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# ASHLAND

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Ashland Chamber of Commerce  
Visitor & Convention Bureau

**2011-12 City Report**



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## **Executive Summary**

**Ashland Chamber of Commerce  
Visitor & Convention Bureau**

**City of Ashland Grant Report**

**Fiscal Year: 2011-2012**

Submitted: January 30th, 2013

The grant report to follow represents the 2011-2012 Fiscal Year. The work completed in compliance with the grant guidelines is reflected in this report. These efforts are made, not only by the Ashland Chamber Visitor & Convention Bureau (Ashland VCB), but the Chamber staff, business owners and community members who contribute to the visitor experience, sustaining the front door of Ashland's economy, tourism.

The Ashland VCB effectively targets a variety of audiences and niches. The goal is to increase tourism in the fall, winter and spring, while maintaining the strong levels of tourism in the summer months. The tools we use to reach these audiences include our dynamic website, [www.ashlandchamber.com](http://www.ashlandchamber.com), online marketing, annual publications, events, promotions, brochures, work with travel writers and advertising with a marketing mix that uses online, print, television, radio, e-newsletters and social media.

Utilizing the pillars of culinary, culture and outdoors as a foundation, we refreshed our brand and are rolling out the new look in spring of 2013 to invite summer travel planning and reach expanded markets. Ashland is a sophisticated destination and this new refreshed logo, tagline and creative development gives Ashland a fresh look.

The Ashland Chamber's Visitor & Convention Bureau produces the Ashland Culinary Festival (formerly the Food & Wine Classic) now in its seventh year attracting over 600 attendees each November to celebrate the food, drink, talent and creativity in Ashland. We continue to grow this event that showcases local chefs, farms, food artisans and partners in the culinary industry. Ashland's culinary scene is thriving and with the emerging wine industry, this underscores how poised we are for growth and drawing that culinary traveler to Ashland. We are producing video that reflects the efforts in agri-tourism, the work of local chefs and restaurant profiles. This helps to sustain the awareness of Ashland's culinary scene that can be enjoyed and accessed year round. Ashland's Restaurant Preview Week each February, invites locals in the region to enjoy specials and win a night out, during the off season.

Ashland was chosen as the "Layover Community" for Cycle Oregon's 25th anniversary. Ashland welcomed 2700 cyclists and 500 volunteers in September of 2012. This put Ashland on the map as a base camp for cyclists and an outdoor destination, as opposed to the cultural amenities we are so well known for. The Ashland VCB provided a hospitality booth with community information. We ran shuttles for cyclists to shop, dine, go rafting and attend plays. We served as the community connection to the riders and services they needed. It was essentially a town in and of itself that landed for two days and then left without a trace. This was our target audience and we were thrilled to welcome them and invite them back by offering a getaway to Ashland to be raffled off. This event added a tangible element to the outdoor pillar. Ashland VCB's management of this event with the partnership of Southern Oregon University (2012 event location) generated new visitors for new reasons.

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In May of 2012, we began creating best practices for Chamber events and encouraging sustainable behavior and management to lessen waste. We are creating a culture of using durable coffee mugs and products instead of disposable. We began with a Mug Club at our weekly Greeters meeting and are increasing awareness beyond the Chamber to encourage best practices with all city-wide events.

We are poised for growth in the coming years. We hear optimism in the businesses that serve our visitors. The outlook is strong and the sentiment that we have recovered from the low point of the economy is a collective thought amongst the service industry. 2013 bookings are strong and visitor requests have increased from last year. Demand has increased for our ***In & About Visitor's Guide*** and the ***Living & Doing Business Guide***. Website traffic increased over the last year on our site with over 10,000 unique visitors per month. Our visitors utilize our website for information and travel planning but still rely on print to be inspired about a destination and often keep their Visitor Guide throughout their trip to refer to.

We look forward to growth in the year ahead and encourage increased investment in the tourism industry. If we were to receive an increase to our tourism grant, we would use that to build upon the brand implementation and expansion of our marketing efforts through online promotions, interactive campaigns and video production. Video is one of the most commonly viewed advertising messages that reach visitors. We look forward to expanding our refreshed brand using our pillars of cultural, culinary and outdoor through video with event and activity coverage, interviews of enthusiasts within each pillar and HD footage that highlights the quality of life and landscape both visitors and residents treasure.

With this refreshed brand, we will reach new niche audiences and expand upon the existing Northern California market which, through continued analysis, is our target market of highly educated folks with expendable income who travel north to Ashland each year.

Leading economic indicators tell us that the economy is improving. People are poised and ready to travel however destinations, such as Ashland are competing for those dollars. We must maintain our presence in the market place to capture those discretionary dollars and take full advantage of the increase in visitor spending as it unfolds.

In closing, the Ashland Chamber Visitor & Convention Bureau serves as the welcome center for the City of Ashland as well as those entering Oregon. We are open to the public year-round providing friendly, informative services free of charge. We are fortunate to promote such a beautiful destination and appreciate the opportunity to do so for years to come. We submit this report for your review and request your continued partnership.



**Katharine Flanagan**  
Visitor & Convention Bureau Director



**Sandra Slattery**  
Executive Director



# ASHLAND

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Ashland Chamber of Commerce

Visitor & Convention Bureau

**2011-12 City Report**



# ASHLAND

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## Ashland Chamber of Commerce Visitor & Convention Bureau 2011–2012

### **VCB OVERVIEW**

#### **Purpose**

For thirty years, the City of Ashland and the community have relied on the Ashland Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) through an annual grant, to promote Ashland, year round, to visitors traveling from more than 50 miles to Ashland and to visitors who stay overnight in Ashland. Promotion includes advertising, publicizing, distribution of materials, developing and marketing special events, conducting strategic planning, visitor center management and research necessary to stimulate tourism development.

#### **Mission**

The mission of the VCB is to promote visitor stays year round with a primary focus on the fall, winter and spring seasons.

#### **Overview of 2011 - 2012 Ashland VCB**

In addition to fulfilling the mission of the VCB as set by the City of Ashland, in fiscal year 2011-2012, we continued to expand our marketing promotion with three prominent areas of interest: Cultural, Culinary and Outdoor experiences. Building on our cultural amenities, we continue to expand our market, inviting new visitors for new reasons, while maintaining the invitation to Ashland's loyal, traditional visitor. By passionately promoting the quality of life & small town charm of Ashland, combined with its world class amenities, we continue to deliver that authentic experience our visitors seek.

#### **Refreshing the Brand**

By refining the pillars, we underscored their importance to the Ashland brand. In spring of 2012, the VCB voted to refresh the Ashland brand using the existing pillars to build upon and create a refreshed look and feel in our visitor messaging. After completing the selection process, the VCB chose DVA Public Relations and Advertising from Bend, Oregon to refresh the Ashland brand, launch the new brand and provide the style guide so that we could implement in-house thereafter. There



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was a significant investment of time from the VCB's Branding subcommittee who held multiple meetings with DVA, driving the brand process forward, explaining who we are and what Ashland is all about. From that process, after research, discussions, refinement and revisions, we now have a refreshed Ashland brand with a new look and feel and messaging.

DVA provided deliverables including brand statement, destination goal, brand rationale, characteristics and attributes. Upon approval of the logo and tagline, DVA developed creative concepts that stem from the logo and tagline to drive the advertising. DVA then provided a style guide or set of ad templates for us to implement in-house and continue to execute the refreshed look and feel.

### Refreshed Ashland Brand - New Logo and tagline.



#### Logo description:

A trip to Ashland is not just a single experience. It's the coming together of many extraordinary people, places and events to create a city that is unique to every single person who comes to visit. "As you like it", while alluding to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for which Ashland is best known, truly speaks to multitude of choices and lets our audience know that, here, they will experience the exact version of Ashland that they love most.

The mark, while alluding to the incredible natural surroundings, supports the individualized experience of Ashland with the single orange leaf. The tailored type design further supports the individualism of Ashland through the playful modification of the letters. The colors represent the characteristics of the town. Maroon connoting wine, roots, passion and adventure. Green symbolizing nature, renewal and life. And orange for the vibrant, spirited energy of this unique destination.

### Three Main Pillars that helped to build the refreshed brand

#### Cultural Pillar:

- Most widely known for the world renowned **Oregon Shakespeare Festival**, approximately half of Ashland's visitors is attracted to Ashland to attend plays.
- **365 days of theatre** – Ashland offers Oregon Cabaret Theatre and Camelot.
- **Galleries and museums** attract art-lovers throughout the county.
- Ashland's heritage showcases the **history** not only of **theatre** and **education** but of **wellness** and **nature**. With the history of Lithia water attracting healers and those wanting to be healed, Ashland became a destination for wellness.
- Ashland's diverse **music** scene includes Rogue Valley Symphony, Chamber Orchestra, live music by the City Band, and a huge variety of performers that play at locals pubs and restaurants and nearby at the Britt Festival.

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## Culinary Pillar:

- Honors Ashland's cuisine, wines, brews, spirits, food artisans, farms and land.
- With over 80 restaurants in Ashland, we attract the culinary traveler experiences.
- **Agri-tourism** is growing in Ashland, (defined as an interactive style of vacation that takes place at a farm, winery or ranch).
- Promotes events & organizations such as the **Rogue Valley Grower's Market, THRIVE**, the **Farm to Table** concept and Culinary tours.
- **Ashland Culinary Festival, produced by the Ashland VCB**, now in its seventh year marks the center of this pillar, consisting of eight chefs competing for Top Chef honor using local produce. With educational workshops, participation from food artisans, farmers, wineries and breweries, it is evident that Ashland offers an unmatched culinary destination.
- **Ashland Restaurant Preview Week** each February promotes restaurants to the local region and invites guests to take part in specials and win a night out.
- The culinary adventure also showcases our emerging wine industry described by **Sunset magazine (Jan. 2010)** as, "*The next big wine country: Southern Oregon.*"

## Outdoor Pillar:

- **Cycle Oregon 2012** – Ashland hosted 2700 cyclists and over 500 volunteers as the Layover Community for the 25th annual Cycle Oregon bike tour across Oregon. This put Ashland on the map as a cycling destination and base camp for cyclists who match our target audience. They were invited back by entering to win a getaway to Ashland. Cyclists enjoyed Ashland's amenities and attractions.
- **"Top 10 places to Visit based on Geotourism"**. Noted by *National Geographic Adventure magazine* (January 2009) Ashland attracts more outdoor enthusiasts each year which is a younger, more active individual.
- **"Best Places to Live"** *Outdoor Magazine* (June 2009) honored Ashland based on its community assets and natural beauty. Honored again in **2011** – Ashland was voted the 8th Top town to live in based on an online poll.
- Top trail running towns – *Trailrunner magazine*, 2008.
- We invite not only the recreational enthusiast but **those who enjoy nature**.

## VCB Committee

The VCB, which meets on the third Wednesday of every month, is comprised of members from various segments of the tourism industry who offer their input, business expertise and knowledge. Industries represented on the VCB include lodging, restaurant, wine, retail, spa, museums, theatre and attractions. These industries rely upon the VCB as the organization to gain the most effective market outreach and the furthest exposure for the Ashland experience by offering various, cooperative advertising opportunities for small grantees and non-profits.

The VCB serves as the local Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) of which there are twenty-two within Southern Oregon. The twenty-two DMO's work in coordination with the Regional Destination Marketing Organization (RDMO) which in this case is the Southern Oregon Visitor's Association (SOVA). SOVA is one of seven RDMO's within the state of Oregon that work in

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coordination with the Oregon Tourism Commission dba, Travel Oregon, the entity that handles Oregon's statewide tourism promotion. Ashland is proud to have direct communication with Travel Oregon and statewide representation.

### **VCB Committee Members:**

**Committee Member:**

**Deb Cleland**  
**Don Anway**  
**Kevin Bendaw**  
**Drew Gibbs (Chair)**  
**Rick Saul**  
**Vicki Capp**  
**Graham Sheldon**  
**Dustin Way**  
**Julie Gurwell**  
**Brad Niva**  
**Lisa Beam**  
**Katharine Flanagan**

**Business:**

Waterstone Spa  
Ashland Springs Hotel & Larks Restaurant  
Oregon Shakespeare Festival  
Winchester Inn, Wine Bar & Restaurant  
Mt. Ashland Ski Area  
Ashland B&B Network/ The Iris Inn  
Ashland B&B Network/ Ashland Creek Inn  
Rogue Valley Roasting Company  
Oregon Cabaret Theatre  
Rogue Wilderness and Winehopper Tours  
Board Liaison/President 2011-2013  
VCB Director/Chamber Marketing & Sales

## **MARKETING & ADVERTISING**

To support the mission of the VCB, our established marketing pillars and our newly refreshed brand, the marketing and advertising focuses on creating awareness of Ashland's off season attractions, amenities and events Through our newly dynamic website, [www.ashlandchamber.com](http://www.ashlandchamber.com), internet marketing, annual publications, events, promotions, brochures and advertising the VCB effectively targets a variety of niches from Northern California and the Pacific Northwest with the goal of increasing tourism in the fall, winter and spring, while maintaining the strong levels of tourism in the summer months.

### **Website, [www.ashlandchamber.com](http://www.ashlandchamber.com)**

One of the most effective tools we have to market the Ashland brand is our website. Demand for print is strong and continues to grow. Website traffic continues to grow and so do the number of visitors and potential residents that seek out information using our site. Our website, [www.ashlandchamber.com](http://www.ashlandchamber.com) is the number one result when the terms "Ashland Oregon" are searched. We have an average of 10,000 unique visitors on our site per month.

**Local and Visitor web traffic:** Our site remains a strong resource for visitor traffic with the lodging section of the site remaining one of the most visited sections. Upon the re-launch in February of 2011, we set out with three goals. The first goal was to increase local traffic and we accomplished that over the course of 2011, increasing by 53%. We believe increased local traffic sustains businesses in the off season.

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**Member Directory:** By enhancing each Member page to house video, photos and multiple links, our Member Directory is one of the most visited sections of our site with over 70,000 visits in that section alone.

**Events:** We have enabled our events to live throughout the year with photo galleries, videos and a more interactive presence to assist visitors in making their travel plans.

**Social Media:** The second goal of the re-launch was to increase the connection with social media and our site. By investing time and content into Facebook, the Ashland Chamber now has over 600 fans all over the country and has increased traffic to our site from Facebook by 10%. It is also the #1 direct referring site to our site.

**Tools:** The third goal was to enhance the user experience and create useful tools for our members and site users.

- **NEWS tool:** Increased traffic by sharing current NEWS for members that posts on our site, links to subscribers and also posts on Ashland Chamber's Facebook page.
- **Calendar:** Open to members and annual community events, the Calendar is the 2nd most visited part of our site. Members can post their own events. The expanded calendar drives more local, community and visitor traffic. More interaction. Visitors rely on this calendar and check it before their visit to find out what is happening and either choose Ashland as their destination or extend their visit based on the calendar events.
- **Mobile Capacity:** Increased the capacity of our site to be viewed on a mobile device. This effort increased mobile visitors by 157%! 10% of all site visitors were using mobile devices and that number continues to grow.

**Preview 2013:** Mobile Site Launched – the mobile version of our site was launched successful for both Iphone and Android users. We look forward to expanding our capacity to reach more mobile users, providing them the information they seek and where they look to find it.

**Video Production and Expansion:** We are creating new footage of content related to our marketing pillars in the outdoor, culinary and cultural realms. We continue to produce video footage that is aired on our site to showcase events, the community and promotions. We are also able to use our established library of HD video of scenic footage, such as Lithia Park, the downtown, Southern Oregon University, the airport, attractions such as the golf course, lakes, rivers, and mountains. Video is an effective tool to tell the story of Ashland to our targeted markets. On our website, you can find interviews with community leaders and business owners representing various business clusters such as manufacturing, health care, secondary education, higher education, technology, tourism, organic farming, and wineries. These are people who have created their business in Ashland, those who had moved their business to Ashland and community leaders who speak to our economic base and quality of life.

**Visit Ashland DVD:** This DVD is still used for travel writers and those interested in Ashland. It has separate chapters on each of the clusters such as health care and technology. On the website, people can view the separate interviews along with the community footage. The DVDs are used at trade and travel shows as both a handout to those interested in business relocation and as a

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show on a laptop. Expressed throughout the video interviews are community values, livability, education, business resources and terrific scenic footage. Utilizing the same methods used to promote tourism, the Chamber applied those skills to marketing economic development. To appeal to clean industry, low footprint businesses that care about the amenities that a culturally-rich town can offer, we focused on Ashland values of quality education at all levels, outstanding culture and recreation.

**Online marketing:** The way in which we communicate our message to visitors and locals is constantly evolving. The internet is the main source used in travel planning, research and buying decisions. The Ashland VCB uses the **website, email correspondence and e-newsletters** to reach to our database of loyal visitors and new audiences. In-depth coordination and collection has been done to enable access to our database of visitors, event attendees, and leads from interested, potential visitors and businesses. We have grown our presence using **social media** by developing **Facebook pages** for our organization and each event to generate awareness, an active fan base and year round promotion of our events.

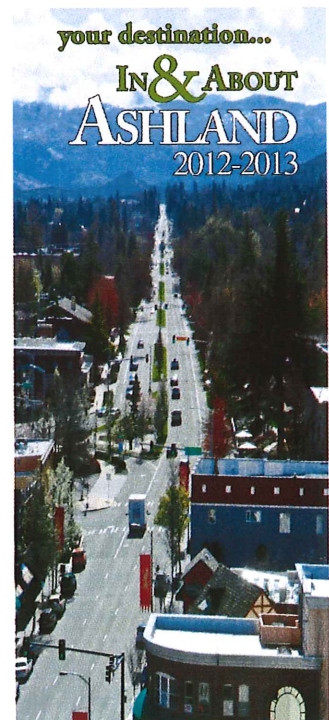
**Internet Marketing Committee:** Based on a collective need from our membership, we created an Internet Marketing committee that assists in planning a series of seminars related to online marketing, social media and trends that can help businesses within different industries learn how to market themselves with the newest tools available.

**Spring 2011: Social Media Workshop.** The Chamber hosted a two day workshop hosted by Jim Teece from Project A. Attendees learned the benefits of showcasing their business in social media, how to build a Facebook page and how to expand their brand and audience using the tools that are available.

## Publications

### *In & About Visitors Guide*

Our premier visitor's guide, that publishes prior to Memorial day each year, is an effective tool for marketing tourism with a distribution of 50,000 that is designed in house. It is mailed as a response piece to all online and phone inquiries. It is annually distributed at Portland International Airport, Oregon State Welcome Centers and Chambers/ Visitor Bureaus and many trade shows including Bay Area Trade Show, Sunset, Portland Bike and Ski shows, POW-WOW an international trade show and many more. It is also distributed to all advertisers in addition to realtors and anyone locally that can use it to help showcase Ashland. The Plaza Booth which the Chamber oversees and Chamber offices reach a combined 135,000 visitors annually, most of which receive the *Guide*. Showcasing the events, food, lodging, shopping, fine arts, museums, maps, entertainment and outdoor recreation that Ashland offers, it is a



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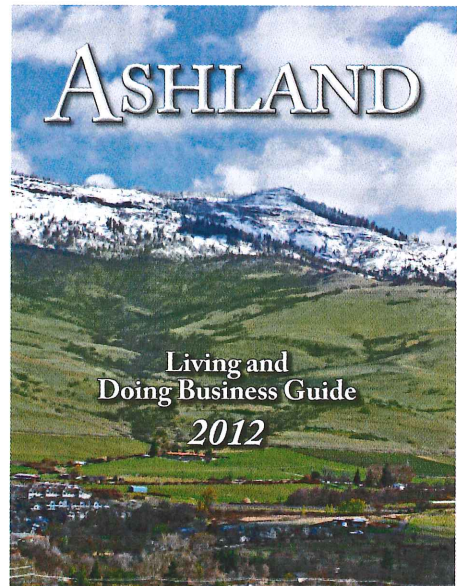
complete picture of what the Ashland experience can provide. We have seen demand increase for this publication both through receiving individual requests as well as increasing the distribution points.

**Tools Implemented:**

- Culinary, Cultural and Outdoor adventures – theme
- Sample itineraries for kids, day trips, Mondays in Ashland and our pillars
- Annual Calendar to assist in visitor planning and year round promotion
- Travel maps, transportation and locators to assist visitors in getting here.
- Driving traffic to our website – each page lists our website address encouraging visitors to pursue information online.

***Living & Doing Business Guide***

The **Living & Doing Business Guide** is the primary economic development marketing piece for Ashland. The purpose of this annual publication is to provide accurate and substantive information on the Ashland community to help guide decisions for local business development and relocation for prospective businesses and residents. It is also utilized locally as a current community profile piece. Significant work is done annually by staff and committee to showcase the depth of our community including quality of life descriptions, community values, visitor amenities, demographic and economic data all done in a visually pleasing graphic format.



**Awards:**

**National recognition: July 2009**

**Grand Award for Communications Excellence** given by ACCE (American Chamber of Commerce Executives) – the premier national organization for Chamber Executives. This is the highest award that can be given in the nation for Chamber publications competing with some of the largest cities in the country.

**Content:**

Each year, this publication is revised to reflect the current 600+ membership, efforts and themes surrounding Ashland and its businesses. The *Guide* is annually critiqued by the ESC committee with staff to create the most dynamic and reflective publication of Ashland’s values and assets. With the new Census data in 2010 and new 3 year forecasts, we were able to update and expand the demographics and information. New photography and editorial showcase Ashland. Staff works with photographers and partners to ensure beautiful, current and correct information. The 2012 themes focused on innovation in our community and the importance of water along with highlighting high performing technology companies based in Ashland.

**Growth in Demand and Distribution:** We have seen an increase in the demand for this publication. We have diversified and increased the number of distribution points to grow the readership. This locally produced publication serves as the main marketing piece for business and family relocation, local business growth and development and is distributed at trade shows by SOREDI

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(Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development Inc.) among others. It is used in recruitment and distributed at Ashland Community Hospital, Providence Medford Medical Center, Asante, Southern Oregon University and the City of Ashland. Local businesses regularly use the data in this publication to assist in their planning. Real estate offices consistently distribute and include in their welcome packets for potential buyers.

## Fall, Winter & Spring Marketing

### Events

#### **6th annual Ashland Culinary Festival November 2 – 4th, 2012**

##### ***Celebrating Southern Oregon's food, drink, talent and creativity***

Originated in November 2007, the Ashland VCB created this event, specifically in November to attract the culinary traveler, showcase the bountiful harvest of Southern Oregon both in food and drink, highlight the talented local chefs and restaurants and lastly, to take part in the statewide promotion of the Oregon Bounty created by Travel Oregon. With educational workshops, Chef Competition, Best Dessert judging and many weekend events, it is a weekend many return to. From pears to cheese, squash to bison, pinot noir to award-winning microbrews the Ashland Culinary Festival brings these ingredients to life in the spirit of competition and education.

**Sales and Promotion:** Attendance and online ticket sales have grown each year, totaling over 600 guests this past year in 2012. New image libraries, videos, Facebook page, ads and travel writer relations contributed to growing the event's exposure.

**Top Chef 2012:** Billy Buscher, Alchemy Restaurant at the Winchester Inn

**Best Dessert in Ashland 2012:** Liquid Assets Wine Bar

**Attendance:** There is a strong draw for young locals that come to support their favorite chef or restaurant. This event is promoted as a destination event with lodging packages and a long weekend invite. This event welcomes visitors from Los Angeles, San Francisco and the Redding market. Now in its seventh year, there are folks who return each November to attend.

**Networking:** The event creates an opportunity for farms, food artisans, wineries, breweries and restaurants to network as many of their paths do not ordinarily cross.

**NEW in 2012:** Rogue Valley Farmer's Market extended their market in 2011 to coincide with this event. In, 2012, we incorporated the Market into the Chefs competition by having them have to go buy product at the Market during their allotted time to prepare their dishes. It created a new energy and a visible connection between the farms, vendors and chefs. Oregon Shakespeare Festival's closing weekend also coincided and thus provided added exposure for the multiple event weekend.

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**Friday Night Kick Off:** Meet the Chefs, food and wine samplings with culinary demos invited a new group of attendees and coincided well with First Friday Artwalk.

**Vendors:** The number of vendors has grown to total 26 at the Historic Ashland Armory.

**Partners:**

- **Ashland Springs Hotel** – catering, staff and volunteers
- **Cooks Kitchen** – kitchen units used for competition
- **Ashland Food Cooperative**
- **THRIVE**
- **Rogue Valley Growers Market and local farms**
- **Cory Schreiber** – *Chef, author and educator - Farm to School* program
- **Porter’s Restaurant - Rolar Yondorf** was one of the judges in 2011 & 2012
- **Past Top Chefs** – **Neil Clooney, Franco Console, Chandra Corwin, David Georgeson**
- **Enchanted Florist**
- **Sysco**
- **SOU Hospitality Club**
- **Winchester Inn**
- **Women Enjoying Beer**
- **Travel Oregon’s Oregon Bounty** Promotion and marketing

**Culinary Marketing & Economic Development:** With the growth of wine and culinary tourism, this event is a necessary tool to attract visitors and locals, families and couples alike to experience the fall and early winter. Highlighting the community of restaurants, artisans, lodging, spas and wineries, this event supports and promotes other non-profits and small grantees by marketing this event in Northern California and in all of Oregon. By showcasing the connection of tourism and economic development, this helps to secure a larger market share and awareness of the tourism oriented business community of Ashland. This event supports the growth of local businesses.

**Preview 2013:** We would like to grow this event both in attendance and capacity of vendors. We will pursue expanding this event for 2013, while staying at the same venue, we hope to expand to include an attached outdoor component to grow this event.

**SAVE the DATE: 7th annual Ashland Culinary Festival November 8 - 9, 2013**

**Festival of Light Celebration, Thanksgiving through New Year’s**  
**“Find your Holiday Spirit in Ashland” 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary 2012**

Aligning with the mission of the VCB, the *Festival of Light* invites **families** and **folks** to Ashland during the months of November through January. With lodging packages, events and celebrations, Ashland attracts visitors not only from Southern Oregon, but from Northern California as well as Central Oregon. Welcoming over 15,000 people, the Ashland Chamber & VCB organize the festivities the day after Thanksgiving including entertainment on the Plaza, Santa’s Parade, the Grand Illumination and Santa’s workshop. It takes not only staff, but an energized committee and volunteers to facilitate.



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**Weekends in December:** The *Festival of Light* celebration was extended through the month of December each weekend since 2008. The ambiance welcomes shoppers, families and locals to enjoy the quaint element of Ashland during the holidays.

**Adopt-A-Wreath 2009:** The Chamber and VCB spearheaded this project to refresh the holiday wreath decorations. After 17 years, the wreaths were looking past their prime. With the help of volunteers, local businesses and the City of Ashland, we stripped the wreaths down to the frame, refurbished the frame, eliminated the rust and wrapped them with new garland and LED lights. 56 wreaths were created, most of which were adopted for \$250 in 2009.

**2011 additions:** Adding to Santa's parade and his reindeer, eight **Rockettes** and four **elves** joined the parade with handmade costumes provided by the Ashland VCB to entertain to the crowd.

**Adopt-A-Snowflake 2011:** All 33 snowflakes were stripped of the old garland, de-rusted and refurbished with new garland and LED lights with the help of Boy Scout Troop #112 and community volunteers, to continue the effort of greening the *Festival of Light* event. The snowflakes hang on Highway 66 in South Ashland.

**Adopt-A-Lantern 2012:** With the help of the Boy Scouts and Eagle Scouts, the historic lanterns that used to hang on East Main in the 1950's were sanded and repainted by Anderson Auto Body. Each of them were adopted and hung on East Main for the 2012 holiday season. Currently the committee is working on how to best enhance use solar to enhance the illumination of the lanterns. The goal is to have all solar lighting and garland on the lanterns completed for the 2013 holiday season.

**NEW: Green – Best Practices Committee:** This committee of the Chamber was created to look at Chamber & VCB events to make them as sustainable as possible, by lessening the waste created and starting to change the behavior of event attendees to bring reusable coffee mugs, use less disposable products if hosting and encourage positive stewardship. Strides were made with Fourth of July vendors and recycling along the parade route, Ashland Culinary Festival composting as well as Festival of Light. The committee is currently working on incorporating information into City event applications and permitting to create more awareness for sustainable resources while putting on an event.

## **Fall, Winter & Springs Promotions**

### **Gift Certificate Program**

Promoting green gift giving and shopping local, we continue this very successful program of selling **Ashland Chamber Gift Certificates** that are good at participating Ashland businesses year round. Promoted most aggressively during the holiday months, folks who use the program feel it does a great job of keeping the money in Ashland during the holidays to support our local merchants. We promote this program within our *Festival of Light* marketing, in local newspapers, regional television commercials as well as online. We are excited to see local entities such as the Ashland Community Hospital use this program for their volunteer appreciation. We see they make great gifts for youth athletic coaches, too. We actively sell them online. This program had the highest sales in 2012 with participation growing to over 40+ businesses and sales steadily increasing.

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## Ashland's Restaurant Preview Week February 3rd – 9th, 2013

In 2012, we chose to promote the general branding and three pillars of Ashland while launching a new **Restaurant Preview Week, February 5th – 11th, 2012** to draw attention to the restaurants and culinary scene for locals and regional visitors to enjoy before the busy season begins.

**Preview 2013:** This year, participating restaurants will offer a special and contribute a \$50 gift certificate each. Patrons who participate and dine will be entered to win a night out in Ashland. We promote this campaign both locally, in the Ashland market as well as around the Rogue Valley, inviting locals to experience Ashland's culinary scene.

## Advertising

*\*See Addendum B, page 32 for examples of advertisement*

In 2011 – 2012, we continued to expand the promotion of our culinary, outdoor and cultural adventures, shifted more dollars towards measureable, online advertising, while renewing successful print campaigns. We broadened our message of who we invite to Ashland and why. The Ashland VCB participates in local, regional and cooperative advertising in addition to providing cooperative opportunities for members of the VCB.

## Regional

- **www.oregon.com:** generating an average of 50 leads per week, there is a live link to their website which receives over 2 million visitors annually.
- **1859 Magazine:** statewide magazine promoting lifestyle, culinary and outdoors
- **Southern Oregon Magazine and online:** year round exposure to local & regional markets
- **Central Oregon Magazine and online:** attracting culinary & outdoor travelers
- **Golf Oregon and online:** cross marketing to golfers who enjoy high-end travel
- **Record Searchlight and online:** Redding is one of the top three sources of traffic to our website.
- **Portland Monthly magazine:** promoting to the culinary traveler, **Ashland Culinary Festival** in their food issue
- **Travel Oregon**
  - **E-Newsletter and Interactive magazine:** promoting online traffic to niche markets including culinary and outdoor readership
  - **Trip Planner** is produced by Media America & Travel Oregon. Circulation is 250,000 annually and serves also as the official state resource guide, intended as a visitor's itinerary planning piece, complete source for statewide lodging accommodations and lead generation.
- **Portland Guide:** The guide has a circulation of 100,000 at 250 locations around the Pacific Northwest. Our presence consists of images, text, Chinese and events.
- **NW Travel Magazine:** greater Seattle and Pacific NW readership with expendable income and travel interest
- **Go-Oregon.com:** Monthly lead generation from our presence on site.

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## Local

- **Oregon Shakespeare Festival:** The Ashland Chamber and Oregon Shakespeare Festival have a cooperative agreement that enables both parties exposure in a variety of products. The Ashland Chamber & VCB values its exposure on [www.osfashland.org](http://www.osfashland.org), within their Playbill and annual brochure. As one of the cornerstone's to the amenities of Ashland, we value the long-term partnership that has grown and strengthened each year.
- **Britt Festival:** partnership solidified through advertising trade
- **Ashland Independent Film Festival:** Much like the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, yet in a smaller capacity, there is an agreement of advertising and in kind sponsorship between AIFF and the Ashland VCB. Reaching this unique market of independent film goes not only enables them to learn of all the amenities they may find by attending the festival, but it also helps to support AIFF.
- **Taste of Ashland and Ashland Gallery Association:** agreement for in kind sponsorship and reciprocal ads placed in respective directories.
- **Southern Oregon University Parent Guide:** resource and strong distribution
- **Local News sources:** Based on events and promotions, ads are placed in the following places that speak to the local community which is essential in marketing the off season in Ashland. :
  - **Daily Tidings, [www.dailytidings.com](http://www.dailytidings.com) and Revels**
  - **Mail Tribune, [www.mailtribune.com](http://www.mailtribune.com) and Tempo**
  - **Sneak Preview**
  - **Locals Guide**
- **Regional television and radio;** To ensure the regional market is reached in more than one way with our message of visiting Ashland, when we purchase airtime with KTVL Ch.10, KDRV Ch.12, KOBI Ch.5 and radio with BiCoastal Media (KRWQ & KISS). Prior to events, we visit the morning news segment to generate awareness and attendance to events such as Ashland Culinary Festival, Fourth of July and Festival of Light.
- **JPR** provides access to the valuable audience of Ashland that may not watch television or be touched by mainstream media and extends our market regionally.
- **Ashland TV 20** supports the VCB by airing event videos we produce.
- **Facebook & Social Media** by increasing our investment with ads, content, current information and more fans, we increased our traffic from Facebook to our website by 10% over the past 2 years since our re-launch.

## TRAVEL INDUSTRY

### Regional Relationships and Memberships

**Oregon Tourism Commission** dba. **Travel Oregon** (Statewide tourism promotion)

**SOVA** - Southern Oregon Visitors Association

Current Board Member: Katharine Flanagan, Ashland VCB Director

**ORLA** - Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association (now combined)

**SOHO (formerly SKAL)** - International Tourism Group

**OACVB** - Oregon Association of Convention & Visitor Bureau's

**Oregon Film Office**

**OTIC** - Tourism Information Council

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**NTA** - National Tour Association  
**IFWTW** – International Food & Wine Travel Writers  
**BATW** – Bay Area Travel Writers  
**THRIVE** – The Rogue Valley Initiative for a Vital Economy  
**SOFAT** – Southern Oregon Film and Television

## Trade Shows

The decision to participate in certain trade shows is driven by reaching our target audience. The Ashland VCB participates in many trade shows around the west coast by either attending, providing *In & About Visitor Guides* or providing information as part of an itinerary that is sold at the show. For instance with shows in Northern California such as the **Sunset trade show**, there is a suggested map with attractions and points of interest that drives tour operators to plan their trips and sell them to their groups. Through Ashland VCB's partnerships with SOVA (Southern Oregon Visitors Association), Mt. Ashland and Rogue 5 Media, the Ashland VCB is able to have a presence at other trade shows by advertising or paying a separate fee to have our brochures and donated products showcased. The Ashland VCB has a consistent presence at:

- **Bay Area Trade Show** in Sacramento, CA
- **Sunset Trade Show** in Menlo Park, CA
- **Portland Ski Show**, Portland
- **Golf Shows** in Oregon, Nevada and California
- **POW-WOW** (groups and international market)
- **Canada Sales Mission**- VCB's meet with tour operators and travel planners.
- **NEW 2012: LGBT: Gay & Lesbian Tourism Conference, October 2012** – a co-op was created with local partners to invite travel and tour planners to consider Ashland as a welcoming destination for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Audience. There is a solid group of businesses that currently include this niche in their marketing efforts. Ashland is an open, friendly destination but there needs to be an invitation with an authentic message to be effective.

## Travel Writers

The editorial coverage from a travel writer is invaluable and offers an authentic perspective of the "experience" that Ashland VCB works to promote. Hosting a travel writer involves a high level of coordination and collaboration to provide hosted lodging, dining and access to attractions. All this has to be done in a timely manner and typically on a short time frame from when the initial communication is made. Welcoming each travel writer with hospitality and a cohesive presentation is necessary to create favorable results and reviews. References, past articles written and the angle of the feature must be checked prior to the work beginning. Below is a recap of travel writers that the Ashland VCB has worked with during the fiscal year. The result of these visits comes in the form of articles published online, in magazines, newspapers, e-newsletters, blogs, websites, radio/TV promotion as well as guide books both in the USA and international.

- **March 2012** –
  - **PaperSky Media Tour** – Japanese Magazine, highlighting Oregon running events and Ashland's running trails, 2 page spread featuring Ashland and Hal Koerner, ultra runner and owner of Rogue Valley Runners.

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- **April 2012**
    - **Joan and David Vokac** - authors of Great Towns of America, Great Towns of Oregon. Created a book solely on Ashland. Their book Great Towns of Oregon published and covered Ashland in 1985, 1995, 2005 and they are back doing research. The Ashland book published Summer 2012.
  - **May 2012 –**
    - **Sunrise Tours** – group tour visiting art galleries, Railroad District
    - **Diane Covington**, Bay Area Travel Writer Association/Santa Barbara News Press, Touristtravel.com, Around the World Radio, follow up story on Ashland – outdoors, biking, recreation and adventure
  - **June 2012 –**
    - **Natasha Nieuwhof**, Goaty Hill Winery, Launceston, Tasmania
      - ▲ Agri-tourism and culinary traveler promotion
    - **Joan Ritger**, CTTours.com, Naples, Florida
    - **Ildiko Bayer**, Director of Sales for Design Destinations, Los Angeles
      - ▲ Destination management travel co. specializing in incentive and group travel
  - **July 2012 –**
    - **Pam Price**, Travel Columnist, Malibu Times Newspaper
    - **Adam Huck**, Daily Telegraph, Abercrombie & Kent UK
  - **August 2012 –**
    - **Toshiya Kiskuchi** - Globetrotter Guide Book, coordinated with Greg Eckhart, Travel Oregon Global Sales – Asia
    - **Charlie Guo and Kevin Chen** - South Korea, JoongAng Ilbo, OR/CA/WA Travel Guidebook.
  - **September 2012 –**
    - **Trails To Feast**, Travel Oregon promotion, enter to win trip around Oregon. Ashland partners provided: farm tour, lunch, Winchester Inn dinner and OSF play
    - **Cycle Oregon staff**, hosted writers, media and representatives.
  - **November 2012 –**
    - **Allen Cox, Editor in Chief and Dave Peterson, Publisher** NWTravel magazine, featuring Ashland Culinary Festival (produced by Ashland VCB)

## Group Business

Ashland annually welcomes different sizes and types of groups, associations, school and youth groups and travel industry representatives. Many religious groups and alumni associations annually convene in Ashland. Ashland Chamber VCB assists in welcoming the groups and supporting our partners through a variety of ways. Some of our lodging establishments and those who cater to group business saw an increase in 2012 in alumni and medical associations returning after 5 years.

- **Elks Convention** – April 2012. The Ashland VCB assisted in promoting and welcoming the Elks Convention welcome signage, information packets and publicity. This was not only exposure for Elks but their significant others who traveled with them got to experience Ashland as well.
  - **Cycle Oregon** – Celebrating the 25th anniversary, Ashland was one of the eight cities on the
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500 mile, 10 day statewide bike tour. Ashland welcomed 2200 cyclists and collectively over 4000 folks affiliated with this event in September of 2012. They were invited back by entering a raffle to win an Ashland getaway.

- Our membership with **SOVA (Southern Oregon Visitors Association)** provides exposure for Ashland at trade shows that market directly to tour operators and group coordinators. Examples are the Go West Summit, Canada Sales Mission and POW WOW International. Many times this results in creating itineraries and welcoming them to Ashland to experience the town while researching the amenities for their group.
- Cooperatively, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, SOVA and the Ashland VCB are working together to sell Ashland's brand as a consistent message to new groups interested in visiting.

## OPERATIONS

### Research-

In 2008, it was determined that the Tourism and Recreation Cluster, so important to Ashland's economic base, needed extensive research and analysis to better understand the strengths and inherent challenges. In addition to planning for a Tourism BR&E survey, it was decided from conversations with the City Council and staff that a thorough analysis was required of the tourism sector. First, the analysis of the base of tourism would be conducted by independent research and second, a study of the visitor profile would be conducted. These studies continued through 2009 – 2010 and findings were included in the 2009 – 2010 City Report issued January 2010. In the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year, there was an additional lodging survey and analysis conducted by Rebecca Reid, Independent Research consultant and presented to the Visitor & Convention Bureau in May of 2011. One conclusion from this most recent study shows there is an inherent value in Ashland's downtown. Visitors value the downtown lodging and proximity to our amenities. This underscores the importance of the commitment and investment to keep our downtown's physical structure and ambiance vibrant, beautiful and welcoming.

### Brochure distribution

We have seen an increase in demand and distribution points for the ***In & About Visitor Guide*** as well as the ***Living & Doing Business Guide***. The VCB distributes this *Guide* through a variety of methods at various locations, both locally, regionally and nationally. Methods include all Oregon State Welcome Centers including the new PDX Welcome Center at the Portland International Airport, which enables visitors entering the state to be acquainted with Ashland. Locations also include Chambers and Visitors Centers throughout Northern California and Oregon. Through the VCB's membership and participation with SOVA, our Guides are distributed in the Bay Area Travel Show, Sunset, Portland Ski Show and Golf trade shows in Oregon, Nevada and California. It is also distributed and restocked with each advertiser in the *Guide*. By supporting Ashland's community events, this *Guide* is included in welcome packets for events & conventions by request. For example, it is included in the Juror packets at the Ashland Independent Film Festival, member packets for the Elks Convention (2012) and was included in the Cycle Oregon athlete packets at their event in Ashland, September 2012.

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## Image Library, Graphics & Video

To market Ashland as the sophisticated destination that it is, it is necessary to refresh our images and photography each year. The Ashland VCB works with both new and established photographers to consistently expand the image library. Fresh images and graphics are needed for our annual publications, promotions and keeping our website vibrant and seasonally driven. In addition, there is a steady stream of requests from travel writers, local non-profits and small grantees that need high quality photos to include in their articles and coverage of Ashland. The Ashland VCB serves as a clearinghouse and a connector to those skilled photographers who capture the essence of the beauty of Ashland. We are constantly expanding the image library to support the promotion of our culinary, cultural and outdoor pillars.

Ashland VCB has worked with DVA Public Relations and Advertising Co. from Bend, over the past year to refresh the look and feel of the Ashland brand. Although we hired this agency to create the new look and feel, we will be implementing and executing this refreshed brand with our in-house graphic designer, Dana Welsh, on Chamber staff who can take the ad templates and style guide created by DVA to stay true to the new look and feel and execute in our advertising going forward.

**Video** – We have created videos that showcase the *Ashland Culinary Festival* and *Festival of Light*. They can be viewed on YouTube or [ashlandchamber.com](http://ashlandchamber.com). From this video production, commercials for TV and online can be made in addition to adding profiles of chefs and local businesses that help create the awareness and support for these events. Our new refreshed branding will involve a campaign that invites visitors to tell us why they love Ashland and we look forward to launching that in the Spring of 2013.

## Printing

In house printing saves money and time. It is a significant part of promoting tourism. For every event and promotion the Ashland VCB produces, there is a repertoire of printed materials that must happen. This includes brochures, signage, monthly calendars, advertising and rack cards. For example, with the *Ashland Culinary Festival*, there are posters, signage, registration forms, brochures, rack cards, programs, name tags and more that need to be produced to create the finished high quality product and experience.

## Postage

With consistent interest and thus, leads or names of folks interested in Ashland, postage supports the response to all inquiries received in the Chamber & VCB office that originate from emails, walk-ins, phone calls and referrals. We maintain a high level of professionalism and customer service by corresponding via first-class mail to each inquiry and mailing them either a *Living & Doing Business Guide* or an *In & About Guide*. This personal touch of a hand addressed envelope and **timely** receipt of information introduces a potential visitor to the experience Ashland provides and begins a relationship that can last for years. Postage supports communication to our members, the mailing of the monthly newsletter, invitations to events and daily operations of member and visitor correspondence. Media kits and correspondence to travel writers and brochure distribution points are also supported through postage.

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## **Volunteers- Plaza Booth & Chamber Office**

As a non-profit, the Chamber & VCB rely on our volunteer base to serve as the front line to visitors and locals. The Plaza Booth is staffed by over 121 community volunteers and operates May through October, serving over 25,000 visitors annually. Each day the Chamber & VCB office is open, there are one to two volunteers who answer phones, walk-ins with questions and handle a variety of information to support the staff and mission. Ongoing training and appreciation is necessary for the volunteers, which we conduct through a training each May to kick off the summer season by providing them updated information, relevant to visitors. We provide a volunteer appreciation tea at the conclusion of each summer season that enables volunteers to socialize and build the camaraderie that enables them to put forth the positive and welcoming energy they do.



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## **Addendums**

Addendum A      2009/2010 Budget

Addendum B      Advertising Samples



*Find Your  
Holiday  
Spirit  
in Ashland*

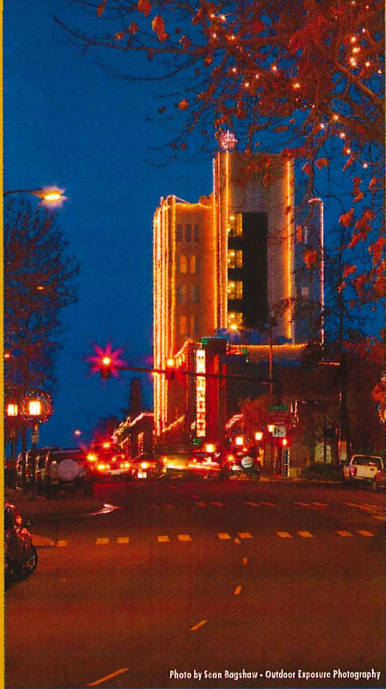


Photo by Sean Bagshaw • Outdoor Exposure Photography

**80 Restaurants  
2 Microbreweries  
Boutique Shopping  
First Class Lodging  
Festival of Light  
Begins Nov. 25th**

*Join us  
for the Holidays!*

**AshlandChamber.com**

**Addendum B:  
Advertising Samples**

6th annual **Ashland Culinary Festival**  
November 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>  
celebrating Southern Oregon's food, drink, creativity and talent. **Order tickets now!**

6th annual  
**Ashland Culinary Festival**  
November 2-4, 2012

Celebrating Southern Oregon's food, drink, talent and creativity

- 8 chefs compete & 30 vendors to sample
- Best Dessert Judging
- Hands on culinary workshops
- Food demos, microbreweries and spirits
- Amazing restaurants and lodging packages

Ashland...your destination

Tickets and info:  
**AshlandChamber.com/food12**

Support your favorite Ashland restaurant

**Ashland's Restaurant Preview Week**  
February 5<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup>

World-class cuisine with local talent and flavor...in your own town!

**AshlandChamber.com**

Experience Ashland's Culinary Scene

**Ashland's Restaurant Preview Week**  
February 3<sup>rd</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>

Amazing Specials . . . Delicious Plates  
Enter to Win a Night Out!

For participating restaurants, specials and to download your enter to win form,  
**AshlandChamber.com**

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## Appendices

Appendix A      2011/2012 Ashland Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

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## Appendix A

### Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors 2011-2012

Alex Amarotico	Standing Stone Brewing Company
Don Anway	Ashland Springs Hotel
Lisa Beam	Pasta Piatti / Sesame Asian Kitchen
Cindy Bernard	Rogue Valley Roasting Co.
Marie Donovan	Ashland Homes Real Estate
Mary Gardiner	Southern Oregon University
Drew Gibbs	Winchester Inn, Restaurant & Wine Bar
Annie Hoy	Ashland Food Cooperative
Pam Hammond	Paddington Station - <i>President</i>
Mark Marchetti	Ashland Community Hospital
Nancy Morgan	Yala
Meiwen Richards	People's Bank
Jim Teece	Project A

