



# ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017





South County Caucus

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

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Senator Mark W. Gee

Senator James C. Sheehan

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Representative Antonia Giarusso



Board of Directors

OFFICERS

*Chariman 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 (2017), Elsie Foy (2016)  
*Coventry:* Norma Smith (2016)  
*East Greenwich:* Levon Kasparian (2017)  
*Exeter:* Loren Spears (2016)  
*Hopkinton:* Barbara Capalbo (2015)  
*Narragansett:* Jason Considine (2019), Megan Moran (2019)  
*North Kingstown:* David Zapatka (2017), Dale Grogan (2016)  
*Richmond:* Nicole Mihailidis Rodin (2017)  
*South Kingstown:* Eric Postemsky (2018), Deb Perry (2019)  
*West Greenwich:* Steve Wright (2017)  
*Westerly:* Daniel Hostettler (2017), Chris Fox (2019)

MISSION STATEMENT

The primary mission of the South CountTourism Council is to plan, promote and market tourism beyond our 11-town region. Working with the applicable state policies and procedures, board memebership has the op-portunity to identify our target tourism market, and to develop marketing campaigns that attract vistiors to our area.

Photo above by Steve Wood. Photo to the left by: Michael Le



Ingrid Mathews

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John Woodmansee



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Dear Tourism Partner:

South County Tourism Council saw many changes last fiscal year. I came on as new president to replace the retiring Myrna George. We secured a new home for the council and expanded our marketing efforts and reach.

The 2016/2017 fiscal year reflected a steady growth for South County Tourism Council. Our group tour business grew by 52%, our web leads grew by 68%, web visits went from 923,000 to 12.4 million, our web hits grew by 75%. Requests for our vacation guide rose by 28% and our hotel tax revenue saw an almost 5% increase. Out of each SCTC hotel tax dollar, paid by visitors, eighty-six cents is spent on marketing. This is a great return on investment, which in turn is returned to our local businesses and residents.

We invested in new initiatives such as user-generated content, video and public relations. Our efforts paid off as user-generated content and video grew our social engagement and reach exponentially. Our PR efforts equaled \$2.6 million in free publicity and one of our new videos won a silver in the North American Travel Journalist Association’s annual awards competition for Destination Video.

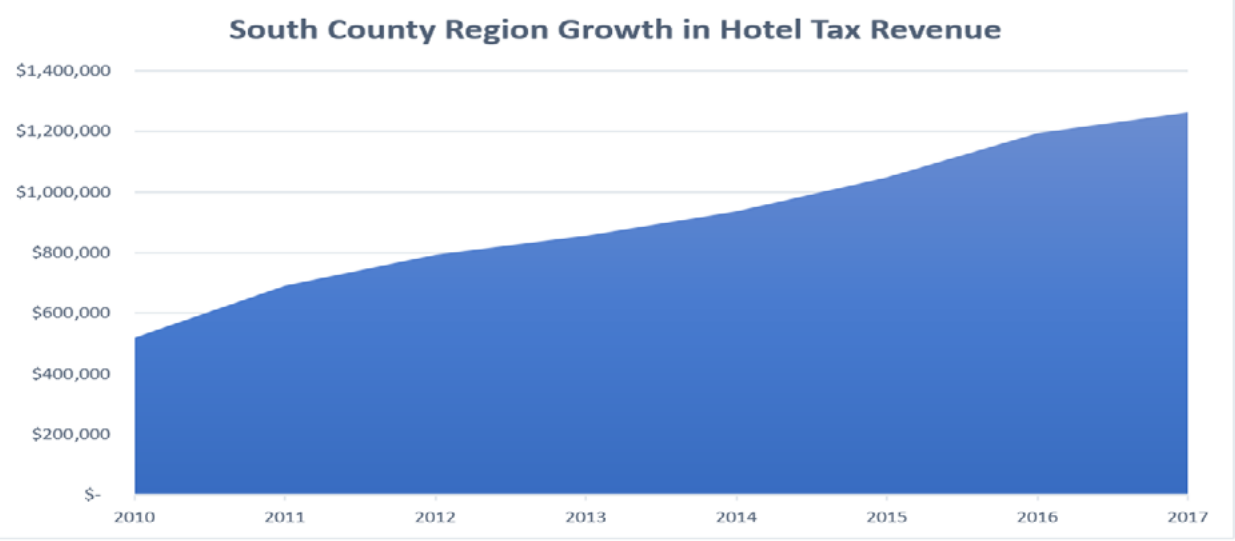
We can credit our collaboration with our regional partners for some of our success. Partnering with Block Island and Newport attractions helped us develop attractive itineraries that helped grow our group travel business. Collaboration with the state tourism board has resulted in many PR opportunities and of course, working with our local businesses and hotel partners is key in keeping our visitors coming back.

I’d also like to thank our Board of Directors, who are our greatest tourism ambassadors, and provide steady oversight.

We are excited to see what new endeavors we will embark on together to help make South County an even more successful tourism destination next year!

Louise D. Bishop  
President & CEO

FINANCIAL STATEMENT



YEARS ENDING JUNE 30,	2013	(1)	2014	(1)	2015	(1)	2016	(1)	2017	(1)
Revenues										
Room Tax	\$ 857,082		\$ 937,976		\$ 1,048,168		\$ 1,195,799		\$ 1,263,740	
Other	\$ 79,958		\$ 94,151		\$ 77,716		\$ 80,279		\$ 74,055	
Interest	\$ 4,034		\$ 5,823		\$ 7,940		\$ 8,006		\$ 8,968	
Total	\$ 941,074		\$ 1,037,950		\$ 1,133,824		\$ 1,284,084		\$ 1,346,763	
% Change	4.6		10.3		9.2		13.3		4.9	
Expenses	\$ 690,822		\$ 773,065		\$ 884,426		\$ 1,011,344		\$ 1,611,021	
Revenues Over (Under) Expenses	\$ 250,252		\$ 264,885		\$ 249,398		\$ 272,740		\$ (264,258)	
Beginning Net Assets	\$ 1,164,005		\$ 1,414,257		\$ 1,679,142		\$ 1,928,540		\$ 2,201,280	
Ending Net Assets	\$ 1,414,257		\$ 1,679,142		\$ 1,928,540		\$ 2,201,280		\$ 1,937,022	

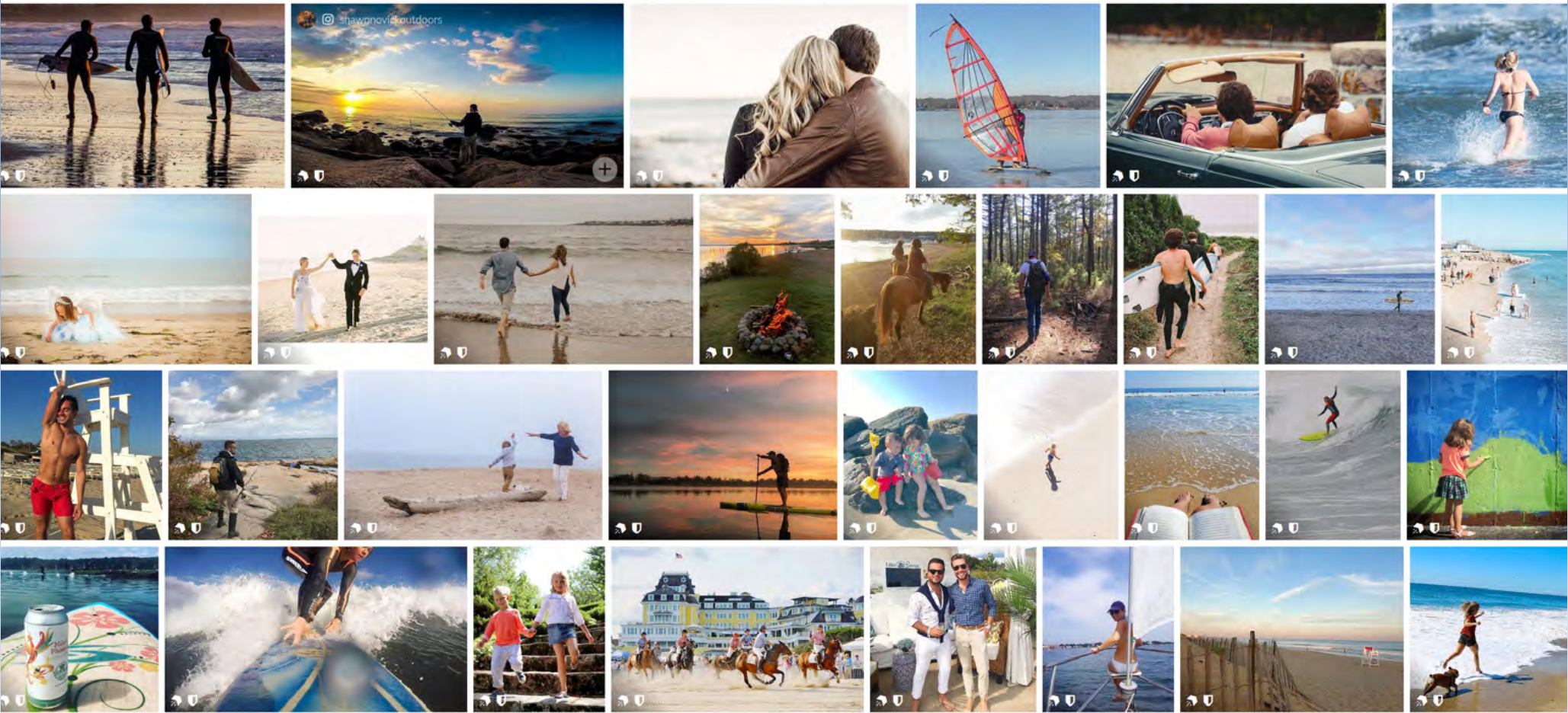
(1) Audited by Mullen,Scorpio & Cerilli, CPA



Ingrid Mathews



User Generated Content via Crowdriff Partnership



User Generated Content is defined as any type of content that has been created and put out by unpaid contributors or, using a better term, fans. It can refer to pictures, videos, testimonials, tweets, blog posts, and everything in between and is the act of users promoting a brand rather than the brand itself. Research has shown user-generated content is trusted more than a brand or company posting about themselves. Generating UGC around a brand is like getting a personal referral from your customers to all their friends and followers. Also, it lets you put your customers at the heart of your marketing.

In January 2017 South County Tourism Council partnered with Crowdriff—a user-generated content aggregator. Crowdriff allows us to aggregate user generated content based on #, location, keywords, etc. From the Crowdriff dashboard we can curate content to share on our home page, various other pages on our website and we can even ask for permission to use the photos or videos we love the most in print or other advertising media. It all is done seamlessly with a request via Instagram and users can respond with #SureSouthCountyRI and photos and videos that are right approved are moved to a clearly marked folder in our Crowdriff dashboard and available to download at full resolution.can request rights for any images we may want to use in print or on our own social media simply and users can respond via a hashtag, #suresouthcountyr. Crowdriff also offers a place for our photo contest contestants to directly upload their entries in high-resolution.

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.

Eric Desirey

FACEBOOK

We have 65K FaceBook followers - a growth of over 260% from the year before. This growth can attributed this growth to FaceBook advertising to an expanded audience and also the creation of engaging content, including user-generated content.

@laurmunzz

TWITTER

Twitter followers continue a steady rise with the current count at 6K. While not as visually engaging, Twitter offers opportunities to connect with press, travel writers and influencers.

Eastern Seaboard

YOUTUBE

The council invested in video content development this past year and the results of posting clips to our social channels, particularly YouTube have raised our views from 2,000 to 56,000 - a 2700% increase!

Instagram

Instagram continues to be one of the fastest growing social media channels and that's reflected in the growth of our Instagram from 700 followers to 3,000 - over a 328% growth!

Susan Sancomb

PINTEREST

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





John Woodmansee

# SCTC HIRES NEW PRESIDENT & FINDS NEW HOME

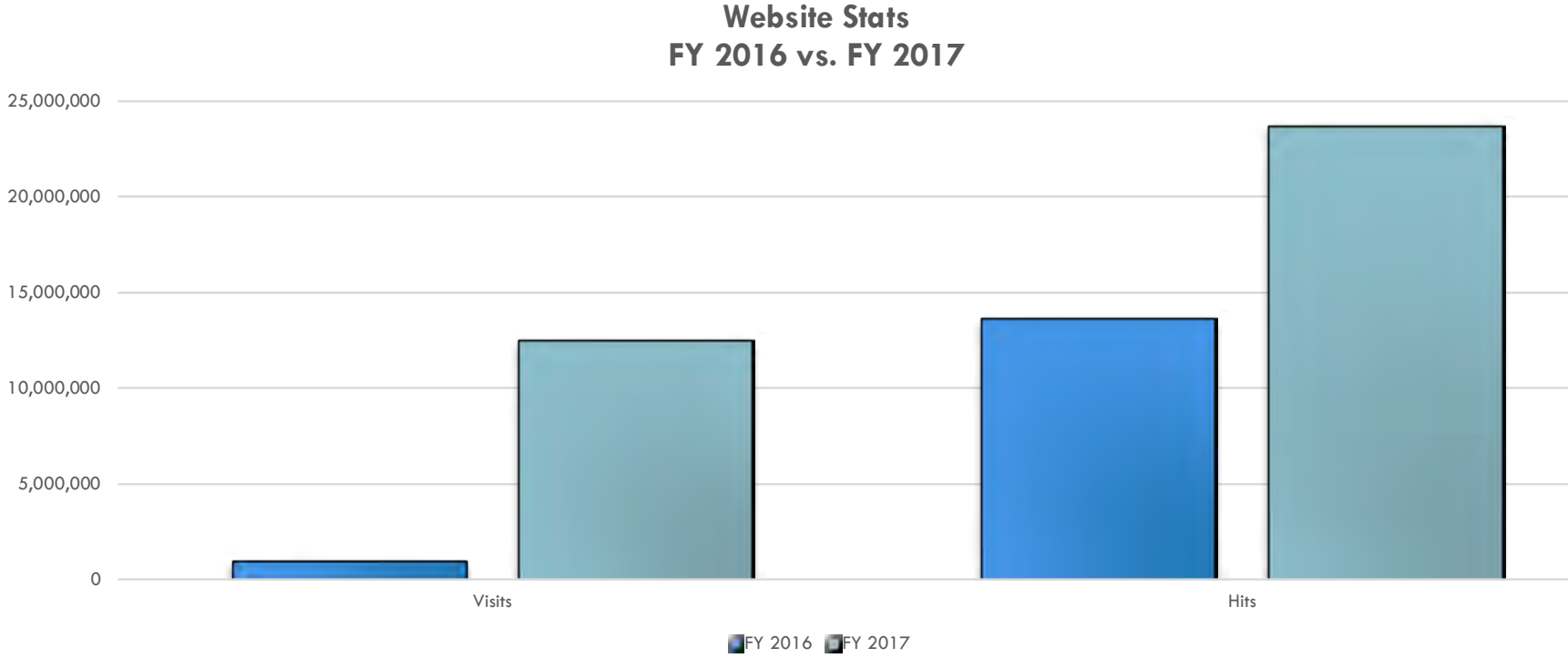
After a nationwide search, receiving more than 50 applications, South County Tourism Council’s five-member search committee hired a new President to replace the retiring Myrna George. On June 8, 2016 the South County Tourism Council welcomed its new President, Louise D. Bishop. Bishop, “has the right set of skills, attitude and enthusiasm to lead the South County Tourism Council to the next level,” said search committee member Loren Spears, Board Chair.



Also after decades of searching and planning, South County Tourism Council, with the consent of our board, purchased a new home. The new space will better accommodate the growth the council has experienced over the past ten years and allow us to grow further and better serve the region. The council will occupy the main floor of the building and the other nine offices are rented to offset the building’s operation. “We are excited to move into a space where we can offer educational workshops to area businesses, host events and more.” says President Louise D. Bishop. The building, known as “The Windswept Center” is located on Old Post Road in Charlestown.

# WEB STATS

Web visits went from 923,007 in FY 2016 to **12.4 million** in FY 2017; web hits went from 13.5 million in FY 2016 to **23.6 million** in FY 2017.



John Woodmansee





## CELEBRATING SOUTH COUNTY

*The 25th annual Celebrate South County Day was held Tuesday, May 9th at the State House and showcased the goods of 13 South County businesses.*



*SCTC Board Chair Loren Spears and Office Manager Lillian Dilluvio*

Kicking off National Tourism Week South County Tourism Council, along with museums, restaurants and other vendors from the 449-square mile coastal region, hosted Celebrate South County day on Tuesday, May 9, 2017. The celebration of the region emphasizes the importance of tourism's role for the state of Rhode Island.

Louise D. Bishop, president of South County Tourism Council noted, “each household in Rhode Island would pay \$1,700.00 in additional taxes each year in the absence of visitor economy. This illustrates - without a doubt - how tourism works for you and has grown over the past decade due to regional marketing initiatives.”

South County Tourism Council has hosted this event for 25 years, showcasing the power of travel, and recognizing the economic benefits of tourism. South County vendors offered a “taste of South County” and mouth-watering aromas wafted throughout the State House rotunda. Food samples included: donuts from Allie’s Donuts, clam chowder from Coast Guard House, ahi tuna, shrimp cocktail and coleslaw from Two Little Fish, oysters from Matunuck Oyster Bar, succotash from the Tomaquag museum, maple syrup from Charlie’s Sugar Shack, brownie bites from the New England Quahog festival, dark chocolate scallop shells from Sweenor’s Chocolates, and frozen lemonade from Del’s Lemonade.

Other exhibitors highlighting the diversity of tourism offerings in South County included the Nathanael Greene Homestead Association, Smith’s Castle, Frosty Drew Observatory, the Narragansett Chamber of Commerce, and the University of Rhode Island who brought along their mascot, Rhody the Ram. All who joined us recognized the importance of travel and the tourism industry’s economic, social, and cultural contributions to the region and the state.

Smiling faces were seen throughout the State House rotunda as people enjoyed the first frozen lemonade of the season, sampled treats and learned about the many delights of tourism in South County.

## SCTC 15TH ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST

South County Tourism Council held the 15th 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](http://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](http://www.southcountyri.com).



*1st Place “A Beautiful Place”, Ingrid Mathews*



*1st Place “People at Play”, Ted Green*



# PAID MEDIA ADVERTISING

We increased our paid media advertising reach from a 300 mile radius to an **850 mile radius** including Canada, Washington D.C., Cincinatti and more. As a result we saw a big increase in metrics.

### Print Advertising

Our print advertising campaigns in national media outlets garnered **33.9M** impressions last year.

### Digital Advertising

- Digital advertising campaigns generated 98.3 Million impressions
- Click-through rate (CTR) is at 0.45% above the industry standard of 0.05-0.07%
- Top performing creative is 580x600 pixels with a 4.78% CTR
- SEM received 6500 clicks with a .30% CTR and an average cost of \$0.79 per click



# EARNED MEDIA

*Travel + Leisure*, July 2016 article titled “World’s Best Awards 2016” named South County’s Ocean House as one of the top hotels in the world.

*Food & Wine*, July 2016, “America’s Best Lobster Rolls” names Champlin’s Seafood Deck among the top lobster rolls in the country.

*Travel + Leisure*, July 2016 “Taylor Swift’s Guide to Rhode Island” uncovers Taylor’s favorite South County haunts.

*CNN.com*, July 2016, “20 of America’s Most Beautiful Hotels” names Ocean House among these.

*Observer.com*, August 2016, “Tired of the Hamptons? We Found Five Alternative Local Getaways” lists South County as an alternative to the Hamptons.

*Yankee Magazine*, August 2016, “10 Best Seaside Inns in New England” lists Ocean House as one of these.

*AFAR*, August 2016, “10 Best Lobster Rolls in the U.S.” names Matunuck Oyster Bar as one of the top 10.

*USA Today*, August 2016, “Best Destination Resorts of 2016” Ocean House was listed at number three.

*CoastalConnecticut.com*, August 2016, “The Coastal Traveler at The Break Hotel”

*Thrillist*, August 2016, “The Most Hippie Town in All 50 States” names Charlestown as the most hippie town in RI.

*Architectural Digest*, August 2016, “5 Must-Visit New England Beach Towns for a Weekend Getaway” features Watch Hill.

*Coastal Living*, August 2016, “The 10 Best Beach Hotels in the World” ranks Ocean House at #1.

*Vogue*, August 2016, “Four Amazing Last-Minute Labor Day Trips” featuring Watch Hill and Ocean House.

*Boston Globe*, September 2016, “Shell Game: In Rhode Island the Slurping Season Is On” lists several South County restaurants for best oysters.

*New York Magazine*, September 2016 “Send Off Summer in South County, Rhode Island”

*Hog Magazine*, March 2017, “Next Ride: South County Sojourn Riding Rhode Island’s Seacoast”

*Yankee Magazine*, April 2017, “Best of Rhode Island | 2017 Editors’ Choice Awards” lists many South County businesses among the year’s best.

*SamanthaBrown.com*, April 2017, “Why Watch Hill, RI Makes for a Dreamy Summer Vacation”

*Chicago Tribune*, May 2017, “Slipping into an ‘Ocean State’ of mind in southern Rhode Island”

*Coastal Living*, June 2017, “The Best Beach Bars in America” names Paddy’s Beach Club as one of the best.

*NECN.com*, June 2017, “14 Places to Visit in Rhode Island and Connecticut This Summer” - several South County businesses listed here.

*The work of the council has resulted in free publicity valued at more than \$2.6 MILLION.*





# GROUP TOURS

During the 2016/2017 fiscal year, South County Tourism Council saw a **52% increase** in group travel.

We partnered with Block Island and Newport attractions to market itineraries to domestic and international group travel organizations. We encouraged restaurants and independent hotels to accept groups and create menus and pricing that are group friendly.

We also attended two additional group travel trade shows in PA and MD to draw in those markets.



# STATE & SOUTH COUNTY MAP

Due to high demand from visitors, South County Tourism Council produced a map of the state and of South County.

Working with DEM and the state, we produced an updated map of the entire state on one side and a South County map on the other side which includes a list of accommodations, beaches, bike paths, and information on transportation and visitor centers.

We distributed the maps to all visitor centers, train stations, airports as well as sent a supply to all our chambers and tourism regions. We also handed them out at shows such as the AAA Marketplace, Boston Globe Travel Show, ABA and more.





# INTERNATIONAL REACH

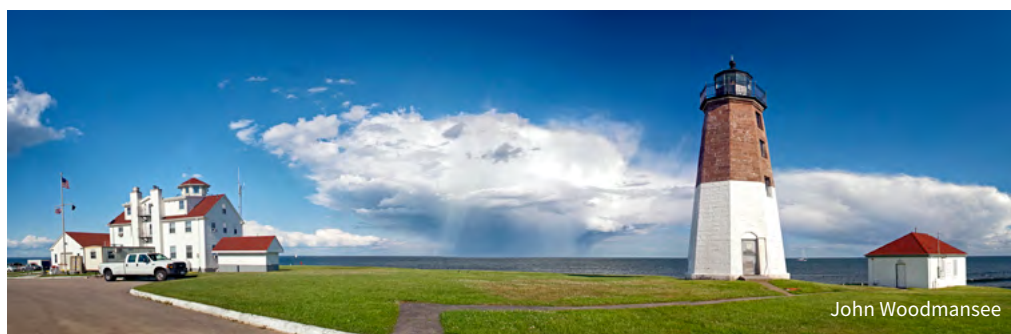
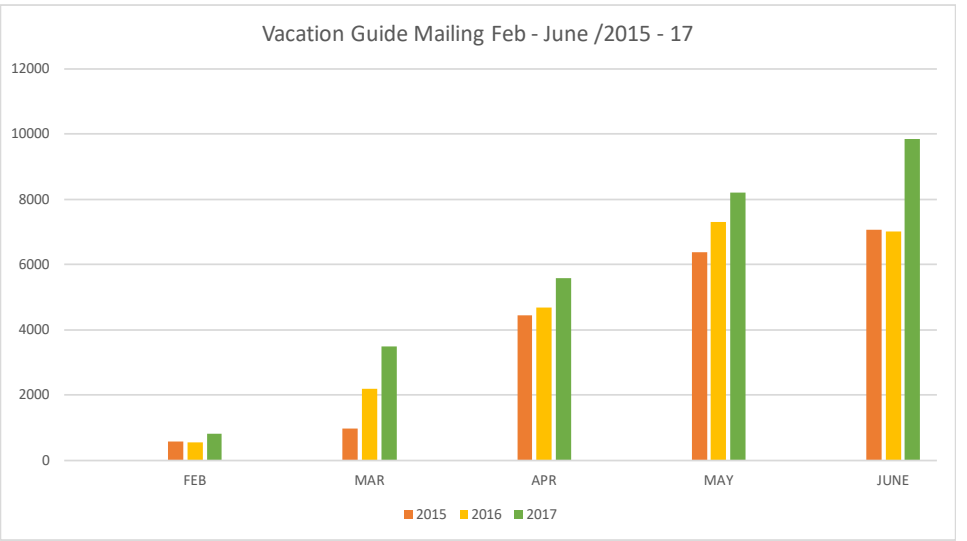
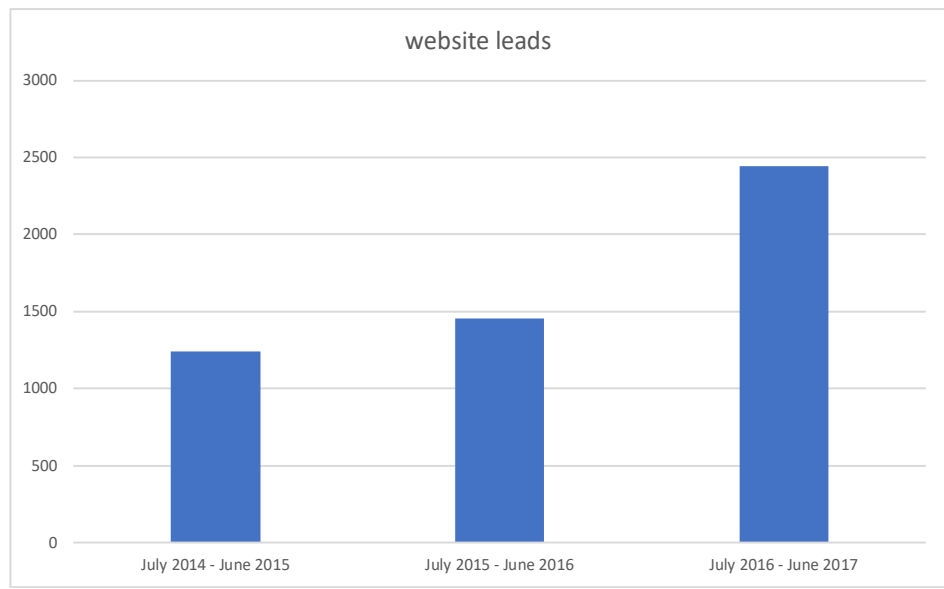


As T.F. Green Airport expands its reach to more U.S. destinations as well as international ones, South County is welcoming more visitors from further away than ever before. Norwegian Airlines launched flights to Ireland, Martinique and Guadelupe. Frontier Airlines brought flights to and from Tampa, Fort Myers, Miami and New Orleans. Allegiant Airlines is flying between Providence and Cincinnati and Air Canada is connecting passengers to and from Providence and Toronto.

We worked closely with the airport, the state tourism office, the airlines and the tourism councils of some of these new destinations such as Shannon and Cork to generate interest in reciprocal tourism.



# WEB LEADS & VACATION GUIDE REQUESTS





# VIDEO

This past year the council invested in developing video content in order to produce a new promotional video. We shot scenes all over the region, as well as in-depth interviews and profiles on local businesses. As a result of our efforts we have added over 12 hours of raw video footage to our library that can be used in various ways. We also saw an increase in advertising sales for the vacation guide due to our video production.

In June of 2016 we negotiated a collaboration with a Canadian film crew who sought to shoot an episode for a travel program in South County. After showing them how much South County has to offer, they opted for shooting five one-hour episodes here. We worked closely with them for two whole weeks, scheduling itineraries and coordinating shoots to showcase the best of South County to our Canadian neighbors.

As a result of that collaboration, the film company will share with the council approximately three hours of B roll that we can add to our ever-growing video library. Overall the time spent with the Canadian film crew yielded us video worth over \$10K.



# SCTC VIDEO WINS SILVER

The North American Travel Journalists Association (NATJA) announced that South County Tourism Council (SCTC) won Silver (2nd place) in the 2017 Annual NATJA Awards Competition in the Destination Video category for a video the council produced promoting and telling the story of Matunuck Oyster Farm and Matunuck Oyster Bar owner Perry Raso. The video can be seen here: <https://youtu.be/C6YglBvklrw>

"We are honored to receive the silver award and want to thank Perry Raso of Matunuck Oyster Bar for allowing our Creative Director to follow him around for an entire day with a film crew and share his story," says Louise Bishop, President of South County Tourism Council. "We hope visitors will tour both the oyster and vegetable farms and experience true farm-to-table cuisine at the restaurant when they're here."

NATJA Awards, in their 26th year, recognize excellence in travel writing, photojournalism, social media, video, multimedia platforms, advertising, marketing and public relations for the travel and tourism industry. This year, NATJA received more than 800 submissions from all over the world.

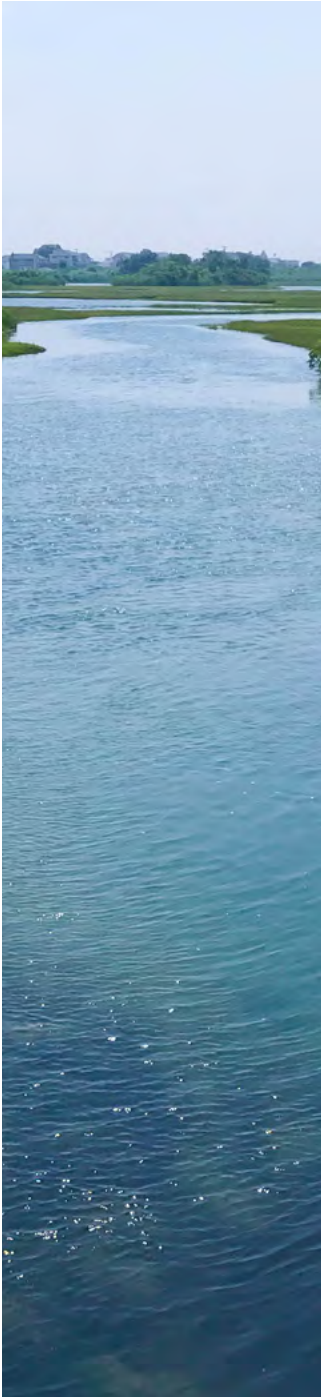
"As the awards entries continue to grow, it becomes increasingly difficult for our judges to pick the winners from such a talented pool of submissions. We thank our judges, who represent academia, publications, photographers, and PR professionals, for their significant time commitment in making this year's selections," stated NATJA CEO Helen Hernandez.

NATJA is the second largest travel media association in North America. Members include travel media professionals, convention and visitor bureaus, social media, hotels and attractions, and other travel marketing agencies. Members are provided with professional development workshops, peer-to-peer evaluation, web tools and networking opportunities. NATJA also publishes TravelWorld International Magazine ([www.travelworldmagazine.com](http://www.travelworldmagazine.com)).

For more information about NATJA or a complete list of 2017 award winners and finalists, visit [www.natja.org](http://www.natja.org).



Click photo to play video.





SOUTH  
COUNTY



TOURISM  
COUNCIL

