broader regional and national marketing. Efforts to rebuild our travel trade markets and expansion of partner deals and packages will be used to spark travel. As international travel is allowed, marketing to international travel trade and visitors will resume.

Conventions and sports marketing will increase as mass gatherings are permitted. The region will welcome large crowds back to performing arts venues, conference centers, Matthew Knight Arena, Hayward Field, Autzen Stadium and more.





## INTEGRATED MARKETING

### Website

**974,000** web sessions

**737k** users

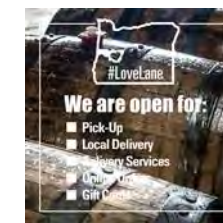
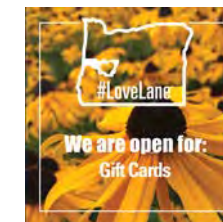


Despite a major drop-off in web traffic beginning in mid-March, web sessions gradually climbed back to near-normal levels by the end of the year. With no paid media pointing to the website, this speaks to the value of a strong investment in Search Engine Optimization and comprehensive listing content for the destination as nearly all traffic was driven by organic search.

## Creative & Content

A strong library of creative assets made it possible to respond quickly to the COVID crisis and deploy content appropriate to each stage of reopening Lane County. Creative focused on igniting community pride and supplying our local partners and businesses with assets, while a strong content plan aimed to instill confidence with locals and residents and communicate what new protocols and guidelines to expect at local businesses and in our parks and outdoor spaces.

### #LoveLane



## Instilling Confidence



## What's Open







## TOURISM MARKETING

GO campaign assets have served Travel Lane County well over the past few years and FY20 began with this campaign being used in limited applications throughout the fall and early winter. A new leisure campaign was under development in late winter, however the pandemic created a need to implement an entirely new strategy to coordinate with the Governor's stay at home order and the phased reopening of the state.

Leisure marketing through earned media was focused on placement goals in top tier domestic publications and international publications. Our top tier stories supported our key campaign messaging and themes set by our content team.

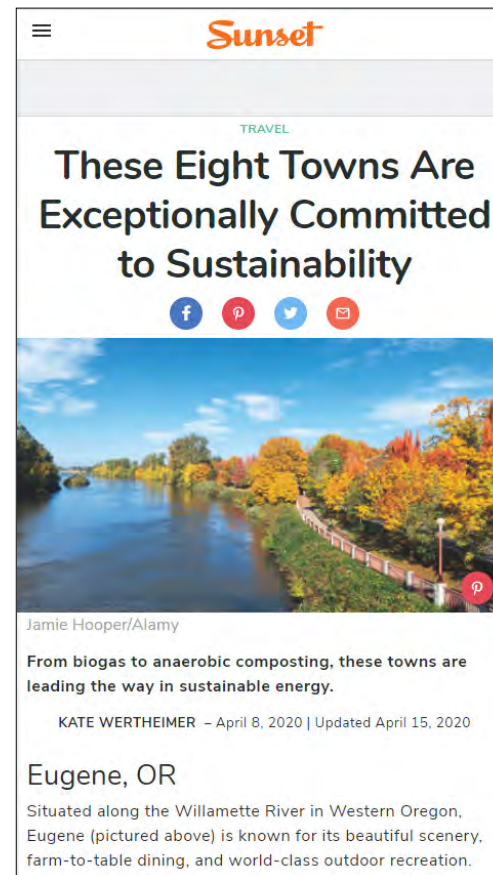
Connection with leisure travelers and local residents continues to grow. Storytelling and engagement, through our social media channels and blogs, attracted 57% more followers over the fiscal year. Social connections now total more than 254,000.

## Earned Media

70 Million  
Impressions

64 Articles

\$2.3 Million  
Estimated Value



19

Top tier stories secured

32

Story placements in  
international publications

4.5 Million

Print advertising  
impressions

5.9 Million

Digital advertising  
impressions

273,385

Digital advertising  
clicks

5.9 Million

Social media reach



## DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Destination development activities continued to focus on rural communities throughout Lane County. Leveraging support and leadership from Travel Oregon, our culinary and agritourism work featured a fall event inviting participants to visit South Willamette Valley Food Trail stops for a chance to win prizes. Working with our partners at the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce and the Oregon Coast Visitors Association, the Central Coast Food Trail moved forward with the formation of a steering committee, meetings and workshops.

The McKenzie Chamber received a grant from the Willamette Valley Visitors Association to design gateway/wayfinding signage and local firm Funk/Levis was chosen to develop design options.

We strengthened our connections with Willamette National Forest public lands managers, made progress on State Scenic Bikeway designation for the Aufderheide and worked with our partners to install the first of the “Connect Lane” bike route signs.

Important infrastructure and economic recovery work continue throughout the county. Staff participated in plans for Link Lane public transportation service from Eugene to Florence, Oregon21 car-free transportation planning, the development of the Oakridge transportation system plan and are involved in recovery committee work in McKenzie River, Oakridge and Cottage Grove.

To fill the last missing piece in our globally recognized status as Track Town USA, we continued to work with the Springfield Community Development Corporation and City of Springfield on developing a Springfield Indoor Track, Sports and Event Center in Glenwood.







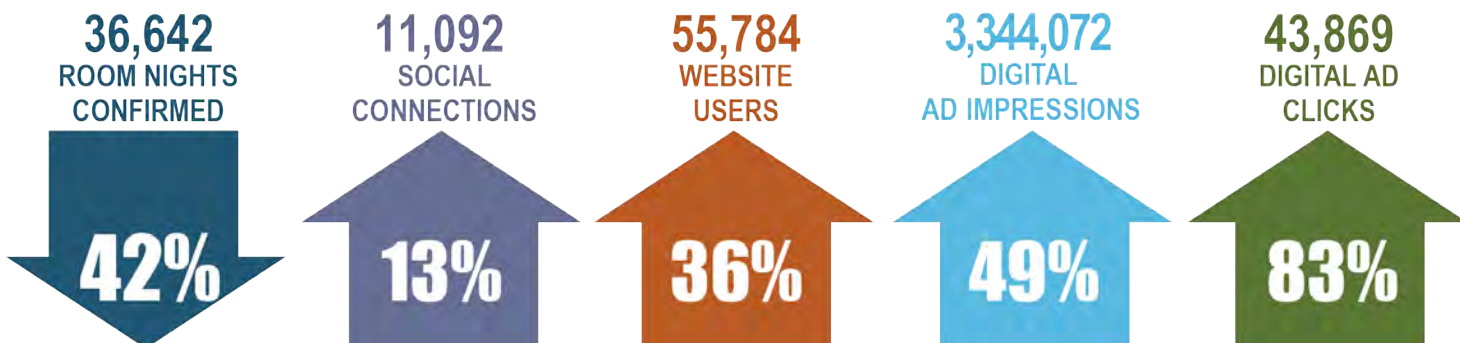
## CONVENTION AND SPORTS MARKETING

Education, Faith and Agriculture were strong markets for Travel Lane County as we began FY20 with educational conferences, several smaller medical events and a variety of faith conferences and retreats. In March, Lane County Community & Economic Development and the City of Eugene joined Travel Lane County in contributing significant resources to bring a signature wine conference to the community before everything was canceled or postponed due to COVID-19.

Updated digital guides were readied for convention and sports event planners to engage with our region's resources and plan exciting events during spring and summer 2020. Unfortunately, the pandemic eliminated large gatherings and that meant no group business in the region for the final third of the fiscal year.

Many events transitioned to a virtual format, others were rescheduled for a future year and some were canceled. Two of the most significant events to be rescheduled were the U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Track and Field (TrackTown20) and Oregon 21. Lane County will be brimming with excitement for the Olympic Trials in June 2021 and the World Athletics Championships, now Oregon22, in July of 2022. Conventions, meetings and other sports events continue to book for 2021 and beyond.

Area lodging partners continued working toward adding rooms to local inventory while others made investments in renovations. Tru by Hilton, The Gordon and an expansion of the Best Western Greentree will come online in the second half of 2020. Meretè property transitions included the change in the Holiday Inn Eugene/Springfield to Holiday Inn Express Eugene-Springfield, and the Holiday Inn Express to La Quinta Eugene-Springfield.







## STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

Prior to the pandemic, partnerships were tracking well against the prior fiscal year as more than 600 partners, including 56 new partners, were actively engaged with the organization. Invoicing for dues was made optional in the face of the pandemic, and efforts to support partners became a primary focus in the organization's work to coordinate actions with the phased reopening process. A COVID resource blog was established and communications were adjusted to provide weekly industry updates. These updates were actively accessed by partners, as evidenced by a 38% open rate.

Training opportunities were made available to partners during the first half of the fiscal year, while additional training focused on assisting partners prepare for reopening during the COVID pandemic. Continuation of an industry vlog/blog series featured how restaurants and lodging businesses had adapted to the reopening guidelines.

Coordination with our chambers of commerce began with sponsorship of business after hours events in Florence and Oakridge and was enhanced throughout the spring as we worked together to develop the #LoveLaneBiz resources to keep the public aware of business reopening activities, develop reopening resource guides and expand the success of #LoveLane campaign. #LoveLaneBiz also included the creation of business and customer pledges with a focus on patience, respect and thoughtfulness.

### Earned Media

9.3 Million Impressions

116 Articles

\$27,605 Estimated Value







## 2020 OFFICERS

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Eugene

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Territorial Seed Company  
Cottage Grove

**Pam Whyte, Treasurer**  
Emge & Whyte  
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Florence

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Eugene

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Eugene

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Lane County

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Marrone Hallinan  
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A. Helfrich Outfitter  
McKenzie River

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Oakridge Lodge & Uptown Bistro  
Oakridge

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Springfield

**Michael Newman**  
In Business Media  
Eugene

**David Penilton**  
America's Hub World Tours  
Eugene

**Sarah Smith**  
InnCline Management  
Eugene

**Pat Straube**  
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Junction City

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McKenzie River

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**Jenny Ulum**  
Obie Companies  
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City of Eugene Mayor  
Eugene

**Jason Williams**  
Hotel Eugene  
Eugene

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Springfield

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City of Eugene - Library, Recreation &  
Cultural Services Department  
Eugene

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Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce  
Eugene

**Bettina Hannigan**  
Florence Chamber of Commerce  
Florence

**Terry Hopkins**  
Oregon Restaurant &  
Lodging Association

**Steve Mokrohisky**  
Lane County Administration  
Lane County

**Austin Ramirez**  
Lane County Community & Economic  
Development  
Lane County

**Vonnie Mikkelsen**  
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce  
Springfield

**Erin Reynolds**  
City of Florence  
Florence - Oregon Coast

**Cathryn Stephens**  
Eugene Airport  
Eugene



**Travel Lane County**  
**Eugene Cascades & Coast**  
541.484.5307 800.547.5445  
EugeneCascadesCoast.org





## SPORTS ADVISORY COUNCIL

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City of Eugene Library  
Recreation and Cultural Services  
Department Chair  
Eugene

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Hilton Garden Inn  
Springfield

**Allan Benavides**

Eugene Emeralds Baseball Club  
Eugene

**Dr. Anthony Cutting**

Active Chiropractic  
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**Mike Duncan**

University of Oregon Athletics - Ticket  
Office  
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**Bob Jagger**

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**Tom Jordan**

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Eugene

**Jeri McPherson**

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**Vonnie Mikkelsen**

Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce  
Springfield

**Ethan Nelson**

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**David Penilton**

America's Hub World Tours  
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**Brittany Quick-Warner**

Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce  
Eugene

**Austin Ramirez**

Lane County Community & Economic  
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Lane County

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TrackTown USA  
Eugene

**Erin Reynolds**

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Florence

**Stephanie Scafa**

City of Eugene  
Eugene

**Tony Scurto**

Lane Education Service District  
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**Rich Spurlin**

Eugene Country Club  
Eugene

**Mike Ripley**

Mudslinger Events  
Lane County

**Whitney Wagoner**

University of Oregon, Warsaw Sports  
Marketing Center  
Eugene

**Michael Wargo**

Willamalane Park and Recreation District  
Springfield

**Nancy Webber**

Eugene Civic Alliance  
Eugene

**Kari Westlund**

Travel Lane County  
Lane County

**Thomas Wuest, MD**

Slocum Center for Orthopedics  
& Sports Medicine  
Eugene



**Eugene, Cascades & Coast  
Sports Commission**

541.484.5307 | 800.547.5445  
EugeneCascadesCoastSports.org





# TRAVEL LANE COUNTY STAFF

## Administration

**Kari Westlund**  
President & CEO

**Liz Bocking**  
Vice President of Finance & Administration

## Destination Marketing

**Natalie Inouye**  
Vice President of Destination Marketing

**Jeff Malik**  
Destination Development Manager

## Convention Sales & Marketing

**Juanita Metzler**  
Senior Director, Conventions

**Philis McLennan**  
Director of Conventions & Sports Marketing

**Linda Norris**  
Director of Convention Services

## Eugene Cascades & Coast Sports Commission

**Joey Jewell**  
Senior Director, Sports Commission

**Jessica Joyce**  
Director of Event Operations

**Katie Morton**  
Sports Sales & Marketing Coordinator

## Tourism Sales & Marketing

**Stephen Hoshaw**  
Senior Director, Tourism

**Meg Trendler**  
Director of Tourism Sales

**Julia Voigt**  
Tourism Marketing Coordinator

## Visitor Services

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Visitor Services Manager

**Diana Wells**  
Visitor Center Manager & Retail Buyer

**Holly Claypool**  
Lead Adventure Specialist

**Tiffany Ottem**  
Lead Adventure Specialist

**Crystal Bryan**  
Lead Adventure Specialist

**Emily Scherer**  
Lead Adventure Specialist

**Janet Auxier**  
Adventure Specialist

## Integrated Marketing

**Emily Forsha**  
Vice President of Integrated Marketing

**Taj Morgan**  
Director of Content Strategy

**Melanie Griffin**  
Content Manager

## Stakeholder Relations

**Andy Vobora**  
Vice President of Stakeholder Relations

**Maxine Walton**  
Director of Partnership Development

**Hayley Radich**  
Partner Services Manager



Travel Lane County  
Eugene Cascades & Coast  
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Sports Commission



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