2019 County Tourism Grant Chats Scheduled!

Join the LHVB to learn what you need to know about your county’s 2019 Tourism Grant Program. We encourage anyone interested in applying for a tourism grant to attend this free meeting. Reservations are required and can be made by contacting Rachel at roehrig@laurelhighlands.org or 724-238-5661, ext. 101. Deadline to RSVP is Sept. 24. Please indicate your county when calling.

- **Westmoreland County** - Monday, Oct. 1, 9-11 a.m. at Christ Our Shepherd Center, formerly Bishop Connare Center, in the Westmoreland Room. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m.
- **Fayette County** - Monday, Oct. 1, 2-3 p.m. at Penn-State Fayette’s Eberly Corporate Training Center in Room 116. Registration will begin at 1:30 p.m.
- **Somerset County** - Tuesday, Oct. 2, 3-4 p.m. at Somerset Country Club. Registration will begin at 2:30 p.m.

Light refreshments will be available at each session. Grant applications will be available online www.laurelhighlands.org/grants. Completed applications will be due Nov. 16, 2018.

Journey of Self, a Wellness Tour in the Laurel Highlands, September 23

The LHVB is pleased to offer its first public tour! Get away and explore the world of wellness in the Laurel Highlands. Get in touch with the real you on our Journey of Self, Sept. 23. This all-day tour includes yoga, group meditation, nature hikes, a visit to a world-class healing and wellness center and renowned wellness workshops provided by professionals at great locations throughout the Laurel Highlands. Plus, enjoy healthy, rejuvenating meals at two top restaurants and a few surprises along the way.

For more information or to register, please visit laurelhighlands.org/plan/scenic-tours or call 724-238-5661, ext. 101.

Marketing Summit | November 2, 2018

Register today for LHVB’s 8th annual Marketing Summit to be held on Friday, Nov. 2, from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at the Fred Rogers Center on the Saint Vincent College campus. This year we welcome speakers from Olson Zaltman, Level Agency, Reimagine Main Street, Gatesman Agency and Saint Vincent College on topics such as Instagram’s algorithm, marketing artificial intelligence and representing women of color in media.

The cost to attend is $50 for LHVB Partners or $75 for non-LHVB Partners, and includes breakfast and lunch. After Summit, please join us at the new after-party and networking event at Four Seasons Brewing Company. Registration and more information about the event is available online at: laurelhighlands.org/summit.

Space is limited, so register today! Help spread the word on Twitter and Instagram by using #LHsummit.
On our recent vacation, which was the last hooray before my daughter Hannah headed off to her first year of college, I was once again reminded of the importance of travel. At 18, Hannah already has a travel “bucket list.” My husband and I decided we would help her check off something, so we headed west to Arizona. Our weeklong trip included a tour of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesin West, several days in Scottsdale, a train ride to and from the Grand Canyon and Sedona’s incredible sunsets.

Travel is about the memories. Laughs and snapshot memories along every mile are now part of my personal memory scrapbook. At the end of our trip, we agreed that hiking to the vortexes in Sedona is a “forever moment” for us. It was something not on our radar, totally free and truly out of our comfort zone. The trails were challenging. We helped each other, literally giving each other a hand up and down the rocky terrain. We looked out for each other, making sure everyone had plenty of water and drank it at intervals along our trek. Travel brings people together and that is why our industry is such a blessing.

As we slide from summer into fall and our lush green footprint becomes a painter’s palate of vibrant colors, remember how important your business is to creating memories. For many visitors, this is something they never see in their own backyard. Sometimes I take our beautiful four seasons for granted. I’ve gained a new appreciation for why millions of visitors come to the Laurel Highlands and why all our jobs are so vitally important. Together we will continue to enhance those “forever moments” each year.

P.S. If you see my husband Joe at LHVB’s Annual Dinner on Oct. 4, ask him about the chicken salad!

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**MARKETING NEWS**

**Kristin Ecker, Senior Director of Marketing**

**Summer by the Numbers**

As we wrap up summer marketing and shift gears into fall, let us take a moment to reflect on the fruitfulness of our summer campaigns. Having worked with Red House Communications to develop a marketing plan and a course for action moving forward, the marketing team got busy implementing the most diverse, all-encompassing campaign of all time. LHVB’s summer campaigns reached visitors of all sorts, spanning markets both large and small throughout the mid-Atlantic, into the Midwest including Ohio and Michigan, and across our home state of Pennsylvania.

Traditional efforts included TV commercials, billboards and print ads in key publications, all enticing visitors to explore the region further through the newly-redesigned laurelh Highlands.org. Digital efforts included standard initiatives such as search engine marketing, display ads, native advertising and extensive social media ads on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube. Each ad for every initiative was customized with the target audience in mind. But we didn’t stop there. The team launched video ads on Hulu, giving users the option to watch a Laurel Highlands video of their choice — adventure or family? For those who indulge in podcasts, we’ve launched podcast advertising campaigns that targets users using geofilters and by genre. If you listen to internet radio, we’re also on Pandora with targeted messaging for each market we hit. Blogs? We’ve published 25 so far in 2018 with blog traffic increased by 500 percent in July 2018 vs. July 2017. Have you heard of influencers? We’re in talks with a few and hope to line them up for winter.

The effort and targeted messaging put out by the LHVB has never been so broad, and the proof is in the pudding. As you read through the digital stats reported by Jared Bundy, you’ll notice the hundreds of thousands of potential visitors that the bureau engages per month with reach and volume trending upward consistently. Web traffic for the season is up nearly 30 percent year-over-year. With the launch of our new website in March came the launch of a new booking engine, which has produced more than 10,000 booking referrals to partner lodging properties. As we look to fall and winter campaigns, you’ll see continuations of these efforts and more as we continue to attract visitors to our beautiful region.

Other initiatives we’re busy working on...

- 2018 Photo Contest Winners
- 2019 Destination Guide
- Fall 2018 Co-ops
- LHVB’s 60th Anniversary Annual Dinner | Oct. 4, 2018
- Video shoot in October
- 8th Annual Marketing Summit | Nov. 2, 2018
WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA STATS
Jared Bundy, Director of Digital Marketing

Social Media Audience
(as of July 19, 2018)

Facebook Fans 61,000+
Twitter Followers 11,900+
Instagram Followers 4,400+
Pinterest Monthly Viewers 25,000+

YouTube Video Views 234,000+

Top Keywords
Laurel Highlands
Ohiopyle
Ohiopyle State Park
Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail
Laurel Highlnd Events
Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau
Ohiopyle Events 2018
Ohiopyle PA
Laurel Highlands Events
4th of July Events Near Me 2018

Top Facebook Posts:

This post about a USA Today article naming Ohiopyle the best hidden gem in PA reached 62,000 people, getting 2,000 likes, 442 shares, 224 comments and 5,339 clicks.

Notable Web Stats (May-July, 2018)
Compared to May-July, 2017

- Users 29% increase
- Blog Traffic 370% increase
- New Users 25% increase
- Mobile Traffic 42% increase
- Pageviews 11% increase
- Direct Traffic 76% increase

Top Instagram Post: A double rainbow passing over Falls City Pub was our top Instagram post of summer with 330 likes.

Top Summer Pages
May-July, 2018 pageviews

- Ohiopyle Rafting 56,127
- Family Fun 30,610
- Ohiopyle 23,946
- Homepage 23,857
- Things To Do 18,230
- Events 16,189
- Idlewild 12,416
- Cabins & Campgrounds 11,581
- Places To Stay 9,669
- Frank Lloyd Wright 8,262

Use #LaurelHighlands When You Post: Laurelhighlands.org can now feature visitors’ and your business’s photos from Instagram across the website. These photos can link directly to your listing, giving you even more ways to showcase your business and make the most of your partnership. Be sure to use #laurelhighlands and add your location when you post to Instagram so we can see your photos and feature them on the website!
WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

Switzerfilm: Switzerfilm’s five-person film crew completed a three-day shoot in Ohiopyle, covering every aspect of the town, from whitewater rafting and the GAP to grabbing an ice cream in town. Drone footage, 360-degree cameras, photos and videos from the shoot will be used for future ad campaigns and website content and social media posts.

Podcast: Subscribe to Laurel Highlands Happenings, our monthly podcast, hosted by LHVB’s own Louise Bates, that showcases partners, events and our region with a different theme each episode. Subscribe on iTunes, GooglePlay, Stitcher or wherever you listen to podcasts. Our latest summer episodes cover summer family fun, food and wine in our region.

JackRabbit: Our JackRabbit booking engine averaged 100 referrals per day through summer 2018 with a total of 7,839 referrals.

GROUP TOUR NEWS

Stacey Magda, Director of Tourism Development

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK – TOUR OPERATOR FAMS

Destination Greater Pittsburgh FAM | August 1
The LHVB welcomed the Travel Lady Tours and Great Escapes for site visits in the region as they plan group tours for 2019 and 2020. Our visit focused on student-friendly travel and included stops at Fort Ligonier, Compass Inn Museum, Flight 93 National Memorial, Oakhurst Grille and Event Center and West Overton Village and Museum. Thank you to these sites for welcoming the operators and providing outstanding educational programming for groups to consider.

BJC Travel | Harvard, Illinois | August 1-3
With a focus on family travel and frequent individual travelers, Beverly Carlson was excited to spend time researching and developing tours for her groups. Her visit included stops at DiSalvo’s Station Restaurant, Fallingwater, Ohiopyle State Park, Falls Market Restaurant and General Store, Nemacolin Woodlands Resort, Kentuck Knob, Christian W. Klay Winery, Stone House Restaurant, Summit Inn Resort, Eat’n Park Restaurant, Polymath Park, Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor, Carol and Dave’s Roadhouse, Green Gables, Mountain Playhouse, Quecreek Mine Rescue Site and the Flight 93 National Memorial.

The Travel Lady Tours | Lawrenceburg, Tennessee | August 1-2
Focusing on senior and adult travel, Krystal and Steve Carter have been trying to make time to visit for the past two years. Their visit included stops at DiSalvo’s Station Restaurant, Fallingwater, Ohiopyle State Park, Falls Market and General Store, Nemacolin Woodlands Resort, Kentuck Knob, Christian W. Klay Winery, Stone House Restaurant and Summit Inn Resort.

Meet the Planners in Harrisburg Fall Luncheon
On Nov. 1, the LHVB and regional businesses will host a luncheon to connect and share meeting and retreat options with association planners from the Harrisburg area. Stay tuned to learn more about how you can be involved in upcoming events!

Welcoming Groups to the Laurel Highlands
August 16 | America’s 9/11 Memorial Ride | Flight 93 National Memorial and Somerset area
August 17 | Upper Lacko Township War Memorial Association | Flight 93 National Memorial, Flight 93 Memorial Chapel, Coal Miners Café and Quecreek Mine Rescue Site
August 19-20 and 23 | Vagabond Tours | Summit Inn Resort and the National Road Corridor
August 25 | Indovina Associates Architects | Ohiopyle and Kentuck Knob
August 23 | Quality Bike Products Saddle Drive | Seven Springs Mountain Resort
October 11-13 | National Land Conservation Trust: Rally 2018 | Conservation Land Tours
October 23-26 | English Setter Association of America | Seven Springs Mountain Resort

GROUP SALES ON THE ROAD:
Tour and Travel Shows: A Commitment to the Group Travel Market
Mid Atlantic Receptive Services | National Harbor, MD | 36 tour operators
AAA East Central Group Leader Show | Seven Springs Mountain Resort | #Group Leaders
Great Day! Group Leader Show | Independence, OH | #Group Leaders
PUBLIC RELATIONS UPDATE

Anna Weltz, Director of Public Relations

MATPRA Media Marketplace Arrives
Sept. 25!

Months of planning, thousands of emails and hundreds of phone calls and the time has come! We are thrilled to host the 15th Annual MATPRA Media Marketplace and excited to share our magnificent mountainous region with 130 travel media and travel public relations professionals. After more than a year of planning, we think this year’s Marketplace will go down as one of the best for many years to come.

An event of this prominence and importance could not have happened without the support of many LHVB partners, especially Maggie Mageko-Hardy, owner of Nemacolin Woodlands Resort. From the bottom of our hearts to you and your team, thank you all for everything you do for the Laurel Highlands tourism industry!

Won’t You Be Our Neighbor?

In late June, the LHVB in our neighbors at VisitPA and Visit Pittsburgh collaborated to create the Fred Rogers Trail, in honor of the 50th anniversary of the iconic children’s television show, “Mister Rogers Neighborhood.” The trail features 15 locations in four counties, including numerous stops in his hometown of Latrobe and Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood ride at Idlewild and Soak Zone. Since its release, the media exposure has been tremendous. Plus, many of our partners along the trail have seen an increase in visitation and heard plenty of people sharing stories about what Fred Rogers meant to them. If you’d like to explore the Fred Rogers Trail in the Laurel Highlands, visit laurelhighlands.org/rogerstrail.

Recent and Upcoming Press Visits

- Anne Schuhle, Buffalo Magazine
- Shawnie Kelley Foy, Wander Lust Tours
- Lillie Marshall, Around the World L
- Jim Cheney, UncoveringPA
- Jeremy Jones, Discovering the Burgh
- Karyn Locke, Sand and Snow
- Anietra Hamper, Planetware

Top Media Opportunities

- Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
- The Incline
- Uncovering PA
- The Columbus Dispatch
- National Geographic

Laurel Highlands in the Spotlight

April 1-June 30, 2018

A summary of press and media projects initiated or coordinated by the LHVB. Circulation, digital impressions and publicity value figures provided by Cision media monitoring service.
Mmmmm! If you love doughnuts, you must swing by The Dapper Doughnut in New Stanton. Custom-designed, decorated and offering 24 unique toppings, these cake-style doughnuts are delicious and proving very popular at weddings. Watch out cookie table!

The delightful Green Shelf Boutique opened in 2017 with a lovely selection of women’s clothing. The clothing range is updated frequently and also includes accessories and jewelry. Their motto is, “There are no limits to fashion!”

Earlier this year, Summersounds launched their own non-profit organization, becoming “Friends of Summersounds Inc.” Summersounds hosts outstanding summer concerts at St. Clair Park in Greensburg, every Friday evening from June through to early September. And the best bit, the concerts are free!

Named after Pamela’s late husband, Mitch’s Fuel & Food is a one-stop-shop in Confluence! Pump gas then pop inside for the rustic country store for snacks, beverages and convenience items. There’s also a café offering a full menu for breakfast, lunch or dinner, dine-in or take-out, seven days a week.

Wonderfully located in the heart of the Laurel Highlands, this vacation rental sleeps up to 10. Guests can enjoy a beautiful yard complete with a stream and a fire pit. Seven Springs, Hidden Valley and more attractions just a short drive away. Perfect getaway from it all!

The Greater Connellsville Area Community Center has served the Connellsville community since 1971. The multi-purpose center features meetings rooms, the 600-seat Edwin S. Porter Theatre and a gymnasium available to rent for meetings, concerts, theatrical performances and more!
**Welcome, New LHVB Marketing Partners!**

Louise Bates, Director of Partnership Development

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**Red Lantern Bed & Breakfast**

Regina Hayman  
301 High Street  
Meyersdale, PA 15552  
(814) 442-6881  
redlanternbandb.com

Having tirelessly worked on renovating the property, Regina and her husband Matthew opened the Red Lantern Bed & Breakfast in 2017. Ideally located for those enjoying the GAP Trail, the property offers three rooms, breakfast and a beautiful view of the Laurel Highlands.

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**W Group Holdings, LLC**

Victoria Roup  
413 North Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15209  
(724) 940-9119  
groupholdings.com

If you are seeking luxury vacation rentals, check out W Group Holdings. They have several rentals located in the Laurel Highlands and Seven Springs Mountain Resort. Properties range in sizes, suitable for small families to large gatherings.

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**Stanton Daily Grind**

Megan Orient  
814 U.S. 119 North  
Suite 100  
New Stanton, PA 15672  
(724) 635-3952  
stantonmilling.com/dailygrind

Recently opened in May, Stanton Daily Grind is located next door to Hepler’s Hardware & Marketplace in New Stanton. Open Monday through Saturday, the coffee shop offers a full hot and cold beverage menu and baked goods and seamlessly reflects Stanton’s grinding mill heritage with images adorning the walls and décor from the mill.

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**Wellness on the Yough**

event, September 1, 2018  
Emily Saylor  
259 North 6th Street  
Connellsville, PA 15425  
(724) 366-5186  
facebook.com/wellnessontheyough

Connellsville celebrated their second year of Wellness on the Yough on Sept. 1. The event offered a full day of yoga, meditation, mindfulness, massage, herbs, healthy lifestyle and much more.

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**Vinoski Winery**

Julie Pryor  
333 Castle Drive  
Rostraver, PA 15012  
(724) 872-3333  
vinoskiwinery.com

What a venue! A gorgeous wood paneled tasting room greets as you sample different wines, while the patio with cheery red umbrellas beckons for you to take a seat and sip from your wine glass and savor the view. Don’t miss an opportunity to visit this new winery in the Laurel Highlands!

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**Westmoreland County Chapter-Keystone Elk Country Alliance Banquet, Feb. 16, 2019**

Mark and Vanessa Bates  
Ramada Inn Greensburg  
100 Ramada Inn Drive  
Greensburg, PA 15601  
(724) 694-1309  
experienceelkcountry.com

Interested in learning more about Elk? Join the Westmoreland County Chapter for their Keystone Elk Country Alliance Banquet on Feb. 16, 2019, hosted by Ramada Greensburg. It will be a fabulous fun evening to fundraise for the Elk Country Visitor Center, located in the heart of the Pennsylvania Wilds.
Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau
120 East Main Street | Ligonier, PA 15658

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