

Headlines

LAUREL HIGHLANDS NEWSLETTER

❄️ 2019-2020

HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE:

- ▶ LHV B NEWS
- ▶ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE
- ▶ MARKETING NEWS
- ▶ GROUP TOUR NEWS
- ▶ PUBLIC RELATIONS NEWS
- ▶ NEW LHV B PARTNERS

Congratulations to Our Tourism Scholarship Winners

Thanks to the incredibly generous donations to the 2018 annual dinner's silent auction, the LHV B 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!



Jared Bundy and Scholarship Winner, Chelsey Gasparovic



Jared Bundy and Scholarship Winner, Hannah Long

▶ LHV B NEWS

Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands Wins Top 30 Emerging Destination Award and Takes Home Third Place in Readers' Choice Award

Congratulations, tourism partners! Not only did our beloved Laurel Highlands win recognition as one of TravelLemming.com's top 30 emerging travel destinations on the planet for 2020, but our region was voted readers' #3 overall pick in the world!

The site's annual awards honor trending destinations in an effort to promote emerging destinations around the world as a solution to overtourism. Winners were selected after voting by 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/Visit PA.

In the final step of the process, readers were invited to weigh in by voting for their favorite destination. Also in the Top 5, Lausanne, Switzerland; Prince Edward Island, Canada; McLaren Vale, South Australia; and Nova Scotia, Canada.

"The Laurel Highlands has always been a beloved destination in Pennsylvania, and we're thrilled to know travelers are taking notice and have selected the region for the 2020 Travel Lemming Readers' Choice Awards," said Carrie Fischer Lepore, Deputy Secretary, Marketing, Tourism, & Film, PA Department of Community & Economic Development. "It's exciting that the region now ranks third among five global destinations! This incredible achievement helps validate that this Pennsylvania region, filled with natural beauty and diverse activities, is a must-visit for intrepid travelers looking for a new and unique experience."

The article explains the selection of the Laurel Highlands as follows: "Who would have thought that one of the best nature destinations in the United States was just an hour outside of Pittsburgh? A landscape so beautiful that it inspired two of Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural masterpieces, today the Laurel Highlands beckon with luxury resorts offering prime ski slope access and cozy woodland accommodations perfect for cuddling up next to a cup of coffee and a book. You'll find plenty to get the adrenaline flowing in the summer too - from whitewater rafting to rock climbing to hiking, the possibilities for adventures are endless in the Laurel Highlands."

27. Laurel Highlands, Pennsylvania



Who would have thought that one of the best nature destinations in the United States was just an hour outside of Pittsburgh? A landscape so beautiful that it inspired two of Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural masterpieces, today the Laurel Highlands beckon with luxury resorts offering prime ski slope access and cozy woodland accommodations perfect for cuddling up next to a cup of coffee and a book. You'll find plenty to get the adrenaline flowing in the summer too - from whitewater rafting to rock climbing to hiking, the possibilities for adventures are endless in the Laurel Highlands.

When to Visit: All year round

Top Attractions: Haffersgrove, Kankakee Knolls, Fort Ligonier, Chippewa

Why We Picked Laurel Highlands, Pennsylvania

Readers' awarded destinations in the readers' 2020 that is home to incredible architecture, nature, and cultural sites that makes for the perfect escape at one of their busy years and an amazing road trip.

MEAN INDEX // [Babe & Chachi](#)



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





2019 Pathfinder of the Year - Tall Pines Distillery, Lisa Welch, Ann Nemanic, Anna Weltz and Keith Welch

Celebrating 61 Years of Tourism

Thank you to everyone who attended the LHVB's annual dinner, Oct. 8, at Laurel Mountain Ski Lodge. We hope you had a great time catching up with old friends, meeting new people, and celebrating the vibrant tourism community of the Laurel Highlands. Congratulations to the 2019 Laurel Highlands Champions of Tourism!

- Trailblazer of the Year: Donna Holdorf, Executive Director, National Road Heritage Corridor
- Pathfinder of the Year: Lisa and Keith Welch, Tall Pines Distillery
- Tourism Employee of the Year: Dean Simpson, Marketing Manager for Touchstone Center for Crafts



2019 Trailblazer of the Year, Donna Holdorf, Executive Director, National Road Heritage Corridor



2019 Tourism Employee of the Year - Dean Simpson, Touchstone Center for Crafts, Louise Bates



Congratulations to Rachel Roehrig, who will be retiring at the end of the year. You will be missed!



▶ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Ann Nemanic, Executive Director

"Kindness is like snow – it beautifies everything it covers." - Kahil Gibran

What a fitting, inspirational quote, especially just a few weeks after #WorldKindnessDay. On November 13, I was once reminded of the power of all forms of media. Fred Rogers was a master and utilized television as a way to convey important messages that still resonate today. In a similar vein, the LHVB uses all form so media to reach audiences for each and every one of you.

We are in the "happy" business and certainly kindness should fit into our deliverables for visitors to the Laurel Highlands. How do you impart kindness? Just like the buttons on a cardigan sweater, kindness should be tightly woven into a visitor's experience. As we bundle up for the winter months ahead may we wrap ourselves in kindness. And, may the words kindness, tolerance, and acceptance be interchangeable.

Visitors embrace our beautiful region for a reason. May the warmth of a smile, a pleasant greeting, and a simple act of kindness be the precursor to many happy returns.





MARKETING NEWS

Kristin Ecker, Senior Director of Marketing and Project Management

Winter offers the #BestWeekendEver

We all know that winter is a majestic time in the Laurel Highlands, and this year we're running a huge marketing campaign in the Mid-Atlantic to make sure populations in our neighboring areas know it too! We are continuing our #BestWeekendEver campaign, which specifically targets the D.C. metro area. The winter ads tout the Laurel Highlands as the ultimate winter sports destination for D.C. residents. We know that the competition is hot for other ski areas in our surrounding states for the market share in this region, but we're there to let them know that our region ranks BEST in snowfall, elevation, accommodations, scenery and, most of all, a robust array of things to see and do nearby.

The Laurel Highlands messaging will decorate the sides of buses and interiors of rail cars in the city and surrounding areas and heard loud and clear on top stations including HOT 99.5 and WESA, D.C.'s NPR radio station. The region will also be seen in the previews of the Fred Rogers' biopic "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" in key movie theaters located in D.C., Bethesda, Arlington and Pittsburgh. Readers of Northern Virginia Magazine and Blue Ridge Outdoors will find a full-page of Laurel Highlands messaging and drivers on I-70 heading north towards Breezewood and just east of Somerset near Bedford will also see bold messaging encouraging them to exit into our region for the BEST winter fun.

In addition to this special campaign, the Bureau continues to run comprehensive campaigns with diverse messaging across dozens of channels including TV, both traditional cable and streaming service Hulu, internet radio on Spotify and Pandora, traditional radio on NPR in Pittsburgh, social media channels, search engine marketing, display ad campaigns, native advertising, influencer marketing and more. All of these efforts mean dozens and dozens of different ads with targeted messaging are running consistently throughout the year, supporting all of the region's unique offerings and ultimately driving potential visitors to our website, your websites and ultimately into our region as spending tourists. Let's all look forward to a prosperous season full of visitors exploring our winter wonderland.



2020 Laurel Highlands Destination Guide Now Available

The all-new 2020 Destination Guide is here and available for distribution at your location! Please contact the LHVB to request copies for your property to be mailed to you at no cost. Guides are available in quantities of 25.



Laurel Highlands Pour Tour Making a Splash!

While the idea of a Laurel Highlands craft beverage trail has long been a wish list item for the marketing team here at the Bureau, the success of the effort could not have been foreseen by our talented staff. With 31 participating properties spanning three counties and five types of craft beverage makers on board, the overall appeal has been vast and intriguing for passport users. The program launched on Sept. 19, 2019 with all of the properties equipped and ready for guests. By the end of the weekend, the Bureau had many requests for replenishment of passports (free for their guests) and the positive feedback from partner businesses was "pouring" in.



Within the first month, participating properties which reported their numbers, plus the verified check-ins from the Pour Tour app, were tallied at 5,985. That's nearly 6,000 individual purchases in the first month, putting an early financial impact figure on the program at well into the tens of thousands. The overall goal of the Pour Tour is not only to benefit the region's craft beverage industry, but to also set visitors and residents alike on a course to explore areas of the region they may not be aware of, and for shops, restaurants and other businesses along the way to benefit from the increased traffic. I hope you'll agree that the Pour Tour has made a positive impact on our tourism community and gives the region great visibility and appeal in our target markets. Stay tuned for increased trail development in the future!



MARKETING NEWS

Jared Bundy, Director of Digital Marketing

Social Media Audience (as of October 17, 2019)

- 63,000+** Likes
- 12,500+** Followers
- 9,000+** Followers
- 250,000+** Monthly Video Views
- 40,000+** Monthly Viewers

Top Organic Keywords

Laurel Highlands, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, Laurel Highlands Pennsylvania, Ohio, LHV, Ohio State Park, Laurel Highlands PA, Steelers Training Camp, Pittsburgh Renaissance Festival 2019, Ligonier Days 2019, Ohio PA, Laurel Highlands Trail, Events Near Me, Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail Map

Top Fall Pages

(July 23-Oct. 17, 2019)	pageviews
Ohiopyle	24,274
Frank Lloyd Wright	17,973
Homepage	16,314
Events	15,976
Pour Tour	13,944
Steelers Training Camp	10,572
Fall Festivals	9,686
Things to Do	8,150
Idlewild & Soak Zone	8,067
Arts & Culture	7,591

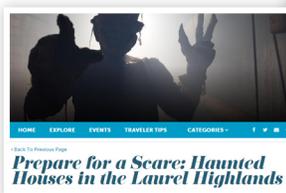
Notable Web Stats

(July 23-Oct. 17, 2019)
Compared to July 23-Oct. 17, 2018

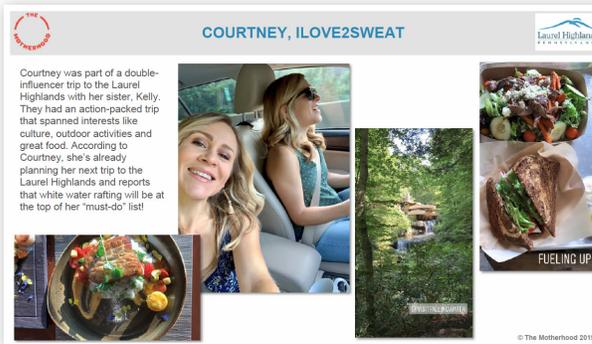
- Sessions **↑10%**
- Users **↑10%**
- Pageviews **↑9%**

- Time on Page **↑15%**
- Social Media Traffic **↑200%**

- Organic Traffic **↑10%**
- Blog Traffic **↑56%**



Top Blogs: Our informational guides continue to be the top-performing blogs. Our Guide to Steelers Training Camp, Haunted House Roundup and Fall Festivals You Can't Miss blogs were the most-viewed.



Influencers: In conjunction with The Motherhood, the marketing team completed three exciting visits to the Laurel Highlands utilizing four social media influencers from Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C.

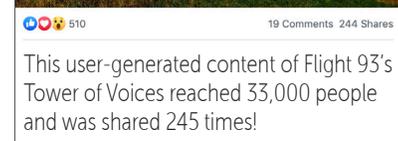
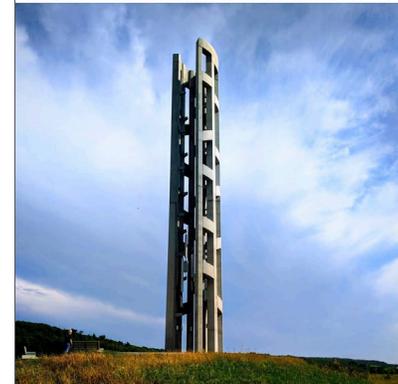


Podcast: Subscribe to Laurel Highlands Happenings, our monthly podcast hosted by LHV's own Louise Bates that showcases partners, events, and our region with a different theme each episode. Subscribe on iTunes, Stitcher, or wherever you listen to podcasts.



Use #LaurelHighlands when you post: Remember to use #laurelhighlands when you post to Instagram so we can add your photos to laurelhighlands.org. All photos will include a call-to-action to help drive traffic to your listing.

Top Facebook Posts:



Top Instagram Post:



This beautiful starry sky over Hollsopple received 778 likes!



PUBLIC RELATIONS NEWS

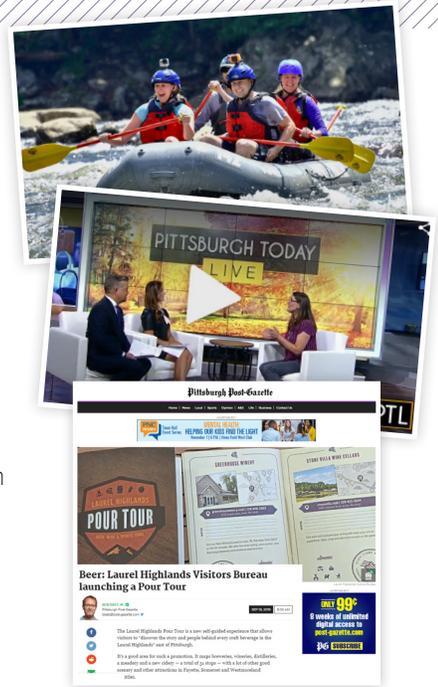
Anna Weltz, Director of Public Relations and Community Outreach

Top Media Opportunities

- "Pour Tour on Tap," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*
- "Camping Beyond Ohio – Ohio State Park," *Columbus Monthly*
- "Rustic Retreat," *Tribune-Review*
- "Fall Fun and Festivals in PA's Laurel Highlands," KDKA's Pittsburgh Today Live
- "The Best State Park in Every State," *Reader's Digest*
- "Visiting Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands," *The Beacon*
- "Three Historic and Scenic Bike Trails to Explore," *Cincinnati Magazine*

Recent Press Visits

- Whiskey Rebellion Trail group tour
- Jeremy Jones, Discover the Burgh
- Lillie Marshall, Around the World L
- Jim Cheney, UncoveringPA
- Stephanie Kalina-Metzger, The (Harrisburg) Burg News and Susquehanna Style magazine
- Lindsay Davies, I've Been Bit
- German media via partnership with VisitPittsburgh
- Amy Bertrand, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Fred Rogers Trail
- Fall Fun Media FAM Tour
- Julie and Charles McCool, Fun in Fairfax and McCool Travel



New Leadership Role - MATPRA Board of Directors

A few months after hosting the 2018 Media Marketplace, Anna was elected secretary to the board of the Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance (MATPRA). In her new role, she will oversee the media review committee, assist future marketplace hosts with event plans, and assist with the development of a strategic plan for the growing tourism organization. After her term as secretary, Anna will move up to chair-elect, then chair, and finally immediate past chair.



MATPRA Media Marketplace, Sept. 23-27, Richmond Region of Virginia

It has been a wildly successful year since hosting the MATPRA Media Marketplace last fall in. At this year's event held in the Richmond, Va., region, Anna was able to take a step back from the duties of host and spend her time networking, meeting new media, getting reacquainted with existing media contacts, and sharing some of the exciting stories in the region.



Fall Fun Media FAM Tour, Oct. 3-6

Hot off the heels of MATPRA Media Marketplace, the LHVB, in partnership with Seven Springs Mountain Resort, co-hosted a group of seven travel writers to explore a sampling of all things fall, including the resort's Autumnfest and resort amenities, an early look at the foliage, Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, and the new Laurel Highlands Pour Tour.

Media Mission to New York City, Oct. 16

Anna joined 11 Pennsylvania DMO representatives at a media mission event hosted by the state tourism office in New York. During this event, she networked with travel writers, editors, and freelance writers. Plans are already in the works for possible visits in 2020!



Laurel Highlands in the Spotlight

July 1-Sept. 30, 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.



206 STORIES



More than \$495 million in added value



More than 313 million in digital reach



More than 2.5 million in print circulation



GROUP TOUR NEWS

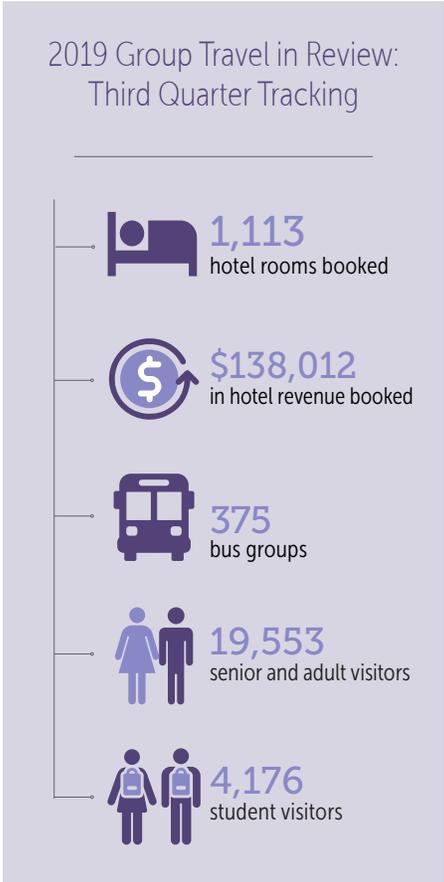
Stacey Magda, Director of Tourism Development

Take the Ride with Laurel Highlands Group and Consumer Sales in 2020!

As winter approaches, the LHVB is preparing for a robust 2020 travel schedule with the return of our team traveling to the Heartland Travel Showcase in Michigan, U.S. Travel's IPW, Travel Alliance Partners TAP Dance, and more! In addition to group conferences and events, our on-the-road efforts will take us to consumer shows far and wide, from New York City to Toronto, and Washington, D.C., as we engage with the public to enhance visitation to our beautiful Laurel Highlands. Be sure to review our 2020 marketing opportunities to see how your site can be a part of the travel outreach for the Laurel Highlands in this new and exciting year. Connect with Stacey today to discuss how you can be involved in cooperative show outreach, group sales missions, FAM tours, specialized itineraries, and more!



We look forward showcasing the Laurel Highlands region at Heartland 2020 with an outstanding line up including Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, Big Mac Museum, Hampton Inn Greensburg, Westmoreland Heritage, SpringHill Suites Pittsburgh/Latrobe, Love Receptive Services, Nemaquin Woodlands Resort, Frank Lloyd Wright's Polymath Park, Frank Lloyd Wright's Kentuck Knob, Compass Inn Museum, and West Overton Village and Museum.



Group Sales Connections

Meet the Planners: Fall Harrisburg Luncheon | November 14 | Harvest Seasonal Grill & Wine Bar Harrisburg

On Nov. 14, the LHVB hosted the Fall Meet the Laurel Highlands Luncheon at Harvest Seasonal Grill & Wine Bar in Harrisburg. Several partners teamed up to showcase the Laurel Highlands to the bustling association event market in Harrisburg. Together we welcomed

10 planners to engage and learn more about meeting and retreat opportunities in the region.

Growing Groups: A Group Travel Education Session | November 21 | The Aaron's Building, Connellsville, PA

On November 21, an engaged group of group travel professionals from our region gathered together to learn, grow, and connect with established group travel pros to enhance our region's reach to groups from all around the world. The day featured an informative discussion panel, round table breakouts, and more. Thanks to the Aaron's Building for being an outstanding venue host and to everyone that came out to learn a bit about group travel.





▶ WELCOME, NEW LHVB MARKETING PARTNERS! //

Louise Bates, Director of Partnership Development



Blue Rock Road Vacation Rental, Somerset
c/o Piatt Sotheby Realty
Kate Balzer | Bailey Sherrier
260 Forbes Avenue, Suite 1525
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
(412) 471-4900

piattsothebysrealty.com/sales/detail/555-l-83895-44vxbk/1008-blue-rock-road-somerset-pa-15501

This stunning luxury vacation rental, which sleeps up to 13 guests, is available for rent or purchase. Located close to Seven Springs Mountain Resort and Forbes State Park, the property boasts outstanding views, a quiet location, and contemporary high-end interior and furnishings.



Legion Keener Park
1658 Catherine Street, Latrobe
c/o Latrobe-GLSD Parks & Recreation
Craig Shevchik
901 Jefferson Street
Latrobe, PA 15650
(724) 537-4331
latoberecreation.org

Legion Keener Park is a 52-acre community park located in downtown Latrobe. The park offers a children's play area, barbecuing, swimming, many sport fields, pavilions for rental, and more. Families may also enjoy the Creekside Nature Trail. The park hosts many events throughout the year, including the farmers market, the city's annual 4th of July Festival, and Steelers' Training Camp pre-season game.



BattleZone Latrobe
Adam Gardner
1025 Latrobe 30 Plaza
Latrobe, PA 15650
(724) 804-5136
battlezonelatrobe.com

Fun indoor shooting range for kids of all ages! Offering a new twist on family favorites: battle-ball, a blend of dodgeball, and castle defense using "American Gladiator"-style gauntlet tower, and pickle ball. Join in the fun, reserve your party today. Walk-ins are also welcome. BattleZone also welcomes groups for birthday parties, church and corporate groups, and more.



Ligonier Tavern & Table
Mary Louise Stoughton
139 West Main Street
Ligonier, PA 15658
(724) 238-7788
ligoniertavernandtable.com

Under new ownership, Ligonier Tavern & Table provides a full service restaurant in a turn-of-the-century Victorian house located in beautiful, historic downtown Ligonier. The restaurant is open daily for dine-in or take-out.



Coal Tubin'
Chad Gontkovic
416 Main Street
Johnstown, PA 15901
(814) 254-4393
coaltubin.com

Located in Johnstown since 2009, Coal Tubin' offers the opportunity to float down the scenic Stonycreek River with tube, kayak, or raft rentals. It's perfect for a hot summer day! Coal Tubin' also offers guided whitewater rafting trips, shuttle service, and bike tours and rentals.



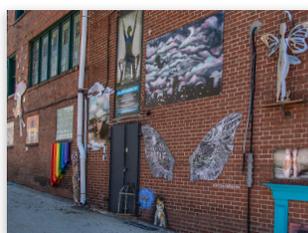
Northwinds Peninsula Golf Club
Kelly Smith
1772 Peninsula Drive
Central City, PA 15926
(814) 754-3461
northwindspeninsulaclub.com

Formerly known as the Golf Club at Indian Lake, The Peninsula Golf Club was the very first golf course designed by Arnold Palmer. The original nine-holes first opened in 1967, and extended to 18 holes of championship golf in 1996. The club is now open to the public, and with new ownership, they are committed to maintaining the history and tradition of this outstanding championship golf facility.



Crown Antique Mall
Sandy McGeever
1710 Mall Run Road
Uniontown, PA 15401
(724) 550-4104
crownantiquemall.com

Located inside Uniontown Mall, Crown Antique Mall offers more than 20,000 square feet packed with vintage, collectibles, and antiques. Open daily, Crown Antique Mall's mission is to provide the absolute best antique shopping experience.



WCT's Art in the Alley
Wilcox Way, Greensburg
Kellie Brisbane
c/o 102 North Main Street
Greensburg, PA 15601
(724) 836-1123
thepalacetheatre.org/
westmoreland-cultural-trust/art_alley

Come visit Art in the Alley in downtown Greensburg! You will discover vibrant and colorful original artworks by Westmoreland Cultural Trust's Incubator for the Arts local and student artists. The innovative project creates a new destination spot in Greensburg enhancing, improving and adding a splash of color to the urban landscape of downtown cultural district, as well promoting local artists and offering them a platform to display their work.



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

Eric Mauck, 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
Ohio 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

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Executive Director
Ann Nemanic
724-238-5661 x103
anemanic@laurelhighlands.org

Senior Director of Finance & Grant Administration
Georgia Robinsky
724-238-5661 x115
grobinsky@laurelhighlands.org

Senior Director of Marketing & Project Management
Kristin Ecker
724-238-5661 x104
kecker@laurelhighlands.org

Director of Digital Marketing
Jared Bundy
724-238-5661 x106
jbundy@laurelhighlands.org

Director of Public Relations & Community Outreach
Anna Weltz
724-238-5661 x108
aweltz@laurelhighlands.org

Director of Tourism Development
Stacey Magda
724-238-5661 x111
smagda@laurelhighlands.org

Director of Partnership Development
Louise Bates
724-238-5661 x 110
lbates@laurelhighlands.org

Administrative & Grant Assistant
Rachel Roehrig
724-238-5661 x101
roehrig@laurelhighlands.org

Marketing Communications Coordinator
Allyson Null
724-238-5661 x116
anull@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

Westmoreland Heritage Coordinator
Jessica Petrovich
724-836-1800 x300
jpetrovich@laurelhighlands.org

LHVb VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER STAFF

Farmington
Cesar Alviar
Susan Morris
Kim Greenbaum

Ohio State Train Station
Patty Hohen

New Stanton
Rebecca Thiel
Diane Heshizer