



Visit San Luis Obispo County

Annual Report
Fiscal Year: 2014 - 2015

— VISIT —
SAN LUIS
OBISPO
COUNTY

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Letter from the President & CEO

Dear Tourism Constituents,

2014-2015 has been a year of great excitement and tremendous transformation for Visit San Luis Obispo County. The core focus, as directed by the Board of Directors and guided by the Task Force, was to build consensus among the tourism industry to create the first countywide Tourism Marketing District (TMD). For the first time in our county, this public/private partnership creates a sustainable funding model and becomes the foundation for a comprehensive and unified marketing plan around tourism in San Luis Obispo County.

I am honored to have stepped into the organization at this critical milestone, taking over as President & CEO on May 1, 2015. As I look at the accomplishments of the past year, the progress is impressive. Balancing marketing initiatives, countywide collaboration, the formation of the TMD, and a critical transition for *Sunset SAVOR* the Central Coast, has positioned Visit San Luis Obispo County to lead the industry in the organization's five-year strategic plan.

Our focus moving forward is to 1) increase demand for overnight stays and 2) create greater awareness of our county and its assets. The foundation of our programming is now in place and it is strong. The industry has the opportunity to accelerate its reach within the State of California, throughout new regional markets and across the globe internationally and Visit San Luis Obispo County will help lead that charge.

As we continue making progress toward our mission to increase tourism revenue and position San Luis Obispo County as the preferred destination, I invite you to take a few minutes to read about our recent accomplishments.

Building upon the San Luis Obispo County brand, our team has increased its digital marketing initiatives, leveraged its key strategic partnerships and strengthened its travel trade outreach. Our public relations program continues to increase its earned media impressions and the Film Commission is refocused for the future.

I am thrilled to serve as your President & CEO and look forward to guiding the organization to reach its full potential. Enjoy reviewing the Annual Report.

All the Best,



Chuck Davison
President & CEO

The Big Picture

About Visit San Luis Obispo County

Visit San Luis Obispo County is the countywide destination marketing organization and tourism agency. Its goal is to promote the inspirational assets of San Luis Obispo County through marketing, advertising, public relations, group sales, promotions, events, sponsorships, strategic partnerships and the film commission to brand the region as a choice destination for regional, national and international travelers alike. Visit San Luis Obispo County works in partnership with tourism industry-related businesses including lodging properties, restaurants, wineries, attractions, golf courses, transportation companies and retail stores to create a unified marketing approach that promotes the Culinary, Coastal and Cultural assets of the County.

For more information, go to VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com.

Vision

To establish San Luis Obispo County as a premiere Central Coast tourism destination, and a leader in the California tourism community.

Mission

Increase tourism revenue by positioning, branding and promoting San Luis Obispo County as a preferred destination for regional, national and global visitors.



Tourism Marketing District

On June 10, 2015, the team at Visit San Luis Obispo County received unanimous approval by all City Councils and ultimately the County Board of Supervisors for the formation of the San Luis Obispo County Tourism Marketing District (TMD). Congratulations to all tourism partners! Years of dedication, commitment and staying the course to create a unified tourism voice have finally paid off. Your voice was heard and together the industry made a difference to move forward with the first ever unified tourism marketing plan in San Luis Obispo County.

This 1% countywide lodging assessment includes hotels, motels, vacation rentals, bed-and-breakfasts and RV Parks. The TMD funding will expand the marketing budget of Visit San Luis Obispo County, allocating an estimated \$3.4M in year-one (FY:2015-16) to be used towards promoting and marketing the destination.

About Us

Visit San Luis Obispo County Announces New President & CEO

On April 29, the Visit San Luis Obispo County Board of Directors unanimously voted to install Chuck Davison as its new President and CEO. Chuck, along with his wife, Kristin, and their four daughters Kylie, Savannah, Samantha and Carissa, moved to Pismo Beach in San Luis Obispo County almost three years ago seeking a balanced quality of life. Chuck's 25 years of career experience in travel, tourism, hospitality, lodging and management immediately had him seeking ways to get involved in tourism locally.



From managing hotels and working in the hospitality/gaming industry in Las Vegas, to a career at Expedia, where he led the opening of the new Local Expert division across North America, to his experience in managing an international non-profit organization, Chuck's results-oriented approach was widely recognized by the Board of Directors to make an immediate impact on Visit San Luis Obispo County.

Chuck began his position on May 1, 2015 after working alongside Visit San Luis Obispo County as a contractor. In that role, Chuck served as the Senior Director for Visit San Luis Obispo County since August 2014. His focus had been: business development and community outreach for the Tourism

Marketing District (TMD) campaign, group sales, developing marketing plan priorities, forging strategic partnerships and providing strategic direction for *Sunset SAVOR* the Central Coast.

Chuck's vision for San Luis Obispo County tourism, along with his knowledge of the tourism industry and charismatic personality, places him in the leadership role as Visit San Luis Obispo County transitions into a Tourism Marketing District funding model.

Chuck succeeded Stacie Jacob who served as Executive Director for nearly four years. During her tenure, Stacie helped build the *Sunset SAVOR* the Central Coast brand, cooperated with community BID programming, extended awareness for San Luis Obispo County through earned media and helped spearhead the TMD plan by building consensus among the tourism industry to realize the power of securing dedicated marketing funds.

2014-15 Visit San Luis Obispo County Board of Directors

- **Noreen Martin**, Martin Resorts— **Chair**
- **Charlie Yates**, Pelican Inn & Suites— **Vice Chair**
- **Jay Jamison**, Pismo Coast Village RV Resort— **Treasurer/Secretary**
- **Kevin Phipps**, Embassy Suites San Luis Obispo— **Executive Officer**
- **Jim Allen**, Hearst Castle
- **Mike Casola**, Cliffs Resort/Boutique Hotel Collection
- **Joel Clay**, Chalk Mountain Golf Course
- **Philip D'Acri**, C.M., SLO County Airport
- **Bill Hendricks**, Ph.D., Cal Poly, Professor & Department Head RPTA
- **Anna Olson**, Ayres Hotel
- **JP Patel**, Best Western Plus Colony Inn
- **Jennifer Porter**, Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance
- **Nikki Schmidt**, County of San Luis Obispo
- **Jill Tweedie**, Breakaway Tours and Event Planning

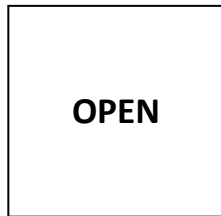
2014-15 Visit San Luis Obispo County Resource Council

- **Judith Bean**, Arroyo Grande & Grover Beach Chamber of Commerce
- **Suzen Brasile**, Pismo Beach Conference and Visitor's Bureau
- **Molly Cano**, City of San Luis Obispo
- **Brent Haugen**, Morro Bay Tourism Bureau
- **Mariam Shah**, Grover Beach City Council
- **Marcia Torgerson**, City of Atascadero
- **Meg Williamson**, City of Paso Robles

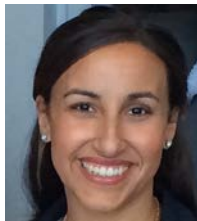
Visit San Luis Obispo County Team



Chuck Davison
President & CEO



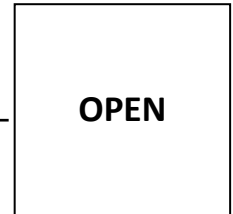
OPEN
Marketing
Director



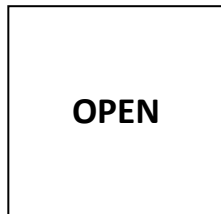
Kylee Jepsen
Sr. Communications
Coordinator &
Film Commission Liaison



Brendan Pringle
Office Manager



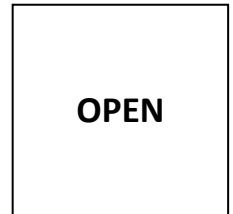
OPEN
Travel Trade
Director



OPEN
Digital/Web
Manager



Jordan Carson
Part-Time
Coordinator

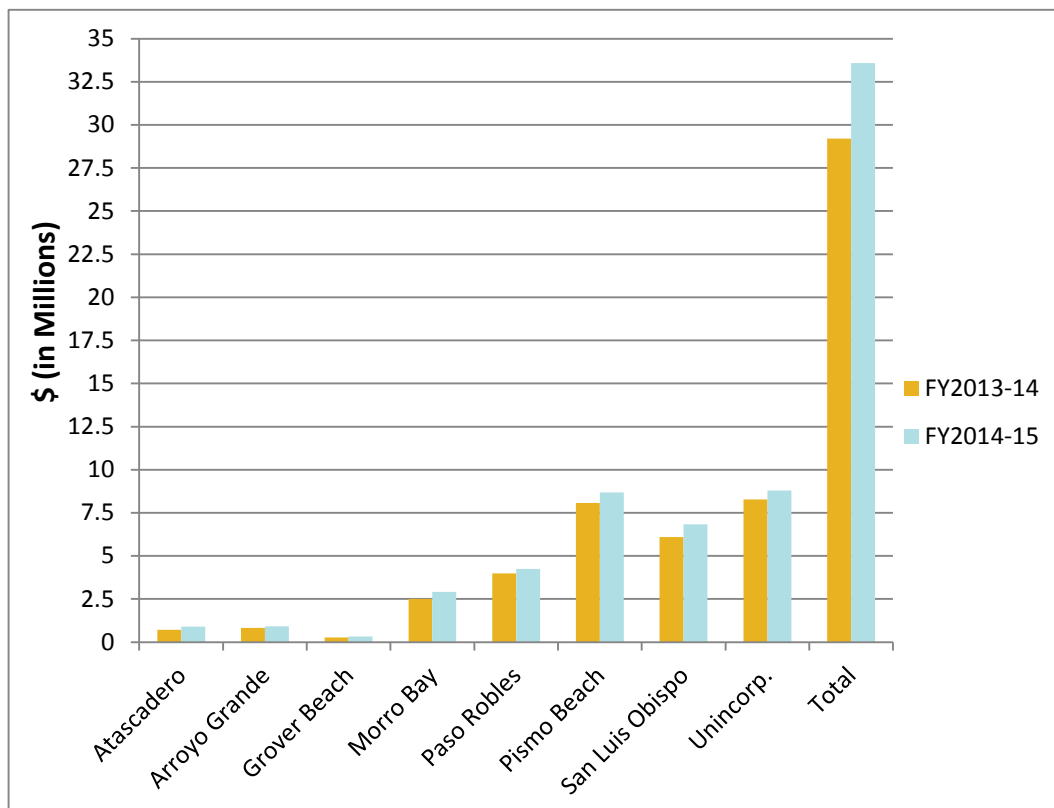


OPEN
Travel Trade
Coordinator

Brand Development

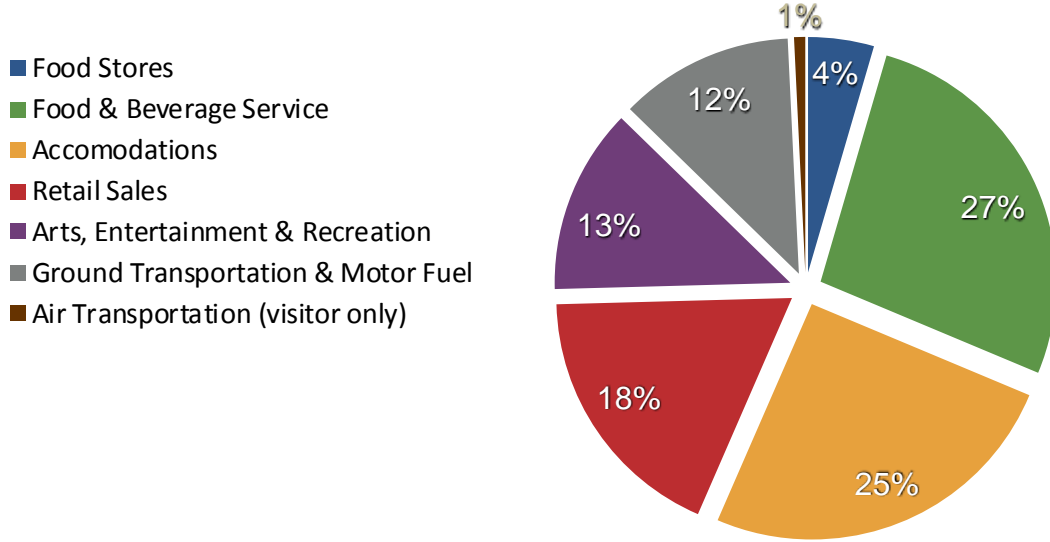
Value of Brand Awareness

Tourism marketing continues to be the best return on investment (ROI) for San Luis Obispo County. Tourism is the largest industry next to agriculture in the county, and wine tourism links these two key industries together. Visit San Luis Obispo County celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week in May and gleaned statistics on the local impact of tourism in San Luis Obispo County. Tourism keeps San Luis Obispo County's local communities economically vibrant, growing at a **3.3% rate** year over year. Industry earnings generated by travel and tourism spending reached its highest number yet, at **\$470 million**, in 2014. Jobs also **increased at 2.7% over 2013** and total tourism-related jobs in San Luis Obispo County reached an all-time high of **17,160** persons employed, making up approximately **10.5% of total employment** in the County. Positions include divisions of accommodations, food service, arts, entertainment, recreation, retail, and transportation. Local and State Tax Receipts totaled **\$125 million** in revenue generated by travel spending, reflecting an **8% and 2.9% increase** over 2013 respectively. San Luis Obispo County has also recorded an **approximate 15% average increase** in Transient Occupancy Tax for the 2014-15 fiscal year. Tourism continues to keep local communities economically viable, create jobs and support local businesses.



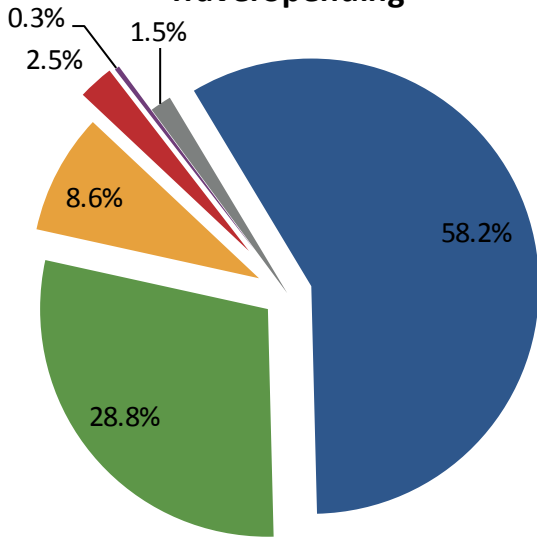
TRAVEL IS SERIOUS BUSINESS

Visitor Spending by Commodity Purchased



TRAVEL MEANS JOBS

Industry Employment Generated by Travel Spending



Total Direct Employment reaches 17,160

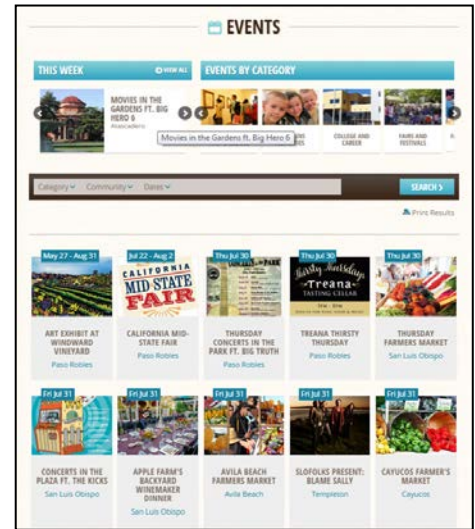
- Accommodations & Food Service (9990)
- Arts, Entertainment & Recreation (4950)
- Retail (1470)
- Ground Transportation (430)
- Airport Transportation (visitor only) (60)
- Other Travel (260)

Website

2014-15 marks the two-year anniversary of the Visit San Luis Obispo County website VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com, which has boosted brand awareness and created a portal to funnel visitors directly to the websites of members.

VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com continues to increase traffic at a rapid rate due to a combination of search engine optimization (SEO) efforts that began in October 2014, and an active social media presence.

The **Events Page** of the website continues to drive the most significant amount of traffic of any interior page. This feature allows members a unique opportunity to showcase upcoming events on a visually-appealing, highly-trafficked calendar. Over the past year alone, the Events page received more than one million views.



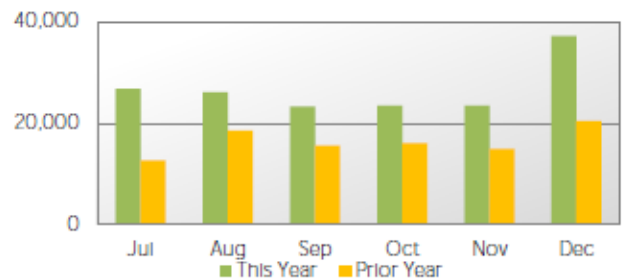
Visit San Luis Obispo County Events Page

The website also featured successful monthly promotions, including Holiday Promotions, Restaurant Month, the Month of Love and Pet-Friendly Month. The popularity of Restaurant Month attracted thousands of visitors to the site, eager to explore the culinary richness of the county. Likewise, members had the opportunity to advertise their romantic deals and specials on the site throughout the Month of Love in February, and pet-friendly partners had an outlet to show their “puppy love” on the site by offering dog-friendly deals throughout April.

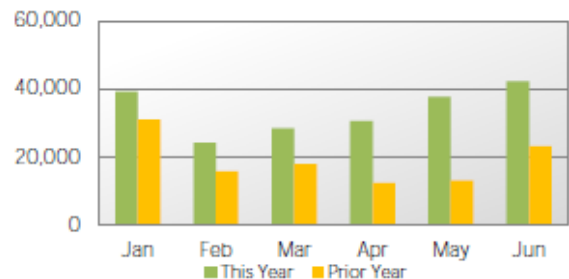
Search Engine Optimization Implemented

In October 2014, Visit San Luis Obispo County partnered with Simpleview to manage its search engine optimization (SEO) efforts and analytics. Their strategic recommendations have yielded 100%+ increases in visitors and organic traffic to the site. In April 2015, visits increased 146% compared to 2014, and organic traffic increased 244% year over year. In May 2015, visits increased 186% vs. 2014, and organic traffic increased 291% YOY. A major priority in FY:2015-16 is focused on increasing the percentage of out-of-market traffic to the site. For FY:2014-15, with an October 2014 campaign start, the website saw out-of-market traffic

2014/2013 Visits Year-Over-Year



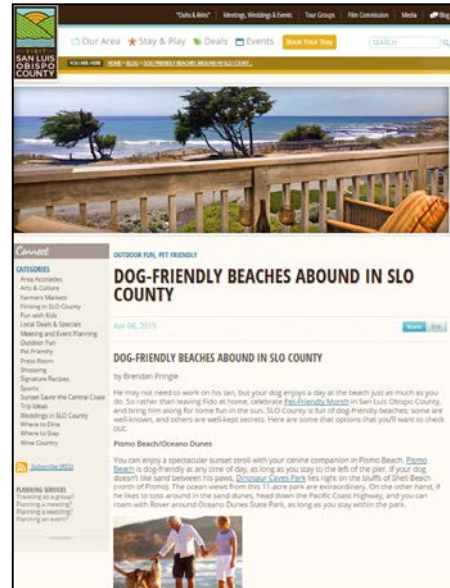
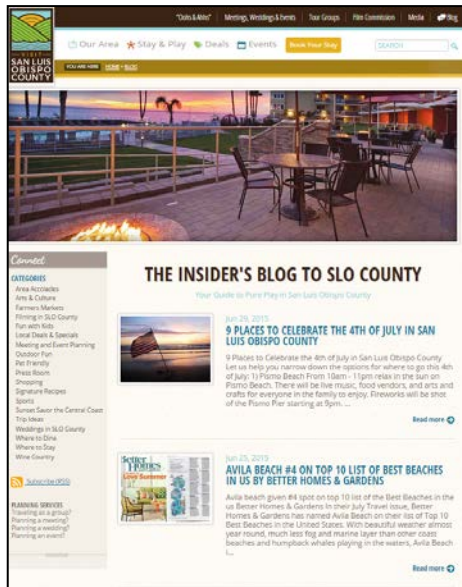
2015/2014 Visits Year-Over-Year



increase from 22% in December to 26% five months later in May.

Visit San Luis Obispo County Blog

The Visit San Luis Obispo County blog has consistently gained traction. The blog features content from local community members, posts about media recognition, posts about local events and travel recommendations and tips. In the coming year, Visit San Luis Obispo County will be increasing the amount of constituent and member content by offering featured blog posts as a new benefit.



Visit San Luis Obispo County Blog

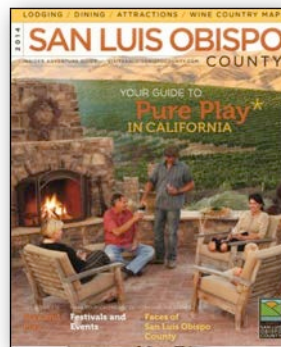
Constituent & Member Programs

2015 Visitor Guide – In 2015, Visit San Luis Obispo County partnered with publisher PACE Communications to transform the publication and create a fresh, new, content-rich Visitors Guide. The Guide is the publication gateway for tourists pursuing more information about San Luis Obispo County’s unique Culinary, Coastal and Cultural assets when planning their multi-day getaway. Published annually, the colorful magazine-style travel planner comes in the form of a lifestyle format, which includes in-depth features on a number of county attractions. A section titled “The Lay of the Land” offers visitors a helpful overview of San Luis Obispo County communities with various tips and highlighted activities. Complemented by colorful, vibrant photos, the article targets the reasons why people come to San Luis Obispo County to play —from outdoor attractions such as beaches, biking and wildlife, to local and cultural events.

New in 2015, the Guide features a special section called “Ask a Local,” where local tourism industry professionals offer insider tips, highlighting their favorite activities in San Luis Obispo County. The Guide also includes a section on wine country, attractions, events, restaurants, golf courses and guides for lodging.

Forty-five thousand guides were printed and sent to potential visitors, leisure and business travelers, meeting planners, travel agents, tour operators and media throughout the country. The Guide is also available in a digital format which is used to target tour operators and media both in the United States and abroad. Additionally, the Guide is available to all Visit San Luis Obispo County partners through local chambers, visitor centers and lodging partners. The Guide is currently available in California Welcome Centers in San Francisco, Oxnard and Pismo Beach and at airport locations in Santa Barbara, Burbank, San Luis Obispo and San Jose. The 2015 Visitor Guide continued with the tagline “Pure Play” to showcase the publication as the official guide to authentic play in California.

- 2015 Visitor Guide Total Distribution: **45,000**
- Distribution through online downloads, bulk mailings and call-in requests: **4,195**
- 2014 Distribution through SAVOR: **5,000**
- Distribution through California Welcome Centers in San Francisco, Oxnard, Pismo Beach, Burbank/Bob Hope Airport, San Jose Airport: **29,000**



2014 Visitors Guide



2015 Visitors Guide

Event Directory and Holiday Guide – Visit San Luis Obispo County continued distribution of its Community Event Directory. This event directory is used by members and visitors to anticipate upcoming events, and in hotels to provide guests with a listing of festivals, fairs, celebrations, special events and performing arts around the county.

In addition, Visit San Luis Obispo County’s 2014 Holiday Guide offered a city-by-city resource on all the holiday happenings up and down the county.



Tourism Vision Workshop/National Travel & Tourism Week Reception (5/8/15) – In conjunction with U.S. Travel Association’s National Travel & Tourism Week, Visit San Luis Obispo County held its fifth annual Tourism Vision Workshop at the historic Atascadero City Hall. Attendees listened attentively to presentations from Visit California President & CEO Caroline Beteta and Jim Rogers, Chairman & CEO of

Kampgrounds of America, Inc., on the importance of a unified tourism direction in San Luis Obispo County. Visit San Luis Obispo County President & CEO Chuck Davison also shared his year-one priorities for the organization on the cusp of finalizing the Tourism Marketing District (TMD). Following this presentation, longtime Pismo Beach CVB Executive Director, Suzen Brasile, was honored with Visit San Luis Obispo County’s Tourism Ambassador Award, which was presented by Beteta. After the workshop, attendees were invited to toast tourism at the SeaVenture Beach Hotel in Pismo Beach, where beach muralist Andres Amador rendered a 140-foot Visit San Luis Obispo County logo in the sand. The events attracted about 150 Visit San Luis Obispo County members, local dignitaries, tourism partners and media. A copy of all presentations can be found on Members Area of VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com.



**Tourism Vision Workshop
Atascadero City Hall**



Suzen Brasile, pictured with Chuck Davison, Caroline Beteta, Stacie Jacob, and Jim Rogers



**National Travel & Tourism Week Reception
Pismo Beach**

Packaging Networking Parties (4/1/15-4/2/15) – Visit San Luis Obispo County hosted two back-to-back packaging networking parties in North and South County. Members were able to network through a “speed meeting” format to establish potential relationships for creating hotel packages. On April 1, attendees gathered at Avila Beach Golf Resort for the South County event, and on April 2, Vina Robles Hospitality Center in Paso Robles hosted the North County event. Over 40 representatives from member lodging properties, restaurants, wineries and activities attended. Guests enjoyed wine provided by Tolosa Winery and Vina Robles Winery, as well as small bites provided by Comfort Market in Arroyo Grande and Odyssey World Café in Paso Robles.



South County Packaging Party (4/1/15)
Avila Beach Golf Resort



North County Packaging Party (4/2/15)
Vina Robles Hospitality Center

Poly Parent Adventures (9/17/14-9/21/14) – Visit San Luis Obispo County and Cal Poly partnered together to create Poly Parent Adventures, which launched in 2014. This new program offered parents of Cal Poly students during Week of Welcome, special value-added deals and packages, enticing them to extend their stay while in San Luis Obispo County. Over 30 lodging, winery, restaurant and activity members participated. This new program was advertised by Cal Poly to the parents of incoming freshmen through email blasts and branded materials. We are continuing this successful partnership in 2015.



Poly Parent Adventures (9/17/14-9/21/14)

Monthly E-Special Campaign – Toward the end of every month, Visit San Luis Obispo County distributes its monthly e-special to a database of about 29,000 consumers. The purpose of the email is to let consumers know about what’s happening in SLO County in the following month. The email includes specials and opportunities from members who opt to pay for their ad placement, as well as events taken from the online event calendar. E-specials have had an average open rate of approximately 19.6%.

Travel Trade

2014-15 areas of priority included maintaining and leveraging memberships in key industry associations, continuing active participation in relevant state and international trade shows and developing and supporting industry familiarization (FAM) trips.

In the coming 2015-16 fiscal year, the Director of Travel Trade will be expanding our presence at trade shows and cultivating new relationships through FAM trips with tour operators, incentive meeting planners and travel trade media.

FAM Tours

- **Visit California UK SuperFAM (9/29/14-9/30/14)** – Visit San Luis Obispo County hosted 11 UK tour operators and one Visit California representative for a tour of Hearst Castle and San Luis Obispo, in partnership with the City of San Luis Obispo, the SLO Chamber and Hearst Castle. These tour operators book luxury-style tours for smaller groups in the UK market.
- **Visit California Chinese FAM (3/14/15, Shanghai)** – In partnership with Visit California, Visit San Luis Obispo County hosted 20 Chinese Tour Operators from Shanghai Huating Overseas, Asia Pacific Travel Tours and other companies. The FAM visited Hearst Castle and finished their day in San Luis Obispo, where they had dinner at Mandarin Gourmet, paired with wines selected by San Luis Obispo Wine Country Association. They stayed at the La Cuesta Inn in San Luis Obispo.
- **Visit California Chinese FAM (3/25/15, Beijing)** – In partnership with Visit California, Visit San Luis Obispo County hosted 13 Chinese tour operators, including operators from Air China, Step the World, and Utour, in San Luis Obispo. The FAM stayed at the Apple Farm, and enjoyed dinner at Mandarin Gourmet. The following day, they enjoyed a tour and lunch at the Madonna Inn.



**Visit California UK Super FAM
(9/29/14-9/30/14)**



**Visit California Chinese FAM
(3/14/15)**



**Visit California Chinese FAM
(3/25/15)**

Trade Shows

- **NTA Travel Exchange (1/18/15-1/22/15)** – Hosted in New Orleans, Visit San Luis Obispo County conducted approximately 26 meetings with tour and receptive operators doing business inside our county along with several who are considering SLO County as part of a future tour. Travel Exchange boasts an attendance of 3,600 tourism



professionals from around the globe and many networking opportunities. Sales leads from the show were pushed out to all lodging members within a week of the show ending.

- **US Travel Association's IPW (5/30/15-6/3/15)** – Visit San Luis Obispo County President & CEO Chuck Davison and other local tourism leaders traveled to Orlando, Florida for this year's IPW. In three days of intensive pre-scheduled business appointments, our delegation of SLO County tourism leaders met with more than 50 international and domestic buyers. Participating partners included: Ayres' Allegretto Vineyard Resort Paso Robles, SeaCrest OceanFront Hotel, Travel Paso Robles Alliance, and Hearst Castle. During the event, we poured wines from Edna Valley Vineyard and Halter Ranch Vineyard. Sales leads from the show were pushed out to the entire lodging community at the end of June.



Through our increased partnership with Visit California, we also had the opportunity to showcase SLO County sparkling wine from Laetitia Vineyards and Winery at the Chairman's Circle Honors Banquet, which honors the Top 100 International Operators providing 70% of the business to the United States.

Additionally, Visit San Luis Obispo County worked with Jeanne Sullivan (Black Ink PR) to represent the region at the IPW 2015 Media Marketplace (6/1/15), which has already produced a number of feature articles and media visits.



IPW 2015: Orlando, FL



Chairman’s Circle Honors Banquet at IPW
Caroline Beteta, President & CEO, Visit CA (center)
Roger Dow, President & CEO, US Travel (right)

Film Commission

The San Luis Obispo County Film Commission (SLOCFC) is a department of Visit San Luis Obispo County that offers a variety of services to fit the production needs for feature films, commercials, television and still photography shoots. From providing location suggestions, to assisting with permitting and finding additional support services, the Film Commission acts as a liaison to scouts, location managers and filmmakers who are interested in shooting in San Luis Obispo County. Film Commission staff continues to expand a location library of images accessible from the Visit San Luis Obispo County website. In addition, the Film Commission is actively working with local film permitting partners to ensure film permitting is a streamlined process for filmmakers.

The San Luis Obispo County Film Commission participated in many programs this year, including:

- **Travel Channel China (7/24/14)** — The SLOCFC hosted Travel Channel China in Pismo Beach and the Oceano Dunes. This Visit California lead reached more than 300 million viewers in China when it was featured in the third episode of Travel Channel China’s California series.
- **San Luis Obispo International Film Festival (3/10/15-3/15/15)** — The SLOCFC partnered with the San Luis Obispo International Film Festival as a marketing sponsor, highlighting the event with special blog posts and social media attention. A special page was also dedicated help promote the event on the Visit San Luis Obispo County website.
- **FYI.TV Network Reality Show (3/12/15)** — The reality TV show “Sliding Doors” (working title) was shot throughout San Luis Obispo County and included scenes filmed at the SeaCrest OceanFront Hotel, River Oaks Hot Springs, and the Oceano Dunes. Cast and crew stayed at the Summerwood Inn and Winery.
- **FLICS Conference (6/13/15)** — Visit San Luis Obispo County attended the annual FLICS (Film Liaisons in California Statewide) Conference in June. Over 600 film industry officials attended, including producers, location scouts and location managers. Panels included information on drones and the new California Tax Incentive program for filmmakers.



- **Countywide Film Permitting Meeting (6/24/15)** — Visit San Luis Obispo County Film Commission Liaison Kylee Jepsen held a meeting with local film permitting partners to discuss ways to streamline the film permitting process for filmmakers looking to shoot in the county. She also updated permitting partners on industry practices involving drones and the new California Tax Incentive Program.
- **Visit California Awesomeness TV (6/25/15)** — Visit San Luis Obispo County Film Commission worked in partnership with Visit California to film Awesomeness TV YouTube Series – “First Times with Jenn & Jack.” This series was filmed predominantly at the Oceano Dunes and B-Roll footage was shot in San Luis Obispo and Pismo Beach. The group also stayed at the Holiday Inn Express in Grover Beach.



FLICS Conference (6/13/15)

Notable Credits in 2014-2015

Print

- See by Chloe (still shoot)
- Petunia Pickle Bottom (catalog shoot)
- *Bleu & Blanc* (upscale Mexican travel magazine)
- Jeep (still shoot, Oceano Dunes)



Commercial

- American Eagle Outfitter
- Aeropostale Clothing
- The North Face



Television

- The Redwood Kings (continued series)
- Travel Channel China

Feature Films

- *The Gael* (Paso Robles)
- *Knowledge Tree Films*
- *The Legacy of Avril Kyte*
- *Day Six*



The Gael
Filming in Paso Robles

Web

- “Cry No More” music video
- Awesomeness TV Youtube Series

Public Relations

Visit San Luis Obispo County continued to develop and leverage partnerships with Visit California to garner media coverage nationally and internationally. From July 2014 to March 2015, Visit San Luis Obispo County extended its partnership with Black Ink PR, who assisted with destination PR for the region, creating press releases that highlighted key brand-supporting travel themes. They also worked in partnership with Visit San Luis Obispo County to attract interest from media through pitching the destination and writing about the year-round experience in SLO County. Visit San Luis Obispo County continues to monitor media leads daily, sharing the latest destination developments with the right media to garner attraction for San Luis Obispo County and its partners. Visit San Luis Obispo County also continues to leverage relationships with Visit California and UK-based marketing agency Black Diamond, partnering in various national and international media FAMs coming to the region.

Media FAM Tours

- **Visit California French Press FAM (3/18/15-3/19/15)** – Visit San Luis Obispo County worked in partnership with the City of San Luis Obispo on a FAM that hosted five journalists from major media in France, including *Elle*, *Le Point*, *Les Echos Série Limitée*, *Biba* and *L’Obs*. Traveling with the group was one Visit California France representative. They visited Hearst Castle, enjoyed lunch and wine tasting at Claiborne & Churchill, as well as dinner at Novo, and stayed at the Madonna Inn.
- **Visit California Brazilian Press FAM (5/19/15)** – Visit San Luis Obispo County hosted three Brazilian media representatives and one Visit California representative in San Luis Obispo. The trip included media from *Do Pão Ao Caviar* and *O Estado de S.Paulo*. Participants had drinks at

Sidecar and dinner at Foremost Wine Co., as well as a tour of Downtown SLO. The group stayed at the Hampton Inn & Suites in San Luis Obispo.

- **Thomas Cook Travel Magazine (6/6/15)** – In partnership with Black Diamond, Visit San Luis Obispo County hosted a journalist writing an article for Thomas Cook Magazine. The journalist focused on Cayucos, staying at the Shoreline Inn and visiting Cayucos Cellars, along with other local businesses.
- **Visit California UK Press FAM (6/16/15)** – Visit San Luis Obispo County hosted in Pismo Beach seven journalists from the UK, representing publications such as Travel Weekly, The Sun, Daily Mirror and Press Association, one Virgin Holidays representative and one Visit California representative. The group was greeted by a private wine tasting from Adelaida Cellars and Kelsey See Canyon, and then had dinner at the Madonna Inn. The next day they traveled to the Oceano Dunes for dune bugging. The group stayed at the Cottage Inn and Suites in Pismo Beach.
- **Visit California Chinese Press FAM (6/25/15)** – A Chinese Press Tour visited San Luis Obispo County in partnership with Visit California China. This tour included journalists from the Chinese GQ, Esquire, Trading Up, National Geographic Traveler and Traveler Weekly. The FAM visited Hearst Castle, the San Luis Obispo Downtown Farmer’s Market and stayed at the SeaCrest OceanFront Hotel in Pismo Beach.



**Visit California UK Press FAM
(6/16/15)**



**Visit California Chinese Press FAM
(6/25/15)**

Press Releases

Visit San Luis Obispo County and Black Ink PR produced several press releases throughout the fiscal year focusing on special Visit San Luis Obispo County programs and projects, as well as targeted vacation planning itineraries and information. Several of these were released through all media platforms:

- **“What’s New in SLO County” (5/21/15)** – Visit San Luis Obispo County reached out to its members asking for submissions on new developments happening throughout San Luis Obispo County to include in this yearly news release to Visit California and other media channels. This release was posted on PR Newswire and received approximately \$460,000 in media value with approximately 4,586,750 media impressions, reaching an audience total of 18,347,000.
- **“Tourist Spending in San Luis Obispo County Grows at Steady Pace Reaching \$1.5 billion in 2014” (5/1/15)** – Visit San Luis Obispo County highlighted the local and national impact of tourism in celebration of National Travel & Tourism Week. This release was sent to local and regional media.
- **“Enjoy Romance this Valentine’s Day in San Luis Obispo County, California” (2/2/15)** – Visit San Luis Obispo County announced its Month of Love with featured deals and packages from local partners. This release was distributed through PR Newswire, reporting an audience of

20,153,000, which is estimated to have received about 5,038,250 impressions and a \$504,000 media value.

- **“Visit San Luis Obispo County Launches Restaurant Month Promotion January 2, 2015” (12/16/14)** – Announced the eighth annual Restaurant Month and the introduction of “Go Local Wine Deals.” This release was sent to local and regional media.
- **“Top 10 Reasons You Should Spend the Holidays in San Luis Obispo County on California’s Central Coast” (11/5/14)** – Featuring holiday attractions throughout the county. This release was released via PR Newswire, reporting back an audience of 20,608,000 which estimated to have about 5,152,000 impressions and \$515,000 in media value.
- **“San Luis Obispo County Welcomes the 2014 Wine Conference, Nov. 12-14” (10/28/14)** – This release was sent to local and regional media.
- **“Visit San Luis Obispo County and Cal Poly Partner to Encourage Mid-Week Tourism During Week of Welcome” (7/16/14)** – This release was sent to local and regional media.

Earned Media Coverage

San Luis Obispo County was featured in many notable publications during the year. Securing placements through earned media is among the most beneficial ROI for tourism marketing. Visit San Luis Obispo County hosted numerous media FAMs through Visit California leads resulting in press.

International Press

Visit San Luis Obispo County hosted many international travel writers representing a variety of publications. These familiarization trips included media from:

- *Thomas Cook Travel Magazine* (United Kingdom)
- *Resorts Magazine* (Italy)
- *Plein Air Magazine* (Italy)
- *Great Golf & Great Spa* (Norway)
- *Air New Zealand In-Flight Magazine* (New Zealand)
- *National Geographic Weekly* (China)
- *Travel Weekly* (United Kingdom)
- *Esquire* (China), article coming out in 2015
- *UK Daily Star* (United Kingdom)
- *GQ* (China), article coming out in 2015
- *Trading UP* (China), article coming out in 2015
- *The Sun* (United Kingdom)
- *The Daily Mirror* (United Kingdom)
- *Vancouver Sun* (Canada)
- *Bon Voyage Travel* (France)
- *Guide des destinations golfs* (France)
- *Tendance* (France)



“Go West”
Air New Zealand In-Flight Magazine



Local, Regional and National Press

Highlights include articles/coverage in:

- **Local Media**
KSBY, KCOY/KCET/KKFX, *The Tribune*, *Paso Robles Daily New*, *805 Living*
 - **Regional Media**
San Francisco Chronicle, *The Los Angeles Times*, *LA Weekly*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *SacMag*, *Westways*, *Sunset*, *CA's Adventure Sports Journal*
 - **National Media**
The New York Times, *The Washington Post*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *National Geographic*, *Huffington Post*, *Forbes*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Martha Stewart Living*, *Passport Magazine*, *Movie Maker Magazine*, *Self Magazine*, *Modern Luxury*, *Travel Channel*, *Fodor's Print & Online*, *CNN Travel*, *Epoch Times*
- Radio & Online Media**
KCBX, *BudgetTravel.com*, *Cruisin' California*, *SF Gate*, *TripAdvisor*, *OpenTable*, *Vagabondish*, *NBCBayArea.com*, *AZDailySun.com*, *Examiner.com*, *PeterGreenberg.com*, *Queerty.com*, *MentalFloss.com*

Public Relations Events

Los Angeles Media Reception (4/12/15) – Visit San Luis Obispo County participated in Visit California's Los Angeles Media Reception to target key media outlets and network with travel journalists. Through the event, Visit San Luis Obispo County distributed branded, preloaded flash drives containing itineraries, photos, and story ideas to over 40 qualified media personnel. San Luis Obispo County was also asked to be the official wine sponsor for the event. Wine donated from SLO Wine Country Association and the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance was placed into gift bags for each media in attendance.

IPW 2015 Media Marketplace (6/1/15) – Visit San Luis Obispo County also worked with Jeanne Sullivan (Black Ink PR) to represent the region at the IPW 2015 Media Marketplace. Here, Visit San Luis Obispo County met with more than 50 journalists at the event, pitching the culinary, coastal and cultural assets of San Luis Obispo County.

Countywide Themed Events:

Restaurant Month (January 2015) – This eighth annual, month-long promotion celebrated some of the finest cuisine on the Central Coast in a slower, off-season month. Forty-five restaurants, representing eight SLO County communities, participated by offering Prix Fixe menus at 3 for \$30, 3 for \$40, 2 for \$30, or 4 for \$40. In addition, Visit San Luis Obispo County partnered with San Luis Obispo Wine Country Association and Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance to introduce "Go Local Wine Deals," which featured about 60 local wineries throughout the



county. The promotion contributed to 71,833 dining related views in January, and 51,679 views to the Restaurant Month splash page—a 106% increase over 2014. Media partners included QuickBite, KRUSH Radio, KJUG Radio, KZOZ, New Times, KCBX and KIQO. Coverage included media from *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, *SF Gate* & *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *New Times SLO*.

SLO County Month of Love (February 2015) –

During the Month of Love, Visit San Luis Obispo County encouraged tourism partners to upload their romantic deals and events to the website, and published blog posts highlighting the many romantic things to do throughout the county around Valentine’s Day and the entire month of February.



Pet-Friendly Month (April 2015) –

This monthly thematic promotion focused content and buzz around San Luis Obispo County as a dog-friendly destination. Visit San Luis Obispo County created blogs about local pet-friendly vacation ideas, highlighting members with pet-friendly facilities. On Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, Visit San Luis Obispo County attracted buzz through a Top Dog photo contest with 20 entries. The winner was awarded a two-night stay at Ayres’ Allegretto Vineyard Resort Paso Robles, lunch at Hunter Ranch Golf Course, and wine tastings from Castoro Cellars, Hammersky Vineyards, Wolff Vineyards and Steinbeck Vineyards. The Visit San Luis Obispo County blog received 8,104 visits and the Facebook page saw more than 58,000 impressions.



Social Media

Using scheduled posts and daily themed posts, social media outlets provided a huge opportunity to leverage and bring traffic to the website. Visit San Luis Obispo County collaborated with community partners to advertise local happenings and recognition, positioning our social media platform as the central place for insider information about San Luis Obispo County.

Daily themed hashtags included:

#MondayMinute – Posts featuring a blog or area accolade from the Visit San Luis Obispo County website.

#TastyTuesday – Posts featuring the delicious culinary experiences in San Luis Obispo County.

#WineWednesday – Posts featuring all the great wines the region has to offer.

#TravelThursday – Posts featuring lodging options and insider travel tips for those visiting the region.

#FanFotoFriday – Posts featuring a unique photo of San Luis Obispo County landscape, activities, or

events, submitted by Visit San Luis Obispo County fans.

#SAVORSaturday – Posts highlighting the Central Coast’s beautiful assets and updates on *Sunset* SAVOR the Central Coast event features.

#FundaySunday – Posts focusing on adventure and events happening on Sunday

Visit San Luis Obispo County Social Media Statistics



Marketing

Magazine Co-op Advertising

California State Visitor's Guide – Visit San Luis Obispo County offered a co-op for partners in the 2014 *California State Visitor's Guide*. The half-page ad featured participation from Travel Paso Robles Alliance and the City of San Luis Obispo. The *California State Visitor's Guide* has an annual production of 500,000 and an online distribution of 3.5 million. The Guide is also used in California Welcome Centers and Visitor Information Centers, at sales missions, consumer and travel trade shows and various newsstands through Time Inc.



2014 California State Visitor's Guide



Touring & Tasting Magazine

Touring & Tasting Magazine – In 2015, Visit San Luis Obispo County also worked in partnership with *Touring & Tasting* on a special editorial section dedicated to the region. Through this co-op advertisement, members of Visit San Luis Obispo County were given discounted rates when buying into the section. The result was a 36-page destination feature highlighting food, wine and lodging in San Luis Obispo County.

California's Central Coast Visitors Map

Every year, Visit San Luis Obispo County works in partnership with Certified Folder and the Central Coast Tourism Council to produce their main collateral piece: California's Central Coast Visitors Map. Approximately 200,000 Visitors Maps are printed each year, and distributed in over 400 hotels and visitor centers in both San Francisco and Los Angeles Gateways, as well as various Tradeshows, six California Airports, seven California Welcome Centers, and over 10 International Visit California Offices.



Advertisements

In June, Visit San Luis Obispo County ran a 2-page spread in *Sunset Magazine's* Sunset Travel Awards issue. The ad leveraged the impact of the many award-winning San Luis Obispo County attractions featured in this issue.

Sunset SAVOR the Central Coast

In 2014 *Sunset SAVOR* the Central Coast remained a key marketing program of Visit San Luis Obispo County. The fifth annual event, held September 25-28, 2014, maintained its draw among a lifestyle and experience driven demographic. Adventure Tours offered 12 countywide experiences and special events and dinners offered five unique opportunities for attendees. The event garnered high honors nationwide, and was recognized as an Honoree for the TASTE Awards in the category of Outstanding Food Event.

Total Attendees – 9,500 tickets sold (6,342 unique attendees)

Attendee Data

- **61%** of attendees have an average household income over \$100,000
- **56%** of attendees are between 45 – 64 years of age; 33% of attendees are between 25 – 44 years of age
- **36%** from out of county / 64% San Luis Obispo County
- **5.36%** from out of state (22 states represented plus Australia)
- **10.8%** from Southern CA / LA area
- **11.2%** from Bay Area
- **5%** from California Central Valley

Of the total attendees, **2,213** or **23%** participated in an event in addition to the main event festivities.

- Total Economic Impact: **\$4.48 million**
- Economic Impact from Attendee Spending: **\$1.15 million**
- Economic Impact from Operations/Preparation: **\$2.55 million**
- Economic Impact from Local Leavers: **\$.783 million**
- Total Dollars Spent by Attendees: **\$0.819 million**
- Estimated Local Hotel/Motel Bed Tax Generated: **\$29,626**
- Estimated Local Sales Tax Generated: **\$73,106**
- Average Length of Guest Stay: **2.31** days with an average party size of **3.68** persons

SAVOR 2014 Events:



Celebrity Chef Fabio Viviani



Celebrity Chef Tanya Holland



Main Event Attendees



**Roam with the Clydesdales
Adventure Tour**



**Indulge in Ocean Rose Abalone
Adventure Tour**

SAVOR 2014 Media & Marketing

Public Relations

- Total Media Impressions: **304,641,264 million**
- Publicity Value: **\$46.9 million**
- Media Hosted: **27**
- Key Publication Coverage: *Antelope Valley Press, LA Times, SF Chronicle, The Epoch Times, US Airways Magazine, San Jose Mercury News, Huffington Post, Vagabondish.com, WanderlustandLipstick.com, About.com, DonnaHup.com, Examiner.com, Two Guys From Napa, TasteTV.com, SF Eater, NBC Bay Area News, Via Magazine, CNBC, Blue Lifestyle Radio, Travel Planners Radio Show, Grape Encounters Radio, Quick Bite Ratio, CRN Radio, New Times SLO, San Luis Obispo Tribune* and many more.



Celebration Weekend (June 6-7, 2015)

Visit San Luis Obispo County showcased the bounty of San Luis Obispo County at *Sunset's* Celebration Weekend, the sister event to *Sunset SAVOR* the Central Coast. This two-day food and wine festival, held at *Sunset* Headquarters in Menlo Park, featured Visit San Luis Obispo County and several SAVOR partners in the coveted inner courtyard. The SAVOR Courtyard showcased wine provided by the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance, SLO Wine Country Association, Lone Madrone Winery as well as various SAVOR artisan purveyors including: Life Elements, The Pistachio Company, Pasolivo and Bristol's Cider. SAVOR welcomed guests, collected more than 1,000 names and distributed SAVOR bags along with Visit San Luis Obispo County Visitor Guides.



SAVOR 2015 Partnership with Fast Forward Events

In February 2015, Visit San Luis Obispo County's Board of Directors voted to approve Fast Forward Events, a national event production and marketing agency based in San Diego, CA, as the operator and production partner for *Sunset* SAVOR the Central Coast.

Fast Forward brings with it an established portfolio of award-winning luxury food and wine experiences, a talented and experienced team of event professionals and a keen understanding of the latest trends in the industry.

Under its management, Fast Forward is handling turnkey event operations including marketing and public relations, sponsorship and exhibitor sales, vendor management, event production, operations and logistics, brand management and activation. Working with the team at Visit San Luis Obispo County, Fast Forward is engaging with the strong community base that has been critical to building the SAVOR brand. The agency is known nationally as an award-winning production agency, with credits including the annual San Diego Bay Wine & Food Festival, Cooking Light & Health's The Fit Foodie series, Editor Showcase NYC, and SommCon, a four-day educational conference for wine industry professionals.

The partnership is a four-year deal, in which Fast Forward Events will ultimately own 100% of SAVOR the Central Coast in 2018. Visit San Luis Obispo County will continue to license the SAVOR name, brand and assets in exchange for a 10% profit share.

Visit San Luis Obispo County continues its partnership with *Sunset*, the West's leading lifestyle brand, to produce *Sunset* SAVOR the Central Coast. Ticket sales launched on May 1, 2015 at SAVORCentralCoast.com.



Strategic Partnerships

Visit San Luis Obispo County continued to position itself as an educational resource to its membership, disseminating valuable tourism information within San Luis Obispo County. Moreover, in its effort to provide a unified voice to the countywide tourism industry, we have strengthened several strategic statewide and regional relationships to grow sales and boost our tourism presence.

Industry Relations

Visit California — Visit California is a non-profit organization with a mission to develop and maintain marketing programs – in partnership with the state's travel industry – that keep California top-of-mind

as a premier travel destination. Visit San Luis Obispo County has continued to cultivate a strong relationship with Visit California.

Chuck Davison, President & CEO of Visit San Luis Obispo County, is a member of Visit California's Research Committee. His focus to increase activity with the organization has directly led to many tour operator FAM and media FAM leads, along with other special opportunities. In January 2015, the organization took San Luis Obispo County on the road to the Visit California corporate office in Sacramento for "Third Thursday." This once-a-month educational promotional opportunity allowed the team to showcase San Luis Obispo County in a new way for the 40+ Visit California staff in attendance. The road show included a cultural, culinary and coastal trip throughout our county through a visual presentation which featured SLO County wine along the way, a Santa Maria BBQ lunch, and an expansive gift bag offering a taste of everything San Luis Obispo County.

Visit California President & CEO Caroline Beteta celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week as a keynote speaker at the Tourism Vision Workshop, and provided Visit San Luis Obispo County the opportunity to feature San Luis Obispo County sparkling wine, from Laetitia Vineyards and Winery, at the Chairman's Circle Honors Banquet at US Travel's IPW. This banquet gave SLO County exposure to the top 100 international operators who provide 70% of the business to the United States.



"Third Thursday" (1/15/15)

Visit San Luis Obispo County and its partner communities were all represented at Visit California's Outlook Forum, California's premier tourism marketing conference, held on February 23-24, 2015. More than 500 industry professionals came together to hear trends, look at innovative marketing ideas and network with industry authorities from across the state.

Central Coast Tourism Council (CCTC) — CCTC is a non-profit, regional tourism marketing organization with an all-volunteer board of tourism and hospitality professionals representing each area within the Central Coast region. Chuck Davison, President & CEO of Visit San Luis Obispo County, is a board member of the Central Coast Tourism Council, ensuring that your voice is heard. This important relationship attracts international tour groups and media visits to SLO County.

CalTravel — CalTravel is the unified voice of California's travel and tourism industry, protecting and enhancing the interests of the California travel and tourism through advocacy, collaboration, and education. Visit San Luis Obispo County attended their annual California Travel Summit (June 17-19), where Sr. Communications Coordinator & Film Commission Liaison Kylee Jepsen received their "30 and Under Award." Cal Travel's November 2015 Board meeting will be held in Paso Robles.



**Kylee Jepsen (center),
receiving CalTravel's
"30 & Under Award"**

Brand USA — Brand USA leads the nation's global marketing effort to promote the United States as a premier travel destination and communicates U.S. entry/exit policies and procedures to worldwide travelers. Visit San Luis Obispo County continues to work in partnership with Brand USA, as a national partner in tourism. This relationship will be leveraged even greater in the 2015-16 fiscal year.

FLICS — The San Luis Obispo County Film Commission continued their membership with FLICS (Film Liaisons in California Statewide) in 2015-16. This membership is vital to the Film Commission as FLICS provides a gateway to location leads, industry information, networking events and partnerships.



Local Partnerships

SLO County Regional Airport — Visit San Luis Obispo County continues to serve as a strategic partner to attract additional air service to the county. As a partner for the Sixel Airports Conference, hosted by the SLO County Regional Airport, Visit San Luis Obispo County provided a taste of San Luis Obispo County in a luxury gift bag for the top 30 airline executives in attendance. Visit San Luis Obispo County also had the opportunity to meet with Alaska Airlines in order to pitch direct flights to Seattle—a key to growing regional tourism markets.

Cal Poly — Visit San Luis Obispo County partnered again with Cal Poly on several opportunities, including Poly Parent Adventures. Additionally, Chuck Davison, President & CEO of Visit San Luis Obispo County, sits on the Cal Poly President’s Local Economic Development Committee.

Economic Vitality Corporation — Economic Vitality Corporation (EVC) is a regional non-profit, economic development organization committed to developing a vibrant and sustainable economy throughout San Luis Obispo County. Leading the county’s economic strategy, Visit San Luis Obispo County is an active partner in the Uniquely SLO Cluster group, advocating additional air service and working with the business community to promote the lifestyle tourism creates in San Luis Obispo County.

Amtrak — Amtrak featured our new 2015 San Luis Obispo County Visitor Guides at the Fullerton Railroad Days, which took place at the Fullerton Railroad Station on May 2-3. The event drew more than 30,000 attendees, and nearly 450 guides were distributed.



For additional information on Visit San Luis Obispo County programs and projects, please contact (805) 541-8000, email: info@visitsanluisobispo.com or go to VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com.