

SOUTH
COUNTY

TOURISM
COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018



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Special thanks to the South County Legislative Caucus for their support over the past 31 years.

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Board of Directors

OFFICERS

Chairman of the Board: Loren Spears, Exeter
Vice Chair: Charlie Beck, Charlestown
Secretary: Deb Perry, South Kingstown
Treasurer: Eric Postemsky, South Kingstown

DIRECTORS:

Charlestown: Charlie Beck, Elsie Foy
Coventry: Norma Smith, Jennifer McLeod
East Greenwich: Levon Kasparian
Exeter: Loren Spears
Hopkinton: Barbara Capalbo, Chris Fox
Narragansett: Megan Moran
North Kingstown: David Zapatka, Jason Considine
Richmond: Nicole Mihailidis Rodin
South Kingstown: Eric Postemsky, Deb Perry
At-Large: Larry Mouradjian
Westerly: Laurie Hobbs

MISSION STATEMENT

The primary mission of the South Count Tourism Council is to plan, promote and market tourism beyond our 11-town region. Working with the applicable state policies and procedures, board membership has the opportunity to identify our target tourism market, and to develop marketing campaigns that attract visitors to our area.

Photo above by Gina Campbell. Photo to the left by: Brooks Mathewson, cover: Katherine Gendreau



John Woodmansee

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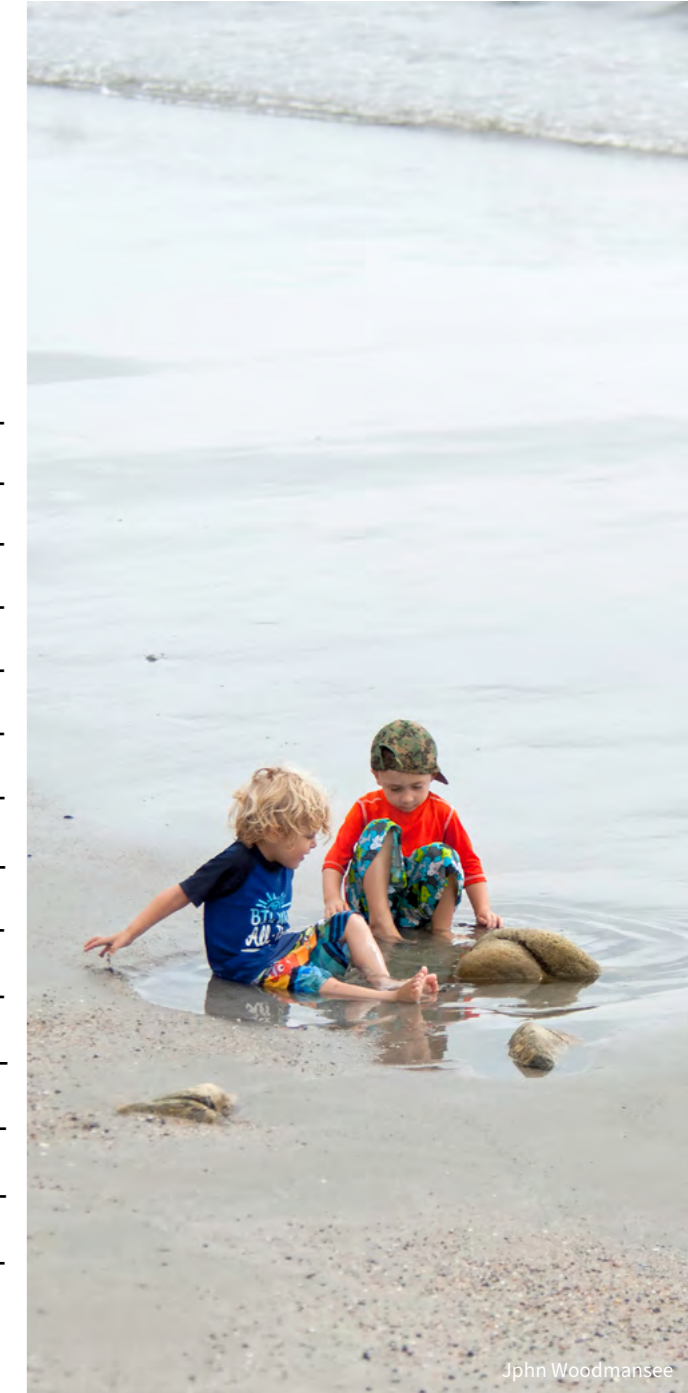
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Jphn Woodmansee

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Dear Tourism Partner:

South County Tourism Council experienced a transitional year- we moved to a new location, we relaunched our website and expanded our marketing initiatives to reflect changes in the industry. Despite all the transition, we continued to grow particularly in our group tour market where we saw an additional 30% increase.

We continued to invest in new initiatives such as charity auctions, video and public relations. Charity auctions increased our visibility attracting new potential visitors. Our PR efforts, including working more with influencers equaled \$2.2 million in free publicity and our new promotional video won a silver in the North American Travel Journalist Association's annual awards competition for Destination Video.

Continued collaboration with regional partners and the state remains key. We work very closely with the state and their PR agency in our PR efforts. We continue to work with Newport and Block Island to promote attractions to visitors across our neighboring regions.

Our Board of Directors continues to provide advice and oversight and I thank them for their input.

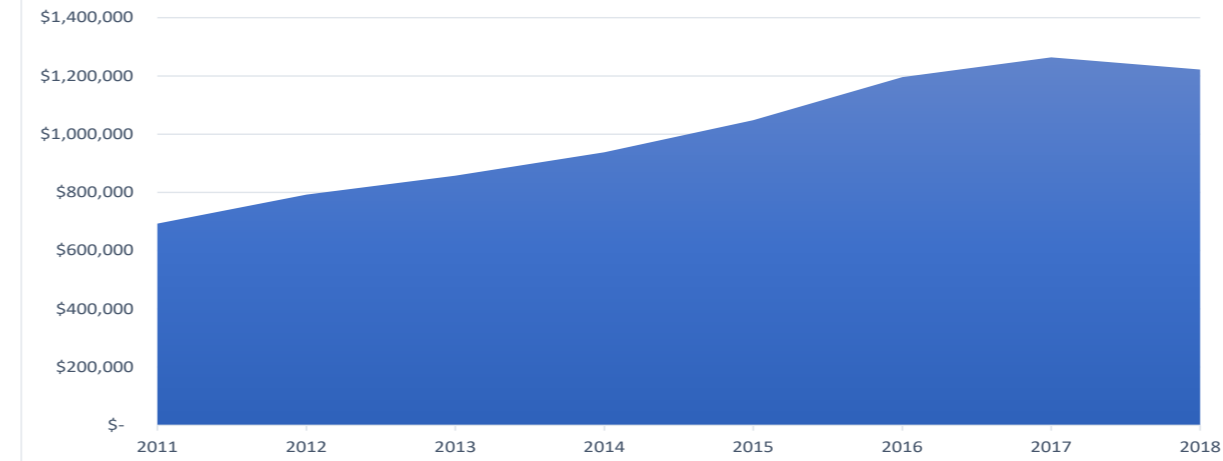
With the transition behind us, we're eager to see what our newest endeavors for South County Tourism will yield next year.

Louise D. Bishop
President & CEO



FINANCIAL STATEMENT

South County Region Growth in Hotel Tax Revenue



YEARS ENDING JUNE 30,

	2014	(1) 2015	(1) 2016	(1) 2017	(1) 2018
Revenues					
Room Tax	\$ 937,976	\$ 1,048,168	\$ 1,195,799	\$ 1,263,740	\$ 1,221,762 (2)
Other	\$ 94,151	\$ 77,716	\$ 80,279	\$ 74,055	\$ 97,389
Interest	\$ 5,823	\$ 7,940	\$ 8,006	\$ 8,968	\$ 7,739
Total	\$ 1,037,950	\$ 1,133,824	\$ 1,284,084	\$ 1,346,763	\$ 1,326,890
% Change	10.3	9.2	13.3	4.9	(1.5)
Expenses	\$ 773,065	\$ 884,426	\$ 1,011,344	\$ 1,611,021	\$ 1,500,696
Revenues Over (Under) Expenses	\$ 264,885	\$ 249,398	\$ 272,740	\$ (264,258)	\$ (173,806)
Beginning Net Assets	\$ 1,414,257	\$ 1,679,142	\$ 1,928,540	\$ 2,201,280	\$ 1,937,023
Ending Net Assets	\$ 1,679,142	\$ 1,928,540	\$ 2,201,280	\$ 1,937,022	\$ 1,763,217

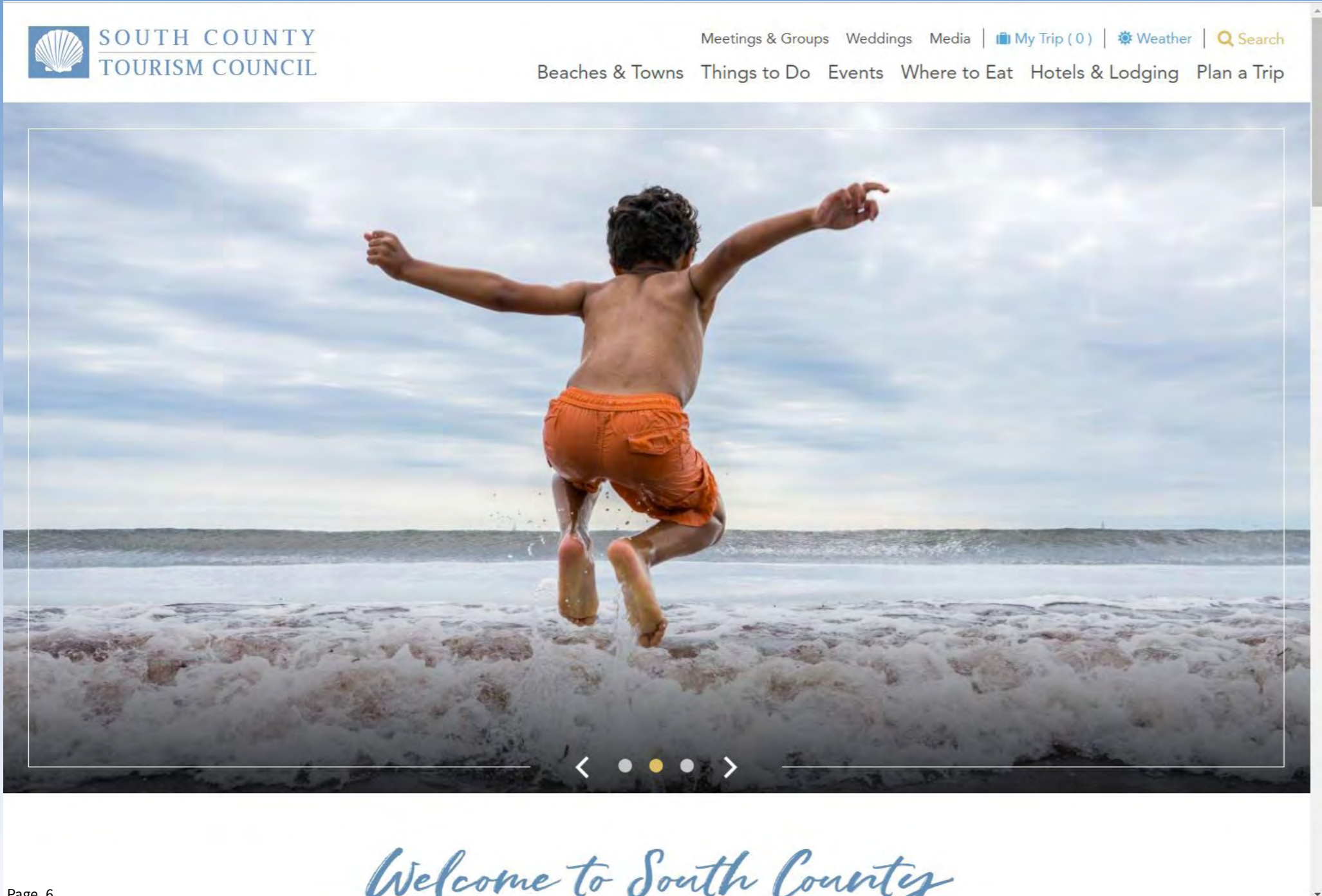
(1) Audited by Mullen, Scorpio & Cerilli, CPA

(2) The Room Tax distributed to the region was reduced by 5%



Steve Wood

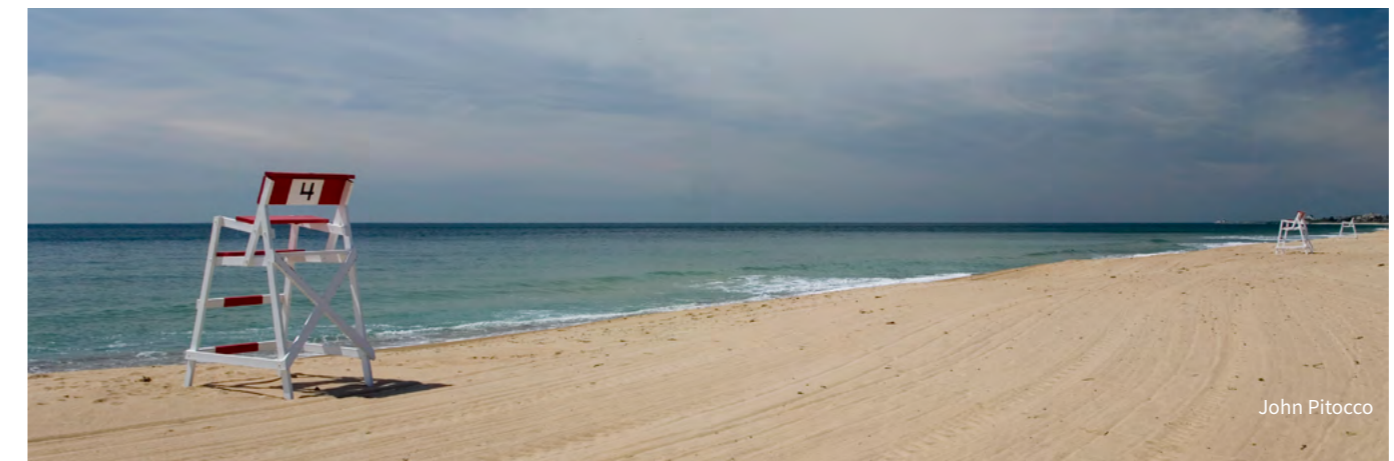
South County Tourism Launches New Simpleview Website Integrated with New CRM



NEW WEBSITE

South County Tourism Council partnered with Simpleview - the DMO standard in websites - to launch a new, improved website integrated with a centralized database which we never had before. Since the state also uses Simpleview for their website and database, this makes it easy to share assets such as photos, events, listings and more. The new website launched the second week of September and features:

- streaming video on the home page that runs seamlessly to the edge of the screen
- photos for every listing
- merge the separate SouthCountyWeddings.com site into the main site
- a Media section
- the ability to sell website advertising
- the ability to create content such as Top Things to Do in South County, Things to Do with Kids, etc.
- A trip planner





Abeselom Zerit

SCTC MOVES TO CHARLESTOWN

In June, South County Tourism Council relocated to our new building in Charlestown that we purchased last year with the consent of our board.

Located at 4160 Old Post Road, the new office, known as “The Windswept Center,” allows space for future growth, a board room for meetings and space for small events. “We hope to better serve the region with space that allows us to host educational workshops, meetings and more,” says South County Tourism Council President Louise D. Bishop.

We held our ribbon cutting in October with the Charlestown Chamber of Commerce present and our board.

We currently occupy the main floor and rent out the nine offices upstairs which cover 90% of the building’s operation costs.

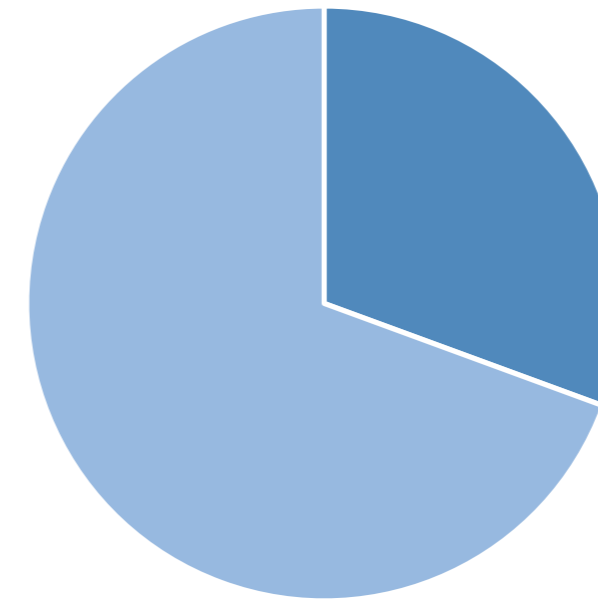


Helen Tafurr

WEB STATS

Web visits for FY 2018 were **9.2 million** and web hits were **18.6million**.

FY 2018



■ Web Hits ■ Web Visits



John Woodmansee

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media continues to provide visitors with useful information and news for their South County destination vacation. Advertising on FaceBook and Instagram has driven up visits to our website and increased engagement on our posts. With the addition of user-generated content, we have grown followers and expanded our photo and video libraries. Google Analytics reflects that most visits to SouthCountyRi.com are via mobile devices and tablets. Our website has been responsive since 2013.



FACEBOOK

We have 99K FaceBook followers - a growth of over 52% from the year before. This growth can be attributed to FaceBook advertising to an expanded audience and also the creation of engaging content, including user-generated content.



TWITTER

Twitter followers hold steady at just over 6K. While not as visually engaging, Twitter offers opportunities to connect with press, travel writers and influencers.



YOUTUBE

Our YouTube views for the year were at almost 14K. We continue to develop video content with plans to expand our online video library in the next fiscal year.



INSTAGRAM

Instagram continues to be one of the fastest growing social media channels and that's reflected in the growth of our Instagram from 3,000 followers to 6.5K - over a 117% increase!



PINTEREST

Pinterest spiked in popularity a few of years ago and has begun to peter out. We use it primarily for wedding and travel inspiration. We are holding steady at almost 800 followers.

SCTC 17TH ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST

South County Tourism Council held the 17th Annual South County Photo Contest on August 25, 2018 at the South County Museum. Approximately 338 entries were received capturing the essence of South County's 449 square mile tourism region.

Ingrid Mathews of Wyoming, RI won first place in the "A Beautiful Place" category, while second place in that category was awarded to Glen A. Tarbox of Saunderstown and third place to Normand L. Charlette of Manchester, CT. Runners up were: Dale Loomis of Saunderstown and Cathy Jackson of Wakefield.

In the "People at Play" category, Ted Green of Wickford won first place, Ingrid Mathews of Wyoming placed second and Stephen Wood of Wakefield placed third. Runners up were Beth A. Thomas of Charlestown and Gina Campbell of Wakefield.

Louise Bishop, president of South County Tourism Council, said; "We had an overwhelming amount of submissions this year - all of them beautiful. We can't wait to see which ones will make it into our 2018 Visitor Guide."

We were honored to have Susan Sancomb, (www.sancombphotography.com) renowned wedding and portrait photographer be the judge for the second year in a row. Sancomb studied photography at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and received her master degree at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

The South County Tourism Council is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the towns of Charlestown, Coventry, East Greenwich, Exeter, Hopkinton, Narragansett, North Kingstown, Richmond, South Kingstown, West Greenwich and Westerly as a single leisure travel destination known as "South County". For more information, please visit www.southcountyri.com.



1st Place "A Beautiful Place", Ingrid Mathews



1st Place "People at Play", Ted Green

PAID MEDIA ADVERTISING

Our paid media advertising reach an **850 mile radius** including Canada, Washington D.C., Cincinnati and more.

Print Advertising

Our print advertising campaigns in national media outlets garnered **19.8M** impressions last year.

Digital Advertising

- Digital advertising campaigns generated **16.4M** impressions
- Click-through rate (CTR) is at 0.05% which is industry standard
- Top performing creative is 330x250 pixels with a 0.05% CTR
- SEM received 8,200 clicks with a 1.4% CTR and an average cost of \$0.73 per click



EARNED MEDIA

Boston Magazine, January 2018 article titled “Wedding Venues in South County” mentions the Towers in Narragansett Town Beach, Ocean House in Westerly and The Preserve at Boulder Hills in Richmond.

North Shore Magazine, January 2018, “Hold Your Own Winter Olympics in Rhode Island” - mentions Yawgoo Valley Ski Area & Waterpark in Exeter and Narragansett Town Beach.

NewEngland.com/Yankee Magazine, February 2018, “The 5 Best Indoor Adventures in New England” lists Rock Spot Climbing in South Kingstown.

Boston.com, February 2018 “Go On a Beer “Rhode Trip” through 6 Rhode Island Cities” mentions Tilted Barn and Grey Sail.

Esquire Magazine, February 2018, “The Best Whiskeys in Every State” names Sons of Liberty’s Grapefruit Whiskey for Rhode Island.

USA Today, February 2018, “50 States: 50 Craft Chocolate Makers” - mentions Hauser Chocolatiers of Westerly.

Brit+Co, February 2018, “14 Romantic Hotel Packages to Book for Valentine’s Day” - mentions Ocean House and Weekapaug Inn.

The Odyssey, March 2018, “10 Unique Places to Visit in New England” - mentions the John H. Chafee National Wildlife Refuge and the Fantastic Umbrella Factory.

AFAR, March 2018, “The Best Beaches in Rhode Island” names Watch Hill Beach, Misquamicut Beach East Beach and Narragansett Town Beach among the seven top, making that 4 out of the 7 in South County. Also listed are local businesses such as Olympia Tea Room, St. Claire Annex, Ocean House, Paddy’s Beach Club, Windjammer Surf Bar, Atlantic Beach Park, Water Wizz, the Andrea, the Breezeway, Warm Winds Surf Shop, Narragansett Surf and Skate Shop, Monahan’s Clam Shack, Coast Guard House and the South County Bike Path.

Travel Channel, March 2018, “Best Budget Beaches” lists South County, RI.

Tasting Table, April 2018, “Rhode Show” features Matunuck Oyster Bar.

Yankee Magazine, April 2018, “The Best 5 New England Inns for Spring” features Margin Street Inn in Westerly.

Group Tour Media, April 2018, “Rhode Island Itinerary for South County” features Westerly and Narragansett, mentions Wilcox Park, the Babcock-Smith House, Coast Guard House and the Towers.

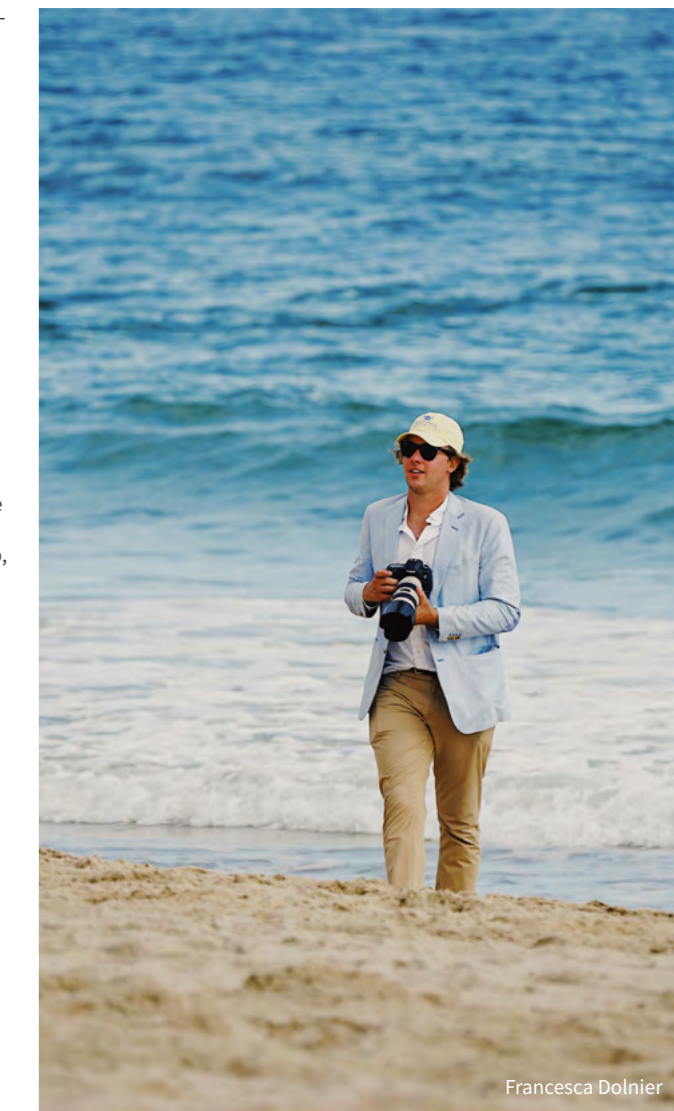
The Telegraph U.K., March 2018, “Back to New England Old-World Charm and Easy Living in Rhode Island and Nantucket” - mentions Watch Hill, Ocean House and Weekapaug Inn.

Budget Travel, April 2018, “Best Budget Destinations in America” features Westerly, highlightinh Watch Hill Light, Grey Sail Brewing, Flying Horse Carousel and more.

Betches.com, April 2018, “5 Quick & Easy Weekend Getaways from New York City” features South County, RI’s Watch Hill Inn, Matunuck Oyster Bar and Tilted Barn Brewery.

Domino.com, May 2018, “Your Summer Escape Is Just a Train Ride Away From NYC” features Ocean House and Matunuck Oyster Bar.

The work of the council has resulted in free publicity valued at more than \$2.2 MILLION.



Francesca Dolnier

GROUP TOURS

During the last fiscal year, South County Tourism Council saw an additional 30% increase in group travel.

We continue to partner with Block Island and Newport attractions to market expanded itineraries to domestic and international group travel organizations. We are more involved in with our towns promoting events and festivals and encouraging restaurants and independent hotels to accept groups and create menus and pricing that are group friendly.

We are also marketing to more than just motorcoach companies, but including small groups like women and couples who book takeovers of small hotels, such as Margin Street Inn.



CHARITY AUCTIONS

We increased the visibility of our region by donating auction baskets to high-end charities that brought in new visitors who will be repeat visitors.

Donations were made to Charity Gala's in the form of South County Get-A-Ways. Packages included a two night stay at one of South County's hotels, dinner for two, and/or a helicopter experience or ferry tickets to Block Island. The non-profit events were chosen by drive market, ticket cost of event (\$500-\$1,000 pp), and number of attendee's.

Donations were made for 5 events with a combined attendance of over 6,500. All attendees were exposed to South County through event programs and live and silent auctions. Additional marketing through the non-profits extended beyond attendees to their email database and social media followers. And one lucky winner from each coming to our region!



INTERNATIONAL REACH BRINGS INTERNATIONAL PRESS



As T.F. Green Airport continues to expand its reach to more U.S. destinations as well as international ones, South County is welcoming more visitors from further away than ever before.

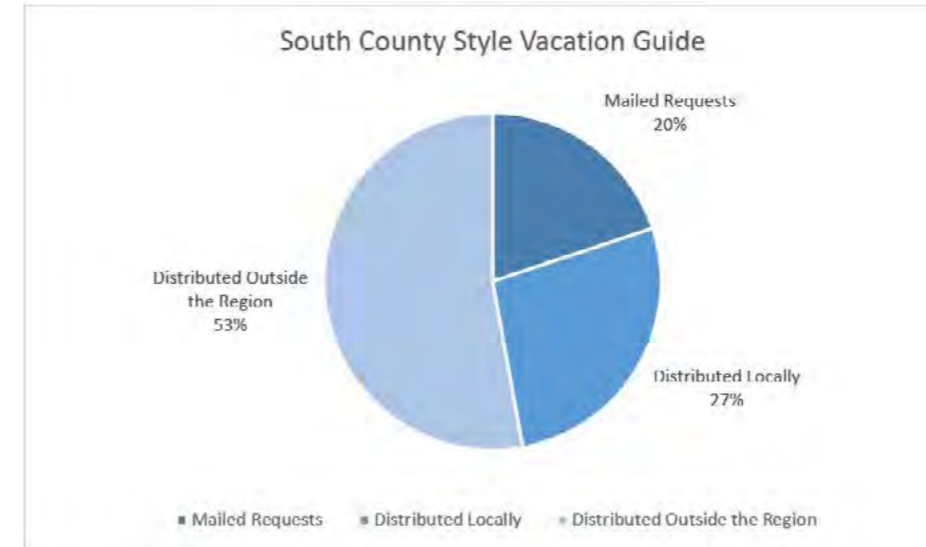
South County Tourism Council continues to work closely with the state tourism board and the tourism and media outlets in international destinations served by the airline - primarily Ireland and the U.K. - to attract international visitors. We hosted 10 members of the press from Ireland and the U.K. last year, sharing with them the best of South County.



VACATION GUIDE REACH & DISTRIBUTION

Our vacation guide continues to be in demand, despite a decline in print publications overall. We still have strong distribution numbers and readership. Approximately 8M people read our guide whether in print or digital form. Last year, 24,458 people requested copies of our guide and research shows that 73% of people who request our guide, book a visit to South County.

Approximately 33,500 copies of our guide were distributed locally to accommodations, train stations, the airport, chambers of commerce and the other RI regions last year. In addition, 65,000 copies were distributed outside of the state at airports, train stations, AAA offices and more.

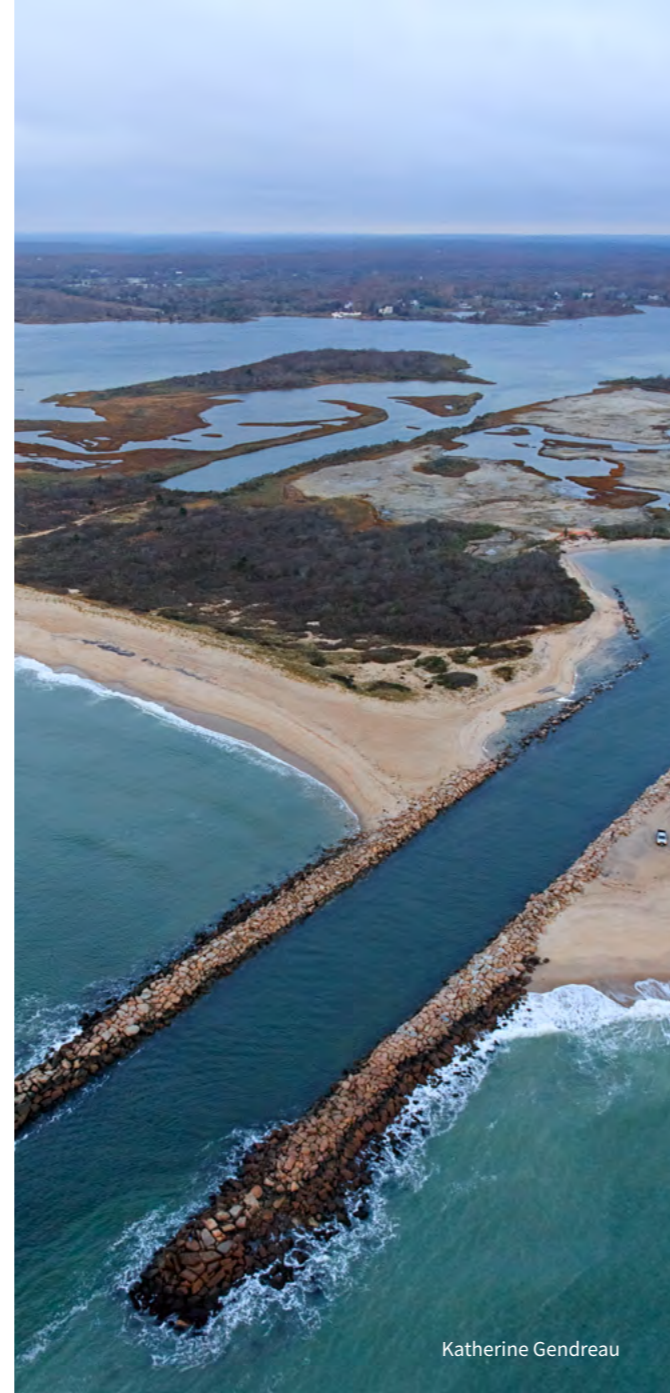


VIDEO

This past year the council completed work on shooting and editing a new promotional video showcasing all the ways visitors can enjoy South County. We cut two final versions - a two-minute and thirty second - and have over 30 hours of unedited video for future use in short clips on our website and social channels. We used clips from our final new promo video in some of our advertising campaigns this past year, such as Pandora and WGBH. We also stream the 30-second version on the homepage of our new website.



Katherine Gendreau



Katherine Gendreau

SCTC VIDEO WINS SILVER

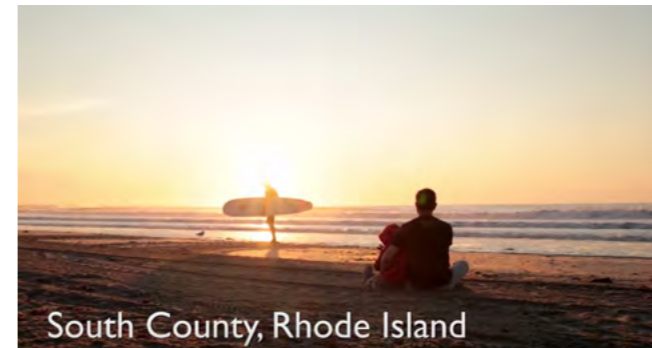
The North American Travel Journalists Association (NATJA) announced that South County Tourism Council (SCTC) won Silver (2nd place) and an honorable mention in the 2018 Annual NATJA Awards Competition in the Destination Video category. The two-minute video the council produced promoting South County, won silver and the 30 second cut received an honorable mention. The silver award winning video s

“We are honored to receive the silver award and want to thank NATJA for the recognition,” says Louise Bishop, President of South County Tourism Council.

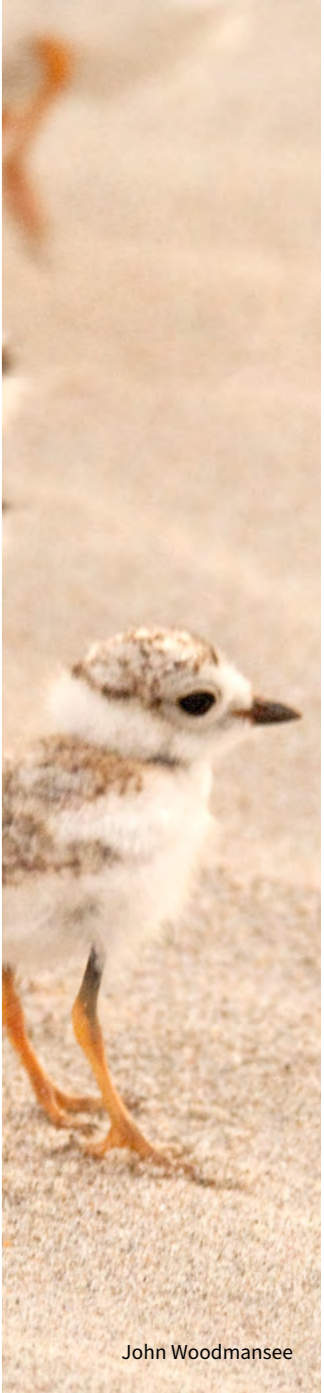
NATJA Awards, in their 27th year, recognize excellence in travel writing, photojournalism, social media, video, multimedia platforms, advertising, marketing and public relations for the travel and tourism industry.

“The winners are a microcosm of the talent and journalistic excellence that encapsulates our industry leading members,” said Helen Hernandez, CEO, NATJA. “As our membership continues to grow so do the submissions of the accomplished pool of those who work in the travel industry—raising the competitiveness and prestige of the annual NATJA Awards.”

Founded in 1991, NATJA is a travel journalism industry leader that fosters high quality journalism by supporting the professional development of its members, providing exceptional program benefits and valuable resources, honoring the excellence of journalism throughout the world, and promoting travel and leisure to the general public. NATJA also publishes TravelWorld International Magazine (www.travelworldmagazine.com).



Click photo to play video.



John Woodmansee

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