

Headlines

LAUREL HIGHLANDS NEWSLETTER



SUMMER 2019

HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE:

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Welcome, Rebecca Thiel!

In her new role at Visitor Center Coordinator, Rebecca will help visitors by providing information about events, attractions, lodging, dining, and more. Rebecca graduated Summa Cum Laude from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with a Bachelor's degree in English. A graduate of the Westmoreland County Leadership program, she and her husband Ryan reside in Ligonier with their two dogs, Zoey and Tucker. In her free time, Rebecca enjoys baking, gardening and reading mystery books.

▶ LHV B NEWS

New Visitor Center Now Open in New Stanton

Following a three-week soft opening, the Westmoreland County Visitor Information Center celebrated its official grand opening April 29 with a ribbon cutting ceremony.



Located at 814 U.S. 119 in New Stanton, the center was created through a cooperative effort by Westmoreland County Commissioners, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau (LHV B), and the Hepler family of New Stanton. The Westmoreland County Visitor Information Center offers a beautiful welcoming experience to visitors with expansive maps, wayfinding signage, and stunning photography showcasing the county's historic sites, famous neighbors, natural beauty, fun festivals, and local wineries and breweries. Displays within the visitor center include an antique handcart from Idlewild & SoakZone, Fred Rogers memorabilia, and more.



Just a mile north of the Pennsylvania Turnpike and close to the I-66 interchange, the Westmoreland County Visitor Information Center isn't the first tourism resource to call the location home. From the early 1960s through the 1980s, the site was home to the former Garden Center Restaurant, one of the area's earliest known 24-hour diners. Owned and operated by Robert K. Hepler and Oren E. Hopkins, the restaurant claimed to be the "Gateway to the Laurel Highlands Information" and a hub for Turnpike information.



Since the soft opening on April 8, visitors to the center inquired about hiking and biking trails, special events such as SummerSounds, and attractions including Frank Lloyd Wright's Polymath Park. Many local residents have stopped by for ideas and suggestions on things to do with out-of-town guests.



LAUREL HIGHLANDS VISITORS BUREAU
120 E. Main Street, Ligonier, PA 15658
724.238.5661 laurelhighlands.org





► EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Ann Nemanic, Executive Director

By now you have shaken off those wintertime shivers, are embracing warmer temperatures, and anticipating the start of an awesome summer season. If you are reading this newsletter, you can tell we have been a bit busy during spring 2019. No spring break for this incredible team. We even had time for a new educational workshop called *Spring Thaw*.

In the weeks leading up to this new event, the staff was given an outline of what they were to share during their breakout sessions. For several, coordinating a presentation and speaking in front of an audience was new for them. As they say in baseball, everyone knocked it out of the park! It reminded me how important it is to challenge ourselves every day, step outside our comfort zone, and even pass the ball to someone else to carry.

We kicked off *Spring Thaw* with a fun ice breaker activity that required our attendees to get creative and work as a team. I was truly impressed by how quickly everyone

came together as a unit in just 15 minutes. Marshmallows, 20 pieces of spaghetti, a set of shoestrings, tape, and a sticker challenged our participants to think and work together. It takes a team to be successful.

Summer is our time to shine in the Laurel Highlands. Many of our partners are single proprietors. You are your OWN team and you can do this! For others, you have a staff in place to roll out the red carpet for our visitors. Keep them encouraged, give them confidence in their daily responsibilities, and allow them to accept additional duties. Those who accept those challenges will be your leaders next year.

Be confident that your LHVB team is working hard for you each and every day. We are investing the single largest amount in a dedicated summer campaign in the LHVB's history. We can have our best summer on record simply by working together. We are all TEAM LAUREL HIGHLANDS!



► MARKETING NEWS

Kristin Ecker, Senior Director of Marketing and Project Management

As we begin the busy summer travel season, know that the LHVB marketing team has been working around the clock to get visitors thinking about their summertime getaways. We're continuing to implement the marketing plan we began in 2017, which focuses on markets in a 200-mile drive radius from the region. These efforts target various age groups, from millennials to baby boomers, families, groups, and individuals via various media outlets. These campaigns showcase unique experiences accompanied by customized messaging to users with a wide range of interests, using the mediums that apply to their behavioral habits.

Implementation of these audience-segmented campaigns has increased our ability to showcase many of our unique properties, amenities, and experiences in a way like never before. We're getting our message out there like never before, too. So far in 2019, campaigns on Google, YouTube, and Facebook have delivered more than 10 million impressions, resulting in 1.5 million video views, and driving nearly 100,000 clicks to our website. Content is still proven to be king and our blog traffic is already up 200% from 2018. Social media engagement is at an all-time high and we're pumping out new content daily.

This summer, our marketing efforts will make a giant splash in the Washington, D.C. market with advertising on the D.C. metro system, including bus wraps, billboards, and rail car placements. In addition to the outdoor efforts, social media campaigns and radio placements in the Mid-Atlantic, and full-page ads in community magazines will be showcasing the region with beautiful, exciting imagery that showcases our region's personality. We haven't forgotten about our other key markets. Keep an eye out for our Comcast cable and Hulu commercials in Pittsburgh that depict all of the excitement that summer in the Laurel Highlands brings. Hear our story not only on Pittsburgh's NPR stations, but also Pandora internet radio. Follow us on social media to read local success stories, learn about special events, and see how we rank on Google.

We're ready for a record-breaking summer and we hope you are too!

Summer Fun Coupon Books

The 2019 Summer Fun Coupon Books are hot off the press with nearly 60 offers for the region's visitors! 25,000 Coupon Books have been printed and are already distributed to 84 LHVB

brochure racks throughout the region to target visitors already in the region. All coupons are also featured on laurelhighlands.org for online visitors to download. To request coupon books for distribution at your property, please contact Rachel Roehrig at 724-238-5661, ext. 101, or at rroehrig@laurelhighlands.org.



2019 Interactive
Marketing Summit
Nov. 8, 2019



MARKETING NEWS

Jared Bundy, Director of Digital Marketing

Social Media Audience (as of April 22, 2019)

63,000+
Likes

12,300+
Followers

6,200+
Followers

350,000+
Monthly Video Views

15,000+
Monthly Viewers

Top Keywords

Laurel Highlands, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, Ohiopyle State Park, Laurel Highlands PA, Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail, Ohiopyle, Laurel Highlands Trails, Ohiopyle PA, Laurel Highlands Events, Laurel Highlands Ski Resort, Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail Map

Top Spring Pages

(January 2019 - April 2019)	pageviews
Homepage	13,272
Events	8,446
Ohiopyle	7,066
Skiing & Snowboarding	5,666
Things to Do	5,016
Cabins & Campgrounds	4,049
Places to Stay	3,826
Resorts	3,726
PA Maple Festival	3,449
Vacation Rentals	3,430

Notable Web Stats

(January 2019 - April 2019)
Compared to January 2018 - April 2018

Users
↑17%

Sessions
↑20%

Pageviews
↑5%

Direct Traffic
↑175%

Display Traffic
↑200%

Social Traffic
↑500%

Blog Traffic
↑600%

A Stargazer's Guide to the Laurel Highlands

Thursday, February 28, 2019 3:00 PM by Alyson Hull



The Laurel Highlands is bustling and bustling with bikers, hikers, families, rafters and foodies during the day, but what outdoor activity can you do once the sun goes down? Get lost in the stars! While there aren't any dark sky sites in the region, we know a few spots where there is minimal light pollution and not too much tree coverage...

[Continue Reading >](#)

Laurel Highlands Fish Fry Guide 2019

Wednesday, March 6, 2019 10:00 AM by Jared Bundy



The Laurel Highlands is one of only a few regions in the United States that celebrates the Catholic Lenten tradition of eating fish each Friday at our churches, restaurants and fire halls turn into small communities full of people from all walks of life enjoying a meal together. Whether you're a fish fry aficionado or just traveling through...

[Comments](#) | [Continue Reading >](#)

Top Blogs: Guides and tours were the top performing blog posts during these three months. Our Fish Fry Guide to the Laurel Highlands led the way, followed by our Reasons to Visit the Laurel Highlands in 2019, Vistas and Views: A Scenic Photography Tour, and A Stargazer's Guide to the Laurel Highlands posts.



Podcast: Subscribe to Laurel Highlands Happenings, our monthly podcast hosted by LHV's own Louise Bates that showcases partners, events, and our region with a different theme each episode. Subscribe on iTunes, Stitcher, or wherever you listen to podcasts.

USE #LAURELHIGHLANDS TO BE FEATURED

or

ADD YOUR PHOTO



Upload your Photos Directly to LaurelHighlands.org

Remember to use #laurelhighlands when you post to Instagram so we can add your photos to LaurelHighlands.org. All photos include a call-to-action to help drive traffic to your listing on our site. You can also upload photos directly to us by clicking the "Add Your Photo" icon on any page you see user-generated content.

Top Facebook Posts:

Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau is at Silver Horse Coffee. Published by Jared Bundy · February 20 · Donegal

Evan Frye, owner of **Silver Horse Coffee** in Donegal, PA, shows the secrets behind locally sourcing your maple, coffee and dairy products to make the perfect maple latte.

Go behind the scenes in our latest Laurel Highlands Uncovered video. Watch more: <https://bit.ly/2tT5EK>

Silver Horse Coffee shows the secrets of a maple latte

WWW.LAURELHIGHLANDS.ORG

Silver Horse Coffee shows the secrets of a maple latte [Learn More](#)

This video of Silver Horse Coffee kept people warm this winter, reaching 23,000 people for 10,000 views and 266 reactions.

Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau Published by Jared Bundy · February 17

Congratulations to the city of Latrobe on being named one of the "50 of the Most Charming Small Towns in America" by **Travel Channel**.

Travel Channel recommends following the Fred Rogers Trail, checking out Training Camp at Saint Vincent College and enjoying a Latrobe-original banana split.

Read more: <https://bit.ly/2TgSIO5>

Get More Likes, Comments and Shares
Boost this post for \$20 to reach up to 4,600 people.

17,201 People Reached 1,647 Engagements [Boost Post](#)

This link to a Travel Channel article about Latrobe being one of most charming towns in America reached 17,000 people and was engaged with 1,647 times.

Top Instagram Post:

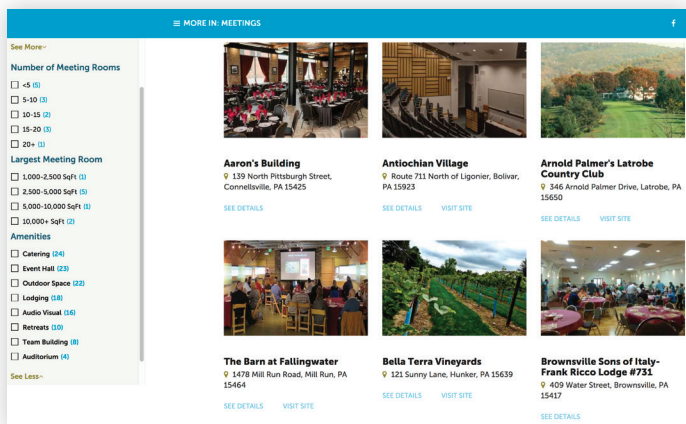
markarcher005

This icy shot of Ohiopyle was a fan favorite, getting 383 likes.



MARKETING NEWS

Jared Bundy, Director of Digital Marketing



Visit Our All New Meetings Page

New for 2019 is our revamped and updated meetings pages, perfect for helping meeting and event planners find the perfect spot for their next outing. Filter by amenities such as the number of rooms, size of rooms or catering. Planners can also submit an RFP. Explore the new page today at www.laurelhighlands.org/plan/meetings/.

Get Ready for Summer Checklist

Set yourself up for success in 2019 and beyond with a little summer loving on your listing to get the most out of your Laurel Highlands partnership. Log in to the Extranet and follow these steps:

- ✓ Update Your Listing. Be sure to add new amenities and social media accounts you may have recently created.
- ✓ Add Your Events. The events page is one of the most popular pages on the site. Take advantage of this traffic by adding all of your 2019 events.
- ✓ Add Your Coupons. Visitors are constantly searching for new deals and coupons. Add yours and remember to include a trackable website or code.
- ✓ Update Your Image. Freshen up your copy for 2019 to entice guests, and make sure to add new spring and summer images instead of wintry ones.
- ✓ Request Materials. Fill your business with our 2019 Guide and Regional Maps.
- ✓ Plan Your Advertising. Use DTN Express to place high-impact ads on LaurelHighlands.org that reach trip planners looking to visit our area.



GROUP TOUR NEWS

Stacey Magda, Director of Tourism Development

Group Travel is Bright in the Laurel Highlands!

The summer months bring loads of groups to the region! Whether they're cruising in car and motorcycle clubs, joining river trips and exploring trails, touring on motor coaches, or making connections at meetings and retreats, it is that time of year when our marketing and sales efforts pay off and we are in full swing. If you have a group coming to your site and would like welcome bags, a regional greeting, and other special touches, please connect with Stacey for details and delivery. As quick as summer arrives, it will soon turn to fall. Stay in touch for end-of-year opportunities such as group leader shows and the final bridal show of the year.



Laurel Highlands Scenic Tours are a GO!

On May 19, the LHVB hosted their first, open-to-the-public scenic tour. With a special focus on wellness, locally-sourced experiences, and the great outdoors, we welcomed 51 guests on this sold out tour! Spread the word and sign up for the August 24 Rustic Retreat: A Farm to Table Tour that will share stops at local farms along our beautiful countryside.

Tour and Travel Shows

Travel Alliance Partners: TAP DANCE | Cheyenne, WY | June 9-12, 2019
PA Bus Annual Meeting | Atlantic City, NJ | June 18-21, 2019

Students and Homeschool Shows

Christian Home Educators of Ohio (CHEO) | Columbus, OH | May 30 - June 1, 2019
Christian Homeschool Association of Pennsylvania (CHAP) | Lancaster, PA | June 13-15, 2019

A Big Thanks from Your Backyard!

On April 18, the LHVB's annual Backyard Tour escorted a group of 35 around Somerset County. From old favorites to new inspiration, the day was filled with fun, education, and networking. A big thank you to everyone who welcomed the group and all who joined us. Stay tuned for our 2020 date to explore Westmoreland County!



2019 GROUP TRAVEL IN REVIEW



1,075

hotel rooms booked



\$133,300
in hotel revenue



47
bus groups



2,925
senior and
adult visitors



1,894
student
visitors



► PUBLIC RELATIONS NEWS

Anna Weltz, Director of Public Relations and Community Outreach

Tips for a Successful Media FAM Tour

- **Prepare, Prepare, and Prepare Some More.** Know who from your team is going to meet with the media for the onsite tour, lodging check-in, meal, etc. Compile a press kit. Press kits don't have to be complicated projects. Gather a handy fact sheet on your organization, contact information, a recent brochure, and perhaps a small gift like a keychain, postcard, etc.
- **Roll Out the Red Carpet.** Think of a media visit as a VIP experience. You want to "WOW" your media guest. Ensure their lodging room is sparkling clean, reconfirm onsite tour details, perhaps provide a signature welcome gift, greet them with a genuine smile, and make them feel welcome. After all, if their experience is top-notch, they'll share their glowing recommendations with their readers.
- **FOOD and COFFEE!** Media FAM tours can be grueling long days with lots of stops, lots of miles in the car, and lots of information.
- **Don't Expect Immediate Coverage.** The purpose of a media tour is to establish a long-lasting relationship with journalists, not necessarily to generate immediate coverage.
- **Stories Aren't Always Sunshine and Unicorns.** The media landscape has changed so much over the years. For instance, print publications have less space to offer for travel stories. So many travel writers "double-dip." They freelance for a number of publications and manage their own blog or website. Part of what makes travel blogs so popular is the relationship between the blogger and their audience. The audience trusts that the blogger is going to tell them the truth – both good and bad.
- **Stay in touch.** Not long after the media tour has concluded, it's important to follow up with any lingering items you promised, such as high-resolution images and answers to follow-up questions. It's also a nice touch to handwritten or email a note to the journalists who met with you. After all, this process was about bettering those relationships!



Successful Toronto Media Mission

To say that the VisitPA media mission was successful would be an understatement. Our neighbors to the north were ecstatic to meet tourism reps from all over the Keystone State. It's been a couple of years since a media mission was held in Toronto, so Anna met many new media contacts and got reacquainted with some familiar friends. Plans are in the works to host several new media later this summer and fall.

Top Media Opportunities

- "50 of the Most Charming Small Towns in America," *TravelChannel.com*
- "Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau Invites You to Take a Wellness Tour," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*
- "Far Out Festivals," *AAA World*
- "Winter Festivals," *Bethesda Magazine*
- "20 of the Best Running Trails Around the World," *Runner's World Online*



Laurel Highlands in the Spotlight

January 1 - March 31, 2019

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.



140
STORIES

More than
\$1.2 million
in added value



Nearly
\$142 million
in digital reach



More than
\$5 million
in print circulation





ART Adventures Town Tours

Facebook: Art Adventures / Town Tours

casselmanwatershed.org

**BLACK ANGUS**
PREMIER MEETING & EVENT PLANNERS

blackangusplanners.com

(724) 235-2320
fairfieldtwpfire.com

brownvic.com

devoutbrewingco.com

Devout Brewing opened its doors in December 2018. Located in Export, their focus is on the art and science of creating, brewing, and drinking craft beer. Devout likes to use traditional beer styles with a modern twist, providing a memorable craft beer experience for those to enjoy. During the weekends, there are often food trucks serving up delicious fare to accompany your pint of beer.



Louise Bates, Director of Partnership Development



Jordan's Brook Vacation Rental

Karen Jordan
Rockwood, PA 15557

A beautiful log cabin nestled in the heart of the beautiful Laurel Highlands, this vacation rental provides three bedrooms, sleeps six, with a large master bedroom, a second on-suite bedroom with full-size bed and a third loft bedroom with two twin beds. The rental also comes with a fully-equipped kitchen, dining, and living room areas. Only a four-mile drive from Seven Springs Mountain Resort, it's the perfect location for a getaway weekend with family or friends!



Springs Folk Festival

Harriet Berg
1711 Springs Road
Springs, PA 15562
(814) 442 4594
springspa.org

With more than 100 juried artisans demonstrating their crafts, Springs Folk Festival is a wonderful event to attend to watch the skills and labors of our forefathers. Visitors will enjoy observing bread being baked, log hewing, and threshing, as well as paintings, baskets, wood-crafted furniture, quilts, and dulcimers. There's a great assortment of wholesome food to enjoy including pancakes and sausage, bean soup, homemade bread baked in the outdoor kiln, fresh doughnuts, homemade pies, and more! All of this accompanied by live music throughout the day including blue grass bands, old time music and dance.



My HoneyBee

Brenda Shaffer
138 West Main Street
Ligonier, PA 15658
(724) 995-8755
myhoneybee.co

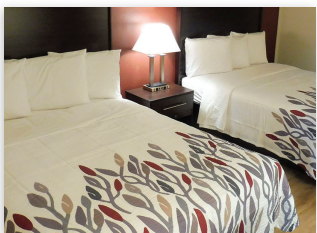
My HoneyBee is an absolute delight for shoppers. This boutique is locally-owned by a mother-daughter team and will not disappoint. A wonderful eclectic and vibrant mix of home décor, purses, jewelry, candles, cosmetics, and clothing entices you to browse the shop to find that perfect gift or item. All products are either made in the USA or originate from fairtrade businesses and organizations.



The Barn at Maple Falls

Mary Linn Theis
793 Gebhart Road
Rockwood, PA 15557
(724) 539-1125
thebarnatmaplefalls.com

This is an absolutely outstanding venue for a wedding or special event! Located not far from Rockwood and nestled amongst the beautiful mountains of the Laurel Highlands, The Barn at Maple Falls offers a two-story barn that accommodates up to 250 guests, as well as outdoor patio space for additional guest seating. The grounds are spectacular, with landscaping, waterfalls, and water features including a covered bridge over the waterfalls, which makes a perfect wedding ceremony location.



Red Roof Inn

Dhaval Patel
111 Sheraton Drive
Greensburg, PA 15601
(724) 216-5951
redroof.com/property/pa/Greensburg/RR11104

Recently renovated and refurbished, Red Roof Inn in Greensburg offers guests quality non-smoking rooms, free Wi-Fi, with extended cable package and free coffee in the lobby. All rooms feature a microwave, mini-refrigerator and a 49" TV with more than 50 HD channels. Red Roof Inn is also a pet-friendly hotel. The hotel is located right off U.S. 30 with easy access to U.S. 119, close to Westmoreland Mall, The Westmoreland Museum of American Art, The Palace Theatre, University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, Seton Hill University, Saint Vincent College, and Arnold Palmer Regional Airport.



Windswept Entertainment & Event Rentals

Mary Linn Theis
4371 Route 30
Latrobe, PA 15650
(724) 539-1009
windswept.com

Founded in 1991, Windswept Entertainment & Event Rentals has been the "go-to" for premier special events rental for the Laurel Highlands, Pittsburgh, and beyond. Windswept offers customers an extensive and diverse inventory of rental equipment that allows them to provide all components necessary for any type of event such as weddings, corporate events, community days, and galas. High-quality, cleanliness, creativity, and prompt delivery together with removal of equipment is always at the top of their list.



Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau
120 East Main Street | Ligonier, PA 15658

Headlines

Headlines is published quarterly. Please contact LHVB's Director of Public Relations, Anna Weltz, with questions or comments at aweltz@laurelhighlands.org.
120 East Main Street, Ligonier, PA 15658 | RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Stephen Clark National Park Service	Theresa Gay Rohall Compass Inn Museum
Liz Diesel Glades Pike Winery	Michael Simons SpringHill Suites Latrobe-Pittsburgh
Tom Guiher Living Treasures Wild Animal Park	Joel White Camp Christian
Alicia Henry Westmoreland County Commissioners' Appointee	

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Executive Director Ann Nemanic 724-238-5661 x103 anemanic@laurelhighlands.org	Director of Tourism Development Stacey Magda 724-238-5661 x111 smagda@laurelhighlands.org
Senior Director of Finance & Grant Administration Georgia Robinsky 724-238-5661 x115 grobinsky@laurelhighlands.org	Director of Partnership Development Louise Bates 724-238-5661 x 110 lbates@laurelhighlands.org
Senior Director of Marketing & Project Management Kristin Ecker 724-238-5661 x104 kecker@laurelhighlands.org	Administrative & Grant Assistant Rachel Roehrig 724-238-5661 x101 rroehrig@laurelhighlands.org
Director of Digital Marketing Jared Bundy 724-238-5661 x106 jbundy@laurelhighlands.org	Marketing Communications Coordinator Allyson Null 724-238-5661 x116 anull@laurelhighlands.org
Director of Public Relations & Community Outreach Anna Weltz 724-238-5661 x108 aweltz@laurelhighlands.org	Marketing Assistant Kayleigh Dumas 724-238-5661 x 102 kdumas@laurelhighlands.org
	Brochure Distribution Coordinator Jim Hamerski 724-238-5277 warehouse@laurelhighlands.org