

go LAUREL HIGHLANDS

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



[GOLAURELHIGHLANDS.COM](https://golaurelhighlands.com)

Dear Partners and Friends,

What a great year it's been for the Laurel Highlands. Even amid national economic uncertainty and a slowdown in travel spending, 2025 proved that people are still drawn to the beauty, adventure, and hospitality that define our region. Smart, targeted marketing and the incredible experiences offered by our partners helped keep visitation strong, resulting in an 8% increase in lodging tax revenue. As you read through this annual report, you will see many of the reasons the Laurel Highlands is such a special place, and I would like to highlight just a few of the successes that helped shape the year.

This success starts with our partners. In 2025, GO Laurel Highlands worked with 538 active partners and maintained a remarkable 90 percent retention rate, including 46 Peak Partners and 47 Supporting Partners. We are grateful for every business and organization that helps make the Laurel Highlands such a welcoming and memorable destination. Across Fayette, Somerset, and Westmoreland counties, a record \$2.96 million in County Tourism Grants were awarded supporting our projects that enhance visitor experiences and strengthen our local tourism economy.

Programs like the Laurel Highlands Pour Tour continue to deliver strong results, generating an estimated \$3.6 million for the craft beverage community. And as we celebrate America's 250th anniversary, I encourage you to visit the many diverse historic sites throughout the Laurel Highlands as we mark this milestone in 2026.

Our marketing and communications team continued to find new ways to share the Laurel Highlands story. The Laurel Highlands Hangout winter promotion brought 10 content creators to nearly two dozen locations across the region, generating more than 1.5 million video views and 1.1 million impressions and earning a Renaissance Award from the Pittsburgh chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. In all, our social platforms reached 19.2 million users and delivered more than 36 million impressions, while earned media coverage highlighted everything from Frank Lloyd Wright architecture to outdoor adventure and the seasonal experiences that make the Laurel Highlands such a special place to visit.

Collaborations with VisitPittsburgh, VisitPA, and the Pennsylvania Restaurant and Lodging Association strengthened our presence across the state. Partnerships with the Pittsburgh Steelers and West Virginia University introduced new audiences to the Laurel Highlands, while campaigns in the Washington DC, Baltimore, Cleveland, and Columbus markets and new digital displays at Pittsburgh International Airport brought our message to millions of potential visitors.

None of this progress happens without the dedication of the creative and talented GO Laurel Highlands staff and the continued support of the commissioners in Fayette, Somerset, and Westmoreland counties. Their leadership helps us showcase the very best of our region.

Thank you for your support of GO Laurel Highlands and for helping us share the story of this very special region.

Warm regards,

Theresa Day Rohall

Executive Director, Ligonier Valley Historical Society/Compass Inn Museum
Board Chair, GO Laurel Highlands



MISSION STATEMENT

The Laurel Highlands works to enhance the economic growth and quality of life for the area by serving its community as a collaborative leader in the promotion and development of the region as a preferred tourism destination.

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.

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Resilient Growth:

STRATEGIC MARKETING EXPANDS THE REACH OF THE LAUREL HIGHLANDS IN 2025

In 2025, GO Laurel Highlands demonstrated resilience and strategic focus in its tourism marketing efforts. Despite national economic uncertainty and a slowdown in travel spending, targeted, data-driven marketing kept visitation strong, contributing to an 8% increase in lodging tax revenue across the region.

Active memberships with VisitPittsburgh, VisitPA, and the Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association (PRLA), reinforce GO Laurel Highlands' reputation as one of Pennsylvania's leading destination marketing organizations. Nationally, the organization attended industry-leading conferences including U.S. Travel Association's ESTO, Destinations International's Marketing & Communications Summit, and the Simpleview Summit. Senior Director of Creative Strategy Laura Argenbright presented sessions on Harnessing the Power of the NFL Fanbase at the ESTO and Simpleview events.

Digital advertising continued to outperform industry benchmarks. A transition to Orange 142, a nationally respected tourism-focused digital media firm, strengthened campaign performance and expanded reach in priority visitor markets.

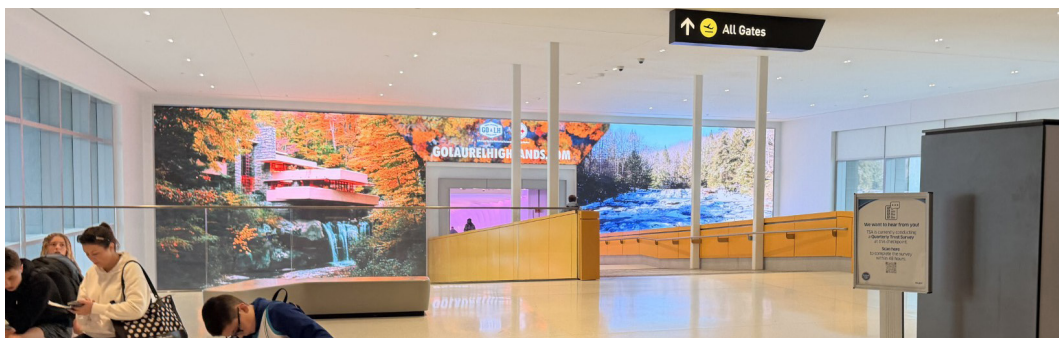
The Laurel Highlands also gained significant broadcast exposure including a five-day segment on "Good Morning Washington," showcasing summer experiences. The segments reached the Washington, D.C. metro market,

with additional digital coverage on affiliated ABC stations in Baltimore and Pittsburgh.

Leveraging state co-op funding, GO Laurel Highlands introduced several high-impact marketing tactics. A fleet of branded vehicles appeared at five events across the Washington, D.C. and Baltimore markets, supported by Gas Station TV advertising and digital mobile trucks activated during a Steelers vs. Ravens game in Baltimore.

Sports marketing expanded our audience with the Pittsburgh Steelers sponsorship and a partnership with West Virginia University that strengthened our presence in the Morgantown market including students, fans, and visiting families.

Our owned and earned media channels delivered strong results while strategic media outreach and familiarization tours secured high-value national and niche travel coverage highlighting signature experiences across the Laurel Highlands.





WEBSITE STATS:

1M

SESSIONS

823K

ACTIVE USERS

51.25%

ENGAGEMENT RATE



TOP CITIES FOR WEBSITE USERS

Pittsburgh, PA
New York, NY
Philadelphia, PA
Ashburn, VA
Columbus, OH

Baltimore, MD
Washington, D.C.
Greensburg, PA
Cleveland, OH
Chicago, IL

DIGITAL

DISPLAY/NATIVE/PPC

17.4M Impressions

206K Clicks

EXPEDIA/OTA MARKETING

1.5M Impressions

2K Room Nights

\$678.3K in Revenue

SOCIAL

Advertising

13.6M IMPRESSIONS

429K CLICKS

3.14% CTR

Organic

133.9K FOLLOWERS

36M IMPRESSIONS

19.2M REACH



Building Bridges

WITH THE PITTSBURGH MARKET

Strengthening ties with the Pittsburgh market remained a key priority for GO Laurel Highlands in 2025 as the region continued to build meaningful partnerships that expand tourism opportunities and deepen connections with one of our most important visitor bases.

GO Laurel Highlands continued to collaborate closely with VisitPITTSBURGH and is an active group tour partner with Pittsburgh and its Countryside. These partnerships position the Laurel Highlands as a natural extension of the Pittsburgh visitor experience.

Visibility in the Pittsburgh region was also elevated through high-impact digital marketing placements at Pittsburgh International Airport. GO Laurel Highlands maintained a “spectacular” digital display on the departures side of the terminal and a digital billboard on the arrivals side. The organization also completed its second year as A Preferred Vacation Destination of the Pittsburgh Steelers and participated in activations that grew our visitor database, increased social engagement, and expanded brand awareness.

GO Laurel Highlands strengthened professional connections through active membership with various groups such as Downtown Greater Pittsburgh and the Public Relations Society of America – Pittsburgh Chapter, partnering to host an informative panel discussion at Saint Vincent College. Participation in Pittsburgh Business Exchange events further solidified relationships with western Pennsylvania’s legislators and business leaders.

Together, these initiatives have helped to position the Laurel Highlands as Pittsburgh’s Outdoor Playground.

PITTSBURGH STATS

54,326

WEBSITE USERS

9% of all visitors

4% of all visitor spending

SCHEDULE RELEASE

15.3M Impressions

the highest number for any off-season-specific campaigns

450K Engagements

18,713 E-Newsletter Opt-ins

(75% opt-in rate)

TRAINING CAMP

43k Fans

across 14 open practices

TRAINING CAMP SWEEPSTAKES

1.9M Impressions

26K Link Clicks

4,087 E-Newsletter Opt-ins

GAME DAY

662k Fans

in stadium signage reach





The Laurel Highlands continued to capture national attention in 2025 as major travel and lifestyle outlets highlighted the region's unique blend of outdoor adventure, architectural heritage and small-town charm.

GO Laurel Highlands 2025 Connections

216 Published Article
Contributions/Assists

- 130 Laurel Highlands locations
- 580 partner touchpoints

4.27B Combined Unique
Monthly Visitors

for the sites that those stories appeared on

\$39.56M Total Ad Value

61 Visits by
journalists/content creators

5.425M Combined Followers for
Content Creators Used

INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP

GO Laurel Highlands Director of Public Relations Eric Knopsnyder became chair of the Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance, strengthening connections between tourism destinations and travel media throughout the region.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

7 of the Coziest Autumn Getaways to Book Now, According to Samantha Brown - *Parade Magazine*

Inside the \$7M project to save Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic masterpiece - *The Washington Post*

Caving Pennsylvania's Laurel Caverns - *Sierra Club magazine*

Uncommon Accommodations - The Cutest, Quaintest and Quirkiest Stays Along the Great Allegheny Passage - *Rails to Trails Magazine*

Trail an "Economic Boon" for Communities (GAP multi-part series) - *The Tribune Democrat* (written by PR director Eric Knopsnyder and Tribune Democrat staff members) *Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association Keystone Media Award - second-place*

WINTER HANGOUT

GO Laurel Highlands expanded its influencer outreach through the Winter Hangout, which brought travel content creators to the region to experience the Laurel Highlands during the snowy season.

Participants documented cross-country skiing on Laurel Ridge, winter hikes and cozy lodging while highlighting craft beverages and dining experiences. Their posts generated more than 1.5 million views across TikTok, Instagram and Facebook.

STRONGER TOGETHER: *Impact Report 2025*

538 Active GO LH Tourism Marketing Partners

60 New Partners

46 Peak Partners

48 Supporting Partners

PARTNER EDUCATION & EVENTS

- 4 Quarterly New Partner/New Employee Orientations
- 2 Educational Sessions:
 - » J1 Visa Program Zoom
 - » (PRLA) Zoom for Restaurant & Lodging Partners
- Zoom Partner Share Session

PRINTED COLLATERAL

- 2,177 Seasonal Happenings Partner Newsletters
- 100,000 Destination Guides
- 30,000 Seasonal Event Calendars
- 74 Unique Partner Brochure/Rack Cards for annual distribution program, and 259,000 out for distribution in the Laurel Highlands
- 5,000 Deals Booklets

DIGITAL

- Monthly partner E-Newsletters - **43.9% average open rate**
- Digital Deals - **1,200 Website Clicks**
- Social Media Paid Partner Ads – **37,313 average reach**
- Consumer eNewsletter Ads - **15 ads, 443 clicks**
- Peak Social Ads – **11,483 Average reach**
- App Push Notifications – **2,475 Average reach**
- Coffee Club - **635 check-ins**



TRAVEL

Director of Partnership Development Kelli Brisbane was on the move, taking the Laurel Highlands on tour to Pittsburgh, Washington, D.C., New York City, Chicago, Erie, and Lancaster — showcasing everything that makes our region a must-visit destination to prospective travelers.

She also traveled to Wisconsin and Erie, PA, connecting with tourism industry leaders from across Pennsylvania, the U.S., and Canada to exchange ideas, share best practices, and bring fresh insights back to benefit our partners and communities.

LAUREL HIGHLANDS POUR TOUR

2025 was a record-breaking year for the Laurel Highlands Pour Tour, with growth across nearly every measure of engagement. The program continues to gain momentum while encouraging patrons to explore craft beverage makers, local eateries, attractions, and small businesses throughout the region.

From sold-out events to record participation and community support, 2025 demonstrated the continued success of the Pour Tour as a signature visitor experience in the region.

Events

Pour Tour Launch Party

(inaugural event) – Yough River Brewing (sold out in 15 minutes)

Pour Tour Pong Tournament Mixer

VooDoo at the Ritz

Meet the Maker Mixer

Tall Pines Distillery

Sunday Funday Mixer

Christian W. Klay Winery and Ridge Runner Distillery

Black and Gold Watch Party Mixer

Four Seasons Brewing

Bonfires, Barrels & Brews

Yinzer Valley Farms (sold-out crowd of 1,025)

The Annual Bonfires, Barrels, and Brews event returned on October 26 at Yinzer Valley Farms and marked another milestone for the program. The outdoor tasting event was the largest to date, welcoming a sold-out crowd of 1,025 guests on a beautiful fall day. Attendees enjoyed samples from 21 craft beverage makers, shopped with 18 artisan vendors, and took part in an afternoon filled with food trucks, live music, caricature portraits, and photo opportunities with animals from Living Treasures Animal Park.

Sponsors - Exelos; Somerset Trust Company; Arnold Palmer Regional Airport; Janney Montgomery Scott; Creenan & Baczkowski PC

Giving Back

\$3,500 was donated to Fayette Friends of Animals, New Kensington Downtown Project, Somerset Humane Society, Arc of Fayette County, and the Lloydsville Fire Department through proceeds from the launch party and mixers.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$3.9M

↑ 30% FROM 2024

TOTAL STICKERS DISTRIBUTED

112,374 (+12%)

TOTAL PASSPORTS DISTRIBUTED

33,000 (+13%)

TOTAL APP STAMP REQUESTS

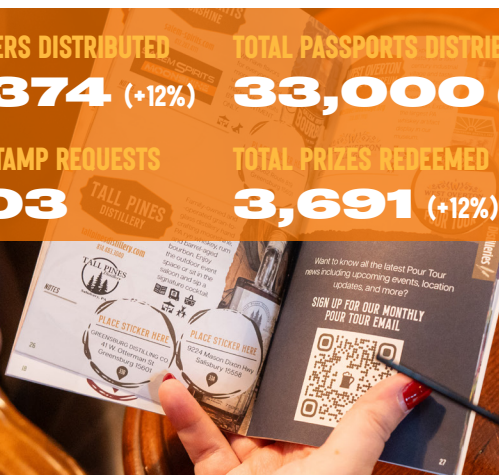
9,503

TOTAL PRIZES REDEEMED

3,691 (+12%)

Pour Tour participants came from

10 U.S. STATES





GO LAUREL HIGHLANDS PARTNERS ACTIVATE MARKETING SUPERPOWERS AT 2025 SPRING SUMMIT

More than 100 partners from across the region came together at the Fred Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College for the 2025 GO Laurel Highlands Spring Summit — an energizing day of insight, collaboration, and momentum for the year ahead.

The program featured a powerhouse lineup of industry leaders, including Sarah Benoit (JB Media Institute and Learn Tourism); Kurt Gingrich and Peter Oblatz (Pittsburgh Steelers); Carissa Parrish (New York City Tourism + Conventions); and Roni Weiss (Travel Unity). Together, they delivered forward-looking strategies on artificial intelligence, digital marketing trends, partnership development, and inclusive travel.

A defining moment of the Summit was a closer look at GO Laurel Highlands' groundbreaking designation as A Preferred Vacation Destination of the Pittsburgh Steelers — the first partnership of its kind for the franchise. This high-impact collaboration continues to elevate the region's visibility and create new opportunities for partners to connect with passionate, travel-ready audiences.

From practical tools to big-picture strategy, partners left equipped to compete, collaborate, and lead. The energy in the room underscored a shared commitment to innovation and growth — and reinforced the collective strength of the Laurel Highlands. The Spring Summit remains a signature investment in partner success, fueling the ideas, relationships, and strategies that drive our region forward.

Sponsors: turnovi; Laurel Valley Graphics; Ohiopyle Vacation Rentals; Seven Mountains; Palmer Products Imaging

2025 ANNUAL DINNER

The GO Laurel Highlands Annual Dinner at Trailside Landing Event Center celebrated tourism leaders across the region.

David and Lillian Cale received the first Laurel Highlands Legacy Award for donating 424 acres that will allow Laurel Caverns to become Pennsylvania's 125th state park and the first underground park in the system.

THE 2025 LAUREL HIGHLANDS CHAMPIONS OF TOURISM:

- Pathfinder of the Year – Fayette County Chamber of Commerce
- Tourism Employee of the Year – Cindie McCracken, O'Shea's Candies

OUR TOURISM SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS:

- Ryan Glagola – Penn State Fayette
- Brooke Martin – Seton Hill University
- Logan Mulheren – Westmoreland County Community College

ANNUAL DINNER SPONSORS:

Snowball Properties; Nemacolin; turnovi; BMS CAT; Highlands Sporting Clays; Living Treasures; Seven Springs Mountain Resort

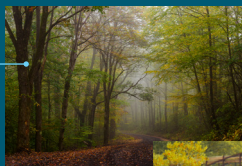


Photo Contest

Chosen from more than 637 entries, first-, second-, and third-place winners in each category of the GO Laurel Highlands 2025 Photo Contest were announced during an awards ceremony held Thursday, Jan. 29, 2026, at the GO Laurel Highlands Office and Visitor Center. Entries were evaluated by professional photographers Doug Michaels, Alex Newill, and Autumn Stankay, along with GO Laurel Highlands videographer/photographer Alex Byers. Images submitted for the contest will be featured in future marketing materials.

LANDSCAPE

- 1) Clare Kaczmarek, Forbes State Forest
- 2) David Glaser, Bushy Run Battlefield
- 3) David Kasuba, Mill Creek Falls, State Game Lands #42

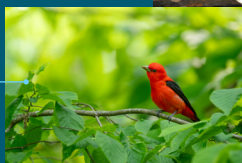


ATTRACTIONS AND EVENTS

- 1) Thomas Bush IV, Kayaker at Ohiopyle
- 2) Denise Eidemiller, Westmoreland County Air Show
- 3) Jeffery Kearns, Flight 93 National Memorial

NATURE

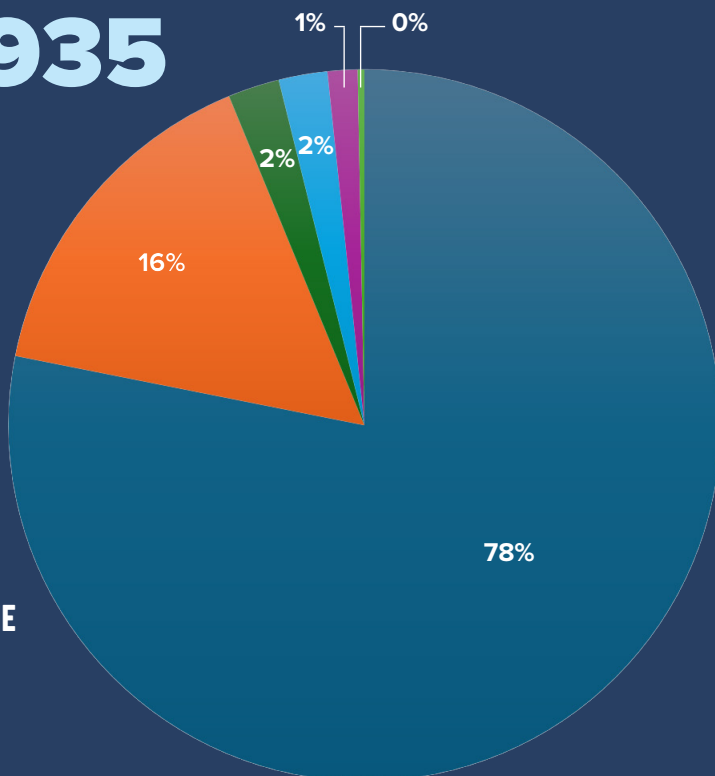
- 1) Alex Busato, Scarlet Tanager
- 2) Carl Thomson, Mink in Jacob's Creek
- 3) Kyle Rose, Bald Eagle





REVENUE \$3,594,935

- LODGING TAX**
\$2,808,493
- PARTNERSHIP AND MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES**
\$563,042
- EVENTS/EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS**
\$84,230
- INVESTMENT & INTEREST INCOME**
\$79,435
- MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONAL**
\$48,872
- ADDITIONAL PROMOTIONS & MERCH. SALES**
\$10,864

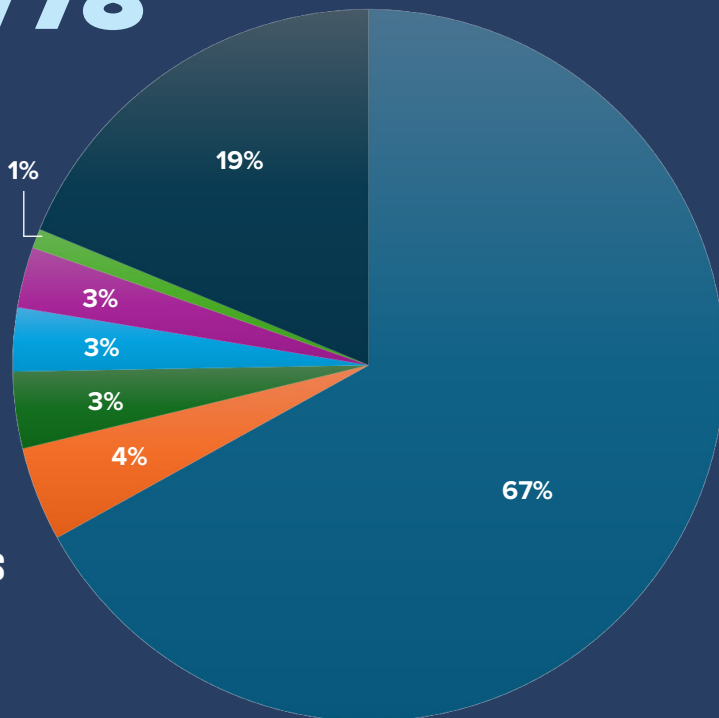


2025

EXPENSE

\$3,578,778

- MARKETING**
\$2,396,106
- PUBLIC RELATIONS**
\$152,999
- PARTNERSHIP AND
MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES**
\$124,789
- GENERAL PROMOTIONS**
\$103,268
- EVENTS/EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS**
\$98,793
- CONSUMER TRAVEL SHOWS**
\$31,270
- MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONAL**
\$671,552



GRANT PROGRAM

As the administrator for the Fayette, Somerset, and Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Programs, GO Laurel Highlands 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.

2025 TOURISM GRANTS:
January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025 implementation period

Fayette

COMMISSIONERS:
Scott Dunn · Vincent A. Vicites · Dave Lohr

GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS:
Chris Baran, Warren C. Hughes, Jr., Ann Nemanic, Tammy Stenson, Devan White

# OF GRANTS AWARDED	TOTALING
55	\$1,221,493

Somerset

COMMISSIONERS:
Brian K. Fochtman · Irvin H. Kimmel Jr · Pamela A. Tokar-Ickes

GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS:
Laura Argenbright, George Coyle, Irvin H. Kimmel Jr., David Runco, John Weir

# OF GRANTS AWARDED	TOTALING
51	\$836,209

Westmoreland

COMMISSIONERS:
Sean Kertes · Douglas W. Chew · Ted Kopas

GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS:
Matt Hegan, Shari Martino, Brian Meridian, Ann Nemanic, Kyli Stoner

# OF GRANTS AWARDED	TOTALING
47	\$548,248

\$25,390,130 DISTRIBUTED TO DATE



GO LH STAFF

ANN NEMANIC
Executive Director

GEORGIA ROBINSKY
Senior Director of Finance & Grant Administration

LAURA ARGENBRIGHT
Senior Director of Creative Strategy

JENNIFER BENFORD
Senior Director of Marketing

KELLI BRISBANE
Director of Partnership Development

ERIC KNOPSNYDER
Director of Public Relations & Community Outreach

DAWN LAMUTH
Director of Cultural & Community Connections

ALEX BYERS
Lead Photographer/Videographer

DEANNA MYLANT
Digital Marketing Coordinator

EMMA REEPING
Marketing & Program Coordinator

HILLARY KING
Operational & Administrative Assistant

WES DELARA
Distribution Representative

ABBY WOLFGANG
Visitors Center & Store Sales Assistant

DAVID KLINK | ALAN MCELROY | SUZIE MORRIS
Information Counselors, Farmington

Board of Directors (as of Dec. 31, 2025)

THERESA GAY ROHALL, CHAIR
Compass Inn Museum

LINDSAY KETTERER GATES, VICE CHAIR
Touchstone Center for Crafts

ERIC MAUCK, TREASURER
Highlands Ventures

MATT HEGAN, SECRETARY
Oak Lodge

RON ALDOM
Somerset County Chamber of Commerce & Somerset County Commissioners' Appointee

MICHELLE BLOOMER
Nemacolin

PATRICK BOCHY
West Overton Village & Distillery

JUSTIN GUNTHER
Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater

ALICIA HENRY
Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corp. & Westmoreland County Commissioners' Appointee

KYLE HILLEGAS
Somerset Maple Producers

JEANETTE LAHM
Laurelville Retreat Center

MIKE MUMAU
Laurel Hill State Park/Laurel Ridge State Park/Kooser State Park

MURIEL NUTTALL
Fayette County Chamber of Commerce & Fayette County Commissioners' Appointee

RICH POLOGRUTO
Jennerstown Speedway Complex, LLC

WILL RACIN
Westmoreland County Community College School of Culinary Arts and Hospitality

BRIAN REEDY
National Park Service

DAVE RUNCO
Seven Springs Mountain Resort

STEVE SMOLENSKI
JoltBike



GO LAUREL HIGHLANDS

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