



# Message from the Chairman

Dear LHVB Partner,

As many of you know, 2019 not only concluded a decade of growth for the LHVB, but it was also a year of great success. Room tax collections exceeded projections, allowing the Board of Directors to approve more than \$200,000 in additional funding that went toward highly-visible branded summer and winter campaigns in the D.C. market. Occupancy rates increased from 2018 and state impact studies suggest a continued trend toward record-setting impact figures for the region.

The LHVB staff and Board of Directors completed a strategic planning initiative, laying out the roadmap for bureau efforts for the next one to three years. Part of the outline included objectives to be a recognizable, well-respected leader in the tourism industry, to be accessible to visitors and partners and to accomplish a more visible physical presence.

I am pleased to report that the bureau started to address these objectives immediately with the purchase of a new building located in Ligonier. This property will allow for the expansion of the LHVB office space and staff, a visitor center space located directly on the Diamond, space to expand retail sales, and, most importantly, visibility to residents, visitors, and all of our regional tourism assets. The new office will put the LHVB on the map as a resource and strong force in the community, strengthening the position of the LHVB for years to come.

In addition to a new building, the Laurel Highlands received a new recognition – a BIG one! In 2019, Travel Lemming recognized the Laurel Highlands as one of 30 emerging destinations in the world for 2020. Plus, the region was voted in the top 5 for readers' choice, and the Laurel Highlands was the only U.S. destination to make the list.

These exciting efforts and developments in 2019 will serve as a catalyst for bigger and better initiatives set to launch in 2020 and onward. The future of the organization is bright, the Laurel Highlands brand is strong, and the staff is exceptional, thanks to the support and partnership of the tourism businesses within the community and the outstanding visitor experience they provide. Thank you all for your continued commitment to making the Laurel Highlands an inspiring destination of choice.

Laurel Highlands

Sincerely,

Eric Mauck | Chairman, LHVB Board of Directors



From Fallingwater's UNESCO World Heritage inscription to the continued celebration of all things Fred Rogers, there was no shortage of exciting news to share with the travel media in 2019.

LHVB public relations collaborated with many regional tourism partners to share, extend, and enhance the region's tourism news. Media events included attending media missions in Toronto, New York City, and Richmond, Va., as well as hosting 45 media guests throughout the year.



26 HOSTED PRESS VISITS



1,740 PUBLISHED STORIES

FODEISTIED STORIES

• 2 Billion
Digital
Impressions



12.7 Million
Print
Impressions



2019 TOTAL PUBLICITY VALUE \$4.2 MILLION

## Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands Wins Emerging Destination Award as Top 30 Place to Travel in 2020

In late 2019, the Laurel Highlands region was voted one of the top 30 emerging travel destinations on the planet for 2020 - one of only four U.S. destinations! The annual awards honoring trending destinations were published on the site TravelLemming.com, which promotes emerging destinations around the world as a solution to overtourism.

Winners were selected by a panel of 30 of the most popular travel bloggers in the industry, who collectively sport more than 12 million followers on social media. The Laurel Highlands region was nominated for the award by The Pennsylvania Tourism Office/VisitPA.





In 2019, the LHVB continued implementation of a strategic, integrated three-year marketing plan developed by Pittsburgh-based Red House Communications. This strategy directs the marketing efforts to uniquely target visitors to the Laurel Highlands based on generational travel trends and behaviors, geographic location and medium. Advertisements with unique messaging for all ages and interests allowed us to showcase all the region has to offer.

## Target Markets

Cleveland, OH | Columbus, OH | Pittsburgh, PA | Baltimore, MD | Washington, D.C.

\$1,078,331

2019 Marketing Programming & Promotions Budget \*excludes county tourism grant program expense



## Including Seasonal Campaigns in the following Media Outlets:

- TV Commercials
- Radio Commercials
- Print Ad Placements
- Billboards & Outdoor
- Social Media Advertising
- Display Advertising
- Search Engine Marketing
- Native Advertising
- Spotify & Pandora
- YouTube & OTT Video
- TripAdvisor
- Influencer Campaigns

## Website Statistics 2019

SESSIONS: 1 million PAGEVIEWS: 2 million

66% INCREASE IN BLOG TRAFFIC FROM 2018 TO 2019

### Social Stats

64,200 Likes



14,000 Followers



2.5 M

Video Views



**12,000** Followers



**34,000** Monthly Viewers



# Laurel Highlands Pour Tour | September 2019

After months of research, planning and development, LHVB Marketing Staff launched the Laurel Highlands Pour Tour, a celebration of the region's beer, wine, and spirits producers. The Pour Tour organizes 31 craft beverage makers with a passport designed to reward visitors for making a purchase at each location, incentivizing with various prizes along the journey. In addition to the printed passport and stickers, the Pour Tour rollout included a dedicated website, iPhone/Android App, social media accounts and an influencer unboxing campaign to get people interested in starting the Pour Tour.

Since launching, 30,000 passports have been printed to keep up with the high demand. More than 12,500 stickers are reported to have been given out by partners, each indicating a purchase. The Pour Tour website has been visited 60,000 times with 4,000 passports requested digitally. The App has 800 monthly active users and climbing. LHVB looks to continue the Pour Tour into 2021 and beyond with new partnerships, advertising, and initiatives to keep the program growing and evolving.







# 2019 Marketing Summit

More than 160 marketers, small business owners and executives joined LHVB for the 9th annual Digital Marketing Summit on Nov. 8, 2019 at the Fred Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College.

Guests included marketing professionals from RedShift and 1st Team Advertising as well as influencers Courtney Brennan and Kalyn Letizia to present on a variety of topics from SEO and Digital Marketing to Body Language and Instagram Makeovers.





In 2019, the LHVB continued its efforts as an inclusive partnership model, allowing for more businesses in the region to become a part of the story of tourism in the Laurel Highlands and to share a mutual resource for visitors. The sales team has diverse marketing opportunities and even produced a podcast filled with information to inspire people headed to the Laurel Highlands for a getaway. Louise Bates, director of partnership development, and Jim Hamerski, brochure distribution coordinator, tag team this department for success.



54 NEW PARTNERS

3,367

TOURISM BUSINESS LISTINGS

84

BROCHURE RACKS

MANAGED BY THE LHVB IN 5 COUNTIES

60,000+

PARTNER BROCHURES

122,000

**DESTINATION GUIDES**DISTRIBUTED IN RACKS



# Laurel Highlands Happenings

12 Shows Recorded | 34 Guests Featured | 24 Sponsorships





Group tours continue to be a strong motivator for travel in the Laurel Highlands. We continue to expand and explore new markets, such as Toronto, in order to engage all markets: motorcoach, leisure travel, homeschool, wedding, and small-to-medium size meetings and conferences. This department, lead by Stacey Magda, director of tourism development, provides an opportunity to showcase our region as a whole and include partners who invest to advance their own marketing objectives.

# By the Numbers



## 7 GROUP TOUR TRAVEL SHOWS.

Meeting with more than 200 tour operators and 850 group leaders



### 4 STUDENT & HOMESCHOOL SHOWS

Educating more than 12,000 homeschool families

## SMALL MEETINGS & CORPORATE EVENTS

Connecting with 45 meeting planners



#### SALES MISSIONS

7 partner organizations | 9 group tour companies



- ✓ **12** Unique Itineraries
  - Featuring 184 group-friendly sites
  - Reaching more than 965 tour operators and planners
- ✓ 6 FAM Tours & Site Visits
- ✓ **2,339** Welcome Bags Distributed





**1,796** Motorcoaches | **88,000** visiting with seniors, students and niche groups from 29 States and 9 Countries



**250** guides printed and distributed to tour operators across the country, featuring 13 multi-day trip itinerary ideas









#### **Annual Dinner**

Hosted at the Laurel Mountain Ski Lodge on Oct. 8, the annual dinner paid tribute to the region and the LHVB's 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary. Partners, guests and scholarship recipients had a great time catching up with old friends, meeting new people, and celebrating the vibrant tourism community of the Laurel Highlands.

## 2019 Champions of Tourism Award Winners

#### TOURISM PATHFINDER OF THE YEAR

Lisa and Keith Welch, Tall Pines Distillery

#### TOURISM EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Dean Simpson, Marketing Manager for Touchstone

#### TOURISM TRAILBLAZER OF THE YEAR

Donna Holdorf, Executive Director, National Road Heritage Corridor

# Congratulations to our Tourism Scholarship Winners!

Thanks to the incredibly generous donations to the 2018 annual dinner's silent auction, the LHVB was able to present a \$1,500 scholarship to two very deserving students majoring in hospitality and tourism. Congratulations to Chelsey Gasparovic and Hannah Long!







# **FINANCIALS**

# LAUREL HIGHLANDS d/b/a LAUREL HIGHLANDS VISITORS BUREAU

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION | December 31, 2019

# **ASSETS**

NJJE I J		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents Accounts Receivable Prepaid Expenses Inventory Room Tax Receivables Restricted Room Tax Receivable Restricted Cash and Cash Equivalents Total Current Assets	\$ 1,503,478 59,330 78,213 2,885 320,976 624,209 4,445,879	\$ 7,034,970
NONCURRENT ASSETS		
Security Deposits	423	
Land, Buildings,	E00 101	
Improvements & Equipment (Net) Total Noncurrent Assets	590,181	590,604
TOTAL ASSETS	_	\$ 7,625,574
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	_	
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable Sales Tax Payable Grants Payable Deferred Revenue Current Portion of Mortgage Payable Refundable Room Tax Advances Total Current Liabilities	\$ 191,856 23 127,870 45,207 21,943 5,070,088	\$ 5,456,987
LONG TERM LIABILITIES		
Mortgage Payable	_	418,057
Total Liabilities	_	5,875,044
NET ASSETS		
Without Donor Restrictions - Designated by the Board for - Marketing Initiatives Operations Fund	551,369 1,199,161	4750570
With Donor Restrictions		1,750,530 0
Total Net Assets	_	1,750,530
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	_	\$ 7,625,574

# LAUREL HIGHLANDS d/b/a LAUREL HIGHLANDS VISITORS BUREAU

STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES December 31, 2019

MADISTING DROMOTIONAL ADVERTISING	Program Expenses	Management and General	Total
MARKETING, PROMOTIONAL, ADVERTISING Association Dues & Memberships	\$ 4,154	\$ 7,555	\$ 11,709
Community Relations	\$ 4,154 131	\$ 7,555 8,316	\$ 11,709 8,447
CRM System		0,310	25,039
Miscellaneous	25,039	195	23,039 388
Printing	193	5,261	140,055
Research/Subscriptions	134,794	6,055	25,248
Travel	19,193	6,936	23,246 14,174
Advertising	7,778	25,444	859,992
Brochure Distribution	834,548	25,444	19,373
Conferences, Seminars, Other	19,372	891	34,207
Consumer Shows	33,316	617	40,939
Events, Marketing, Meetings, Tours	40,322	338	67,943
General Promotion	67,605	2,414	56,120
Postage	53,706	(2,348)	28,660
Visitor Center Support	31,008		16,274
OPERATIONS	16,274	0	10,274
	0	7,325	7,325
Contributions & Sponsorships Fees	0 7	8,253	8,260
Insurance	•	2,228	7,872
Lobbying/Legislative	5,644 0	9,264	9,264
Miscellaneous Operating	192	1,723	1,915
Meetings		2,517	2,655
Professional Development	138 0	3,742	3,742
Professional Services	6,157	41,063	47,220
Office Expense (Services, equipment, 1T, rent, supplies)	25,416	71,517	96,933
Bad Debts	23,410	3,075	3,075
PERSONNEL EXPENSES	U	5,075	5,075
Recruitment	0	249	240
	420,338	165,954	249
Salaries & Wages Pension	12,867	5,530	586,292
Insurance	42,986	27,998	18,397
Other Benefits	5,806	3,344	70,984
Taxes	39,317	15,087	9,150
	3,671	6,870	54,404 10.541
DEPRECIATION AND AMORTIZATION	3,071	0,070	10,541
COUNTY GRANT PROGRAMS	400 700	0	400.722
Fayette County Grants	480,722	0	480,722
Westmoreland County Grants	474,542	0	474,542
Visitor Center Grants	82,480		82,480
	\$ 2,887,716	\$ 436,874	\$ 3,324,590
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# LAUREL HIGHLANDS d/b/a LAUREL HIGHLANDS VISITORS BUREAU

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS
December 31, 2019

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
REVENUE, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT			
Fayette County Administration Fees Somerset County Administration Fees	\$ 634,881 417,465	\$ 0 0	\$ 634,881 417,465
Westmoreland County Administration Fees	848,732	0	848,732
Brochure Distribution	68,418	0	68,418
Destination Guide	138,190	0	138,190
Basic Marketing Packages	105,534	0	105,534
Seasonal Marketing	23,485	0	23,485
Co-Op Advertising	63,872	0	63,872
Events/Summits	37,196	0	37,196
Miscellaneous Operating	7,171	0	7,171
Interest Income	12,220	0	12,220
Fayette County Grant Program	480,722	0	480,722
Westmoreland County Grant Program	474,542	0	474,542
Visitor Center Grants	82,570	0	82,570
Westmoreland Heritage/Informational Centers	500	0	500
Online Promotional Sales	1,055	0	1,055
Cost of Goods Sold Online	(594)	0	(594)
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	0	0	0
TOTAL REVENUE, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT	3,395,959	0	3,395,959
EXPENSES Program Expenses			
County-Directed Grant Programs	1,093,694	0	1,093,694
Regional Marketing Programs	825,247	0	825,247
Regional Economic Initiative Programs	968,775	0	968,775
Program Expenses	2,887,716	0	2,887,716
Management and General	436,874	0	436,874
Fundraising	0	0	0
TOTAL EXPENSES	3,324,590	0	3,324,590
*INCREASE/DECREASE IN NET ASSETS	71,369	0	71,369
NET ASSETS - BEGINNING	1,679,161	0	1,679,161
NET ASSETS - ENDING	\$ 1,750,530	\$0	\$ 1,750,530





As the administrator for the Fayette, Somerset, and Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Programs, the LHVB works with each county's Board of Commissioners to provide organizational assistance for each program, collect and maintain necessary documents and assist each tourism grant review committee. The grant review committees evaluate criteria and applications, select recipients, and award grant funds. The annual tourism grant programs are funded by a portion of the room tax dollars collected each month and are unique to each county.

## Fayette County

Commissioners:

Vincent Vicites · Dave Lohr · Angela Zimmerlink

#### 2019 Grant Review Committee Members:

- Dawn Rice
   Warren Hugher
- Warren Hughes
- · Sean Sypolt

\$471K

\$585K

51 GRANTS AWARDED

**39 GRANTS AWARDED** 

# Somerset County

Commissioners:

Gerald Walker · Pat Terlingo · John Vatavuk · Pamela Tokar-Ickes

· Tammy Stenson

· Ann Nemanic

#### 2019 Grant Review Committee Members:

- · Commissioner Pat Terlingo
- · Eric Mauck

· John Weir

· George Coyle

Kristin Ecker

Westmoreland County

Commissioners:

Gina Cerilli · Ted Kopas · Charles Anderson

2019 Grant Review Committee Members:

- · Bob Boscarino
- · Mary Lou Hugus
- · Michael Simons

· Ann Nemanic

· Carol Wentzel

\$368K 42 GRANTS AWARDED

> \$16.3 MILLION

INVESTED TO DATE INTO THE REGION'S TOURISM INDUSTRY THROUGH THE TOURISM GRANT PROGRAMS:



#### **Publications**



COUPON BOOK
Distribution: 25,000

LAUREL HIGHLANUS
TARRETURE
TO THE TOTAL TO T

DESTINATION GUIDE Distribution: 175,000



CALENDAR OF EVENTS Seasonal Distribution: 13,000



HEADLINES NEWSLETTER
Distribution: 1,000 Quarterly

#### 2019 LHVB Photo Contest

More than 600 entries were submitted for the 2019 Laurel Highlands Annual Photo Contest. Photos were submitted in four categories: people, plants and animals, festivals and events, and places. The annual Photo Contest has long served as an important resource by providing a fresh inventory of photos from across the region to help support all of the LHVB's marketing initiatives.

# 2019 Legislative FAM Tour

In April 2019, the LHVB was honored to host a delegation from Pennsylvania's House Tourism & Recreational Development Committee for a three-day familiarization tour to the region. The delegates were given experiences in our three counties and walked away with a renewed appreciation and firm support for tourism in the Laurel Highlands.

# Westmoreland County Visitor Information Center

With the support of the Westmoreland County Commissioners, a new Visitor Center opened at the busy I-70/I-76 intersection near New Stanton in the Spring of 2019. The facility not only enables Westmoreland County to showcase the county's specific tourism assets, but allows Visitor Information Counselors to show the connectivity to the greater Laurel Highlands region.







#### LHVB Staff 2019

#### ANN NEMANIC

**Executive Director** 

#### **GEORGIA ROBINSKY**

Senior Director of Finance & Grant Administration

#### KRISTIN ECKER

Senior Director of Marketing & Project Management

#### JARED BUNDY

Director of Digital Marketing

#### ANNA WELTZ

Director of Public Relations & Community Outreach

#### STACEY MAGDA

Director of Tourism Development

#### **LOUISE BATES**

Director of Partnership Development

## RACHEL ROEHRIG

Administrative & Grant Assistant

#### **ALLYSON NULL**

Marketing Communications Coordinator

#### **KAYLEIGH DUMAS**

Marketing Assistant

#### JESSICA PETROVICH

Westmoreland Heritage Director

#### JIM HAMERSKI

**Brochure Distribution Coordinator** 

PATRICIA HOEHN, Information Counselor, Ohiopyle CESAR ALVIAR, Information Counselor, Farmington SUZIE MORRIS, Information Counselor, Farmington KIM GREENBAUM, Information Counselor, Farmington REBECCA THIEL, Information Counselor, New Stanton LINDA KUBAS, Information Counselor, New Stanton DIANE HESHIZER, Information Counselor, New Stanton

## Board of Directors (as of Dec. 31, 2019)

Eric Mauck, Vice Chairman | Seven Springs Mountain Resort

Muriel Nuttall, Vice-Chair | Fayette County Commissioners' Appointee

Karen Post, Treasurer | The Progress Fund

Michael Simons, Secretary | SpringHill Suites Latrobe-Pittsburgh

**Ron Aldom** | Somerset County Commissioners' Appointee

**Ken Bisbee** | Ohiopyle State Park

Stephen Clark | National Park Service

Liz Diesel | Glades Pike Winery

**Tom Guiher** | Living Treasures Wild Animal Park

Alicia Henry | Westmoreland County Commissioners' Appointee

**Lladel Lichty** | Friends of Flight 93 National Memorial

Liz McCarty | Laurel Highlands River Tours & Outdoor Center

Bryan Perry | Allegheny Trail Alliance

Clinton Piper | Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater

Dawn Rice | Nemacolin Woodlands Resort

Theresa Gay Rohall | Compass Inn Museum

Joel White | Camp Christian





## Community Engagement

The LHVB staff strives to be involved and engaged in our region. From serving on committees and boards to volunteering throughout the Laurel Highlands, the LHVB is always honored to support our local communities.

Ligonier Valley Historical Society • Laughlintown Community Center • Westmoreland County Parks & Recreation Citizens Advisory Board • Stahlstown Flax Scutching Festival Board of Directors • Ligonier Valley Chamber of Commerce • Destination: Greater Pittsburgh • Heartland Travel Showcase • Westmoreland County Historical Society • Great Allegheny Passage Bike Trail • Jacob's Creek Watershed Association • Plant-A-Tree at Flight 93 • Fayette County Chamber of Commerce • Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce • Somerset County Chamber of Commerce • Mon-Valley Consortium • Ligonier Valley PBW • Historic Hanna's Town • Reenactment Volunteer • Allegheny Trail Alliance • Ohiopyle Biking Club • Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape • Westmoreland County Food Bank • Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance Board of Directors • Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor Board of Directors • Leadership Westmoreland • Ligonier Valley Steering Committee





# Vision Statement

The Laurel Highlands will be globally recognized as a destination offering a unique opportunity to engage the mind and senses through stunning architecture, uncommon heritage, exceptional outdoor recreation and noteworthy arts and culture.

