

2014 - 2015

Annual Report

LAUREL HIGHLANDS VISITORS BUREAU




Laurel Highlands
P E N N S Y L V A N I A

Dear LHVB Partner,

As this year's chairman of the Board, I am so very excited and honored to be a part of the Laurel Highlands Visitor Bureau. The dedicated staff continues to strive for excellence, and indeed, last year surpassed the Board's expectations. We ended the year with 575 partners, hotel tax collected grew by 6.3% over the previous year, and the LHVB achieved and maintained a strong financial position. We continued to fund our promotional budget, allowing our team to expand our marketing campaigns and initiatives. Certainly, by all metrics, the LHVB had a fantastic year in achieving our goals and mission. Again, congratulations and thanks to our staff.

The new year brings exciting changes and opportunities for us. Our new President, Renee Seifert, has taken over the reins, and the Board is very excited about her ability to build on the successes of these past few years and lead us to greater achievements. This continued growth and expansion will serve to enhance our brand name, thus increasing awareness of the region as a travel destination, which ultimately attracts more visitors. This is a very exciting time for all of us!

I am proud to be the new Chairman, and I sincerely thank Andrea Cuda, our past chair for her commitment and dedication to LHVB. I look forward to the opportunities of the upcoming year.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Langer, Chairman
LHVB Board of Directors



Mission Statement

The mission of the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau is to promote tourism, tourism development, and the interests of the travel and hospitality industries in the Laurel Highlands region generally comprising Fayette, Somerset and Westmoreland Counties, thereby contributing to the economic growth and quality of life of the area.



19,200 JOBS

TOURISM-RELATED JOBS IN 2013 REPRESENTING 7.5% OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE REGION - 1 IN 13 JOBS IN THE REGION IS SUPPORT BY TOURISM.

\$1.5 BILLION

2014 VISITOR SPENDING UP BY 4.2% OVER 2013

Dear Partner of the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau,

As the new President of the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, I look forward to sharing my vision as we move the bureau forward in the coming years. Change is always inevitable when new leadership comes on board. Technology is changing our world very rapidly and influencing travel trends. Along with our fast-paced digital lifestyles, travelers are yearning for meaningful experiences, recreational challenges, and opportunities to immerse in a travel destination's culture.

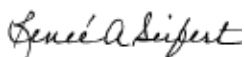
The bureau will continue the efforts to think outside of the box and develop cutting edge initiatives to increase our market shares and reach the traveling public.

Getting our message out at home is just as important as getting our message out to the traveling public. Advocacy, telling the bureau's story, is important. We are very, very good at what we do, and need to continue to tout our accomplishments in our own backyard.

Your bureau is an economic and community development organization whose purpose is to expand our region's economy by attracting visitors, whether individuals or groups. The LHVB implements a travel and tourism marketing strategy that is a vital economic tool toward the long-term development of our communities. We are responsible for marketing our region as a desirable destination. No business or company considers locating in a community without having visited it first. An important part of our marketing strategy is to provide useful information, which highlights the Laurel Highlands' attributes. The bureau is a key stakeholder toward providing economic stability for the region.

The partnership of three counties in the bureau allows us to effectively pool our resources to achieve a larger market reach. By reaching a larger amount of potential visitors, we are able to grow the region's economy. I am very pleased to report that 2014 marked the fifth straight year of spending growth in the Laurel Highlands region as the expansion of the visitor economy continued. You'll be hearing more about this in the coming year so stay tuned.

Tourism is BIG business. It's GOOD Business. ...it's EVERYBODY's business.



Renée A. Seifert, President & CEO
Laurel Highlands Visitor Bureau



\$510

SAVED PER HOUSEHOLD IN THE REGION
IN TAX PAYMENTS BECAUSE OF TOURISM

\$120 Million

STATE AND LOCAL TAXES
GENERATED BY TOURISM IN THE
LAUREL HIGHLANDS IN 2013.

\$116 Million

FEDERAL TAXES GENERATED
BY TOURISM IN THE
LAUREL HIGHLANDS IN 2013.

LHVB HIGHLIGHTS

LHVB HOSTED 2 DCED SECRETARIES IN 14-15 FISCAL YEAR

The LHVB was honored to welcome two Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Secretaries to the Laurel Highlands during the past fiscal year. The LHVB coordinated visits for Secretary Alan Walker in September, 2014 and Secretary Dennis Davin in June, 2015.



LAURELHIGHLANDS.ORG 2014 MARCOM AWARD WINNER

The LHVB kicked-off 2015 with the prestigious Gold MarCom Award for the redesigned www.laurelhighlands.org. The MarCom Awards is an international competition that recognizes outstanding creative achievement by marketing and communications professionals.



2014 LAUREL HIGHLANDS CHAMPIONS OF TOURISM

The LHVB recognized the following partners for their outstanding contributions to the region's tourism industry.

Tourism Trailblazer of the Year

Gabby Nastuck, Latrobe Art Center and Neighborhood Café

Tourism Employee of the Year

Ray Matthews, Christian W. Klay Winery

Tourism Entrepreneur of the Year

Pam Kruse, Falls Market & Inn, Firefly on the Plaza and the Firefly Grill



From left to right: Gabby Nastuck, Pam Kruse, Ray Matthews

LAUREL HIGHLANDS FEATURED ON SNYDER OF BERLIN® PACKAGING!

LHVB partner and the Berlin-based purveyor of chips, cheese snacks, and popcorn, Snyder of Berlin packaged hundreds of thousands of potato chip bags with Laurel Highlands' landmarks. The Laurel Highlands brand is reaching potential visitors in 13 states along the east coast!



LHVB TOURSIM GRANT PROGRAMS

The LHVB administers the Fayette, Somerset, and Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Programs. The LHVB works with each county's Board of Commissioners and each tourism grant review committee to evaluate criteria and applications, select recipients, and award grants. The annual tourism grant programs are funded by a portion of the room tax dollars collected each month.

WESTMORELAND COUNTY

14-15 Grant Review Committee Members:

- Commissioner Chuck Anderson
- Commissioner Tyler Courtney
- Vince Fontana, Owner, Vince Building Company
- Andrea Cuda, Co-Owner, Ligonier Ramada
- Ron Virag, President & CEO, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau

TOTAL # OF GRANTS AWARDED 71



\$401,191

CAPITAL, MARKETING & VISITOR CENTER GRANTS

SOMERSET COUNTY

14-15 Grant Review Committee Members:

- Erick Mauck, Seven Springs Mountain Resort
- George Coyle, Somerset MED Services
- Commissioner Joe Betta
- Ron Bruner, Retired Bed and Breakfast Owner
- Ron Virag, President & CEO, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau

TOTAL # OF GRANTS AWARDED 53



\$338,197

CAPITAL, MARKETING & VISITOR CENTER GRANTS

FAYETTE COUNTY

14-15 Grant Review Committee Members:

- Chris Plummer, General Manager, Nemaocolin Woodlands Resort
- Sean Sypolt, Private Industry Council
- Greg Nuccetelli, National Account Manager, Nestlé Professional
- Donald Yowler, Yowler's Trophies & More
- Ron Virag, President & CEO, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau

TOTAL # OF GRANTS AWARDED 49



\$468,161

CAPITAL, MARKETING & VISITOR CENTER GRANTS

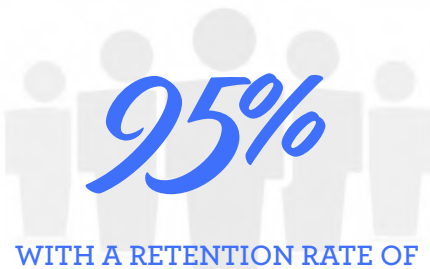
\$10.5
MILLION

INVESTED TO DATE INTO THE REGION'S TOURISM
INDUSTRY THROUGH TOURISM GRANT PROGRAMS

PARTNERSHIP

575

TOTAL LHVB PARTNERS



95%

WITH A RETENTION RATE OF

60

NEW PARTNERS

OF BROCHURE RACKS MANAGED BY THE LHVB IN 5 COUNTIES

89

62,000 PARTNER BROCHURES DISTRIBUTED

PROMOTED THE REGION AT 7 CONSUMER SHOWS, DISTRIBUTING 10,000 DESTINATION GUIDES, GENERATING 2,500 LEADS



HOSTED OVER A DOZEN NETWORKING & EDUCATIONAL EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

- Backyard Tour
- Social Media 101
- Partnership Orientation
- Grant Writing Workshop
- Breakfast with the Bureau
- Tourism After Hours
- Beyond your front door
- Extranet Workshop
- Trail Summit





\$1,093,157

AMOUNT SPENT IN THE 14-15 FISCAL YEAR ON MARKETING & PROMOTIONS FOR THE LAUREL HIGHLANDS REGION

INCLUDING SEASONAL CAMPAIGNS IN THE FOLLOWING MEDIA OUTLETS:

- TV Commercials
- Radio Commercials
- Print Ad Placements
- Billboards
- PANDORA
- Social Media Advertising
- Display Advertising
- Search Engine Marketing

WEB STATISTICS JULY 2014 - JUNE 2015
www.laurelhighlands.org

↑ 35%
OVER 13-14

TOTAL VISITORS **684,723**

PAGE VIEWS **1,763,677**

SOCIAL STATS + % INCREASE OVER PREVIOUS YEAR

- 40,240** Fans ↑ **79%**
- 9,410** Followers ↑ **51%**
- 40,117** Video Views ↑ **13%**
- 466** Followers ↑ **19%**
- 741** Followers ↑ **56%**



GROUP SALES/PR

LHVB HOSTED PENNSYLVANIA BUS ASSOCIATION SUMMER MEETING & SALES RETREAT

Seven Springs Mountain Resort | June, 2015

The Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Bus Association was Held at Seven Springs Mountain Resort, and hosted by the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau for 3 days, bringing in:

- ✓ 25 BUS COMPANIES
 - ✓ 75 GROUP TOUR PLANNERS
 - ✓ 226 ATTENDEES
- to the Laurel Highlands



325 Leads generated at **14** Tour & Travel Shows

Nearly **40,000** Guests reported from **31** States & **11** Countries

LHVB'S PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS

1Million+

MEDIA IMPRESSIONS
GENERATED THROUGH PR



250+

MEDIA INQUIRIES

105+

EDITORIAL PLACEMENTS GENERATED

100+

TRAVEL WRITERS LHVB REACHED THROUGH INDUSTRY
CONFERENCES AND INITIATIVES

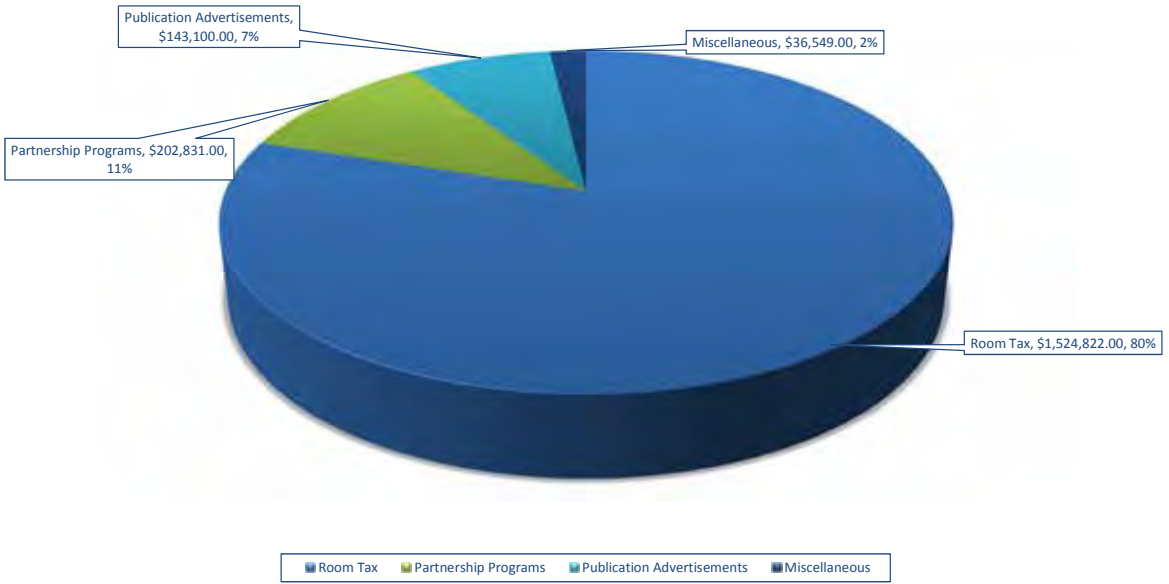
25

TRAVEL WRITERS LHVB HOSTED FOR PRESS TOUR OR
COORDINATED ITINERARIES FOR (DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF JUNE 30, 2015

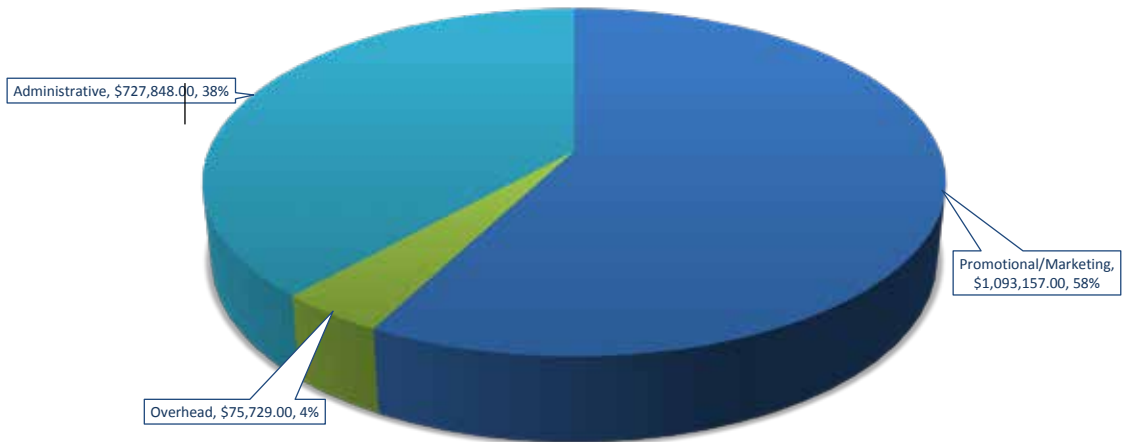
REVENUE

\$1,907,302



EXPENSE

\$1,896,734



ABOUT LHVB

LHVB STAFF

2014-2015

Ronald W. Virag
President & CEO

Nadine Yanarella
Vice-President & CFO

Julie Donovan
Vice-President - Public Relations

Ann Nemanic
Vice-President - Partnership Development

Linda Mauzy
Vice-President - Group Travel

Kristin Ecker
Vice-President - Marketing

Michele Wisnesck
Interactive Marketing Manager

Breanna Smith
Marketing Coordinator

Katie Showalter
Administrative Coordinator

Rachel Roehrig
Partnership Sales Coordinator

Stacey Magda
Group Tour Coordinator

Jim Hamerski
Brochure Distribution Coordinator

Dolores M. Love
Information Counselor - Ohiopyle

Patricia Nicholson
Information Counselor - Ohiopyle

Cesar Alviar
Information Counselor - Ohiopyle

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2014-2015

Andrea Cuda, Chairman
Westmoreland County
Commissioners' Appointee

Eric Mauck, Vice Chairman
Seven Springs Mountain Resort

Michael Langer, Treasurer
Westmoreland Cultural Trust

Chris Plummer, Secretary
Nemacolin Woodlands Resort

Ron Aldom
Somerset County
Commissioners' Appointee

Laura Argenbright
Mountain Playhouse

Linda McKenna Boxx
Allegheny Trail Alliance

Liz Diesel
Glades Pike Winery

Janis Dofner
Levi Deal Mansion B & B

Deb Driggers
The Supper Club

Dave Kahley
Progress Fund - Trail Town Program

Lladel Lichty
Friends of Flight 93 National Memorial

Dr. Roxanne McCarthy
Dr. McCarthy's Kitchen

Susan McCarthy
McCarthy Public Relations

Joel Means
Ohiopyle Trading Post

Gabe Monzo
Arnold Palmer Regional Airport

Muriel Nuttall
Fayette County
Commissioners' Appointee

Renée Seifert
Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater

PUBLICATIONS



SUMMER FUN COUPON BOOK
Distribution 25,000



DESTINATION GUIDE
Distribution 200,000



CALENDAR OF EVENTS
Seasonal Distribution 13,000



HEADLINES NEWSLETTER
Distribution 1,000

2015 LHV PHOTO CONTEST

Nearly 1,200 entries were submitted for the 2015 Laurel Highlands Annual Photo Contest. Photos were submitted in 4 categories – Category 1: People, Category 2: Plants & Animals (Nature), Category 3: Places (Attractions & Landscapes), and Category 4: Altered Images. The Annual Photo Contest has long served as an important resource by providing a fresh inventory of photos from across the region to help support all of the LHV’s marketing initiatives.



WELCOME RENÉE AND CASSANDRA!

Renée Seifert, President and CEO

Renée Seifert, the new President & CEO, joined the LHV team July 1st. You may know Renée from serving on the Board of Directors for 2 years. She also worked at Fallingwater® as the Marketing Manager. With her 25 years of non-profit management experience, including 15 years of Destination Marketing Organization management, we’re excited to see the direction in which Renée’s leadership takes the LHV.



Cassandra Rupert, Marketing Communications Coordinator

Cassandra Rupert, another addition to the team, is a recent Saint Vincent College graduate who received a degree in English Literature with a minor in History. Cassandra was with us from Jan. 5th to May 1st of 2015 as an intern and returned to the LHV at the end of August as our Marketing Communications Coordinator. As our copywriter, you will all come to know Cassandra well, or at least read her work very often!





LAUREL HIGHLANDS VISITORS BUREAU
120 East Main Street | Ligonier, PA 15658
(TF) 800.333.5661 (P) 724.238.5661
www.laurelhighlands.org