



ASHLAND

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Ashland Chamber of Commerce
Visitor & Convention Bureau

2014-2015

City Report

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Executive Summary
**Ashland Chamber Visitor &
Convention Bureau**
City of Ashland Grant Report
Fiscal Year: 2014 – 2015
Submitted: January 28th, 2016

The grant report to follow represents the 2014-2015 Fiscal Year. The work completed in compliance with the grant guidelines is reflected in the following report. Our success and contribution to the growth of the tourism industry is made possible not only by the Ashland Chamber Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) and partners but by the Chamber and VCB staff of six hard working individuals, volunteers, business owners and community members who contribute to and deliver the visitor experience, showcasing Ashland as the unmatched travel destination that it is. The overarching goal is to deliver an unsurpassed, travel experience that creates lasting memories, encourages repeat visitation, enriches lives and converts visitors into lifelong Ashland ambassadors and potential residents through servicing individuals, industry partners, groups, tours, conventions and conference attendees. We accomplish this through our scope of work that is described in this report within the main categories of **promotion, outreach and exposure, partnerships, tools and fulfillment**. You will find a goal for each category and a thorough description of how we succeed in the goals set by this grant and the growth of the industry as a result of our efforts.

Within the fiscal year of reporting, we diversified and expanded our reach while evolving our brand onto multiple platforms including print, digital, video and industry channels. We built upon the established marketing pillars of cultural, culinary and outdoor experiences while inviting visitors to enjoy Ashland, 'as you like it' year round. We created seasonal, enter to win getaways to promote Mondays in Ashland and long weekend stays. Enter to wins generated new leads that grew our visitor database. We created a new Ashland Map Guide to promote the outdoor pillar and stewardship of our natural resources. We generated return on our investments through effective promotions, events and measurements while expanding our database and partnerships. We saw business growth with strong spring, summer, fall and holiday business by increased visitation, occupancy, investment and participation. We strengthened our partnerships throughout the industry positioning Ashland as a leading destination. We saw the return of large group business and enacted our role in promoting, servicing and supporting the growth of this group business sector. Through promotion, outreach and exposure, partnerships, tools and fulfillment, we continue to expand and diversify our market, inviting new visitors for new reasons, while maintaining the invitation to Ashland's loyal, traditional visitor. The Ashland VCB Committee also addresses issues that affect our visitor. Discussions have included the need to address behavior issues, improving downtown beautification, establishing adequate transportation for our visitors around Ashland and from the airport as well as parking. By passionately promoting the unique quality of life & small town charm of Ashland, combined with its world class amenities and local innovations and talent, we continue to enhance and deliver that authentic experience our visitors seek.

With an anticipated increase in lodging tax revenue and thus an anticipated increase in the amount of the VCB grant, the first main area of growth and expansion in the Ashland VCB's work will be broadening our Digital Platforms that we use for promotion to expand our reach, diversify and increase our visitor audience. This includes enhancing the way we market to our existing audience as well as reaching new visitors. Examples of this are through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, targeted e-news stories to niche audiences, online stories through video and editorial, enter to wins that increase our database through direct marketing to visitors with a personal invitation. We will be launching our new www.ashlandchamber.com site that will provide better wayfinding for the visitor planning their trip, a more intuitive site to cater to the 50% traffic coming from a mobile device as well as the most current tools that provide the online experience the visitor is looking for.

The second area of growth with the anticipated funding increase will be building the public relations strategy through story creation, strategic PR relations, forming new partnerships and leveraging existing partnerships with those who have effective channels in reaching new visitors while expanding our own channels. This encompasses creating compelling stories of Ashland that show trends in destination promotion. Stories that invite one into the unique quality of life, beautiful setting, amazing offerings and amenities that Ashland has along with the local characters who create the visitor experience such as food artisans, athletes, artists, musicians, talented chefs, brewers and wine makers. By strategically pitching these stories to our partners, for example Travel Oregon, Sunset magazine and niche travel writers, we gain both national and international exposure in leveraging our partnerships and their channels. Through an assertive, strategic PR effort, we position our brand through themed stories to engage the visitor and provide additional exposure spoken by the author as opposed to an ad. This is what we will be building and rolling out over the next year. Additional funding will be needed to support the story creation, labor and time it takes to pitch the stories and do fulfillment.

The third area of growth with the anticipated funding increase will continue to be promoting more group, tour and conference business. The servicing of these groups will take more staff time, use more materials in welcoming the groups along with attending applicable trade shows selling to meeting planners and collaborating with group partners. Promotion includes attending trade shows, working with partners to support their efforts in hosting large groups, promoting to tour operators and building on our established partnerships with OSF and Neuman Hotel Group. The partnerships are strong but with increased business, there will be more work on everyone's plate to execute the level of service we provide collectively and continue to enact the role of the Visitor and Convention Bureau.

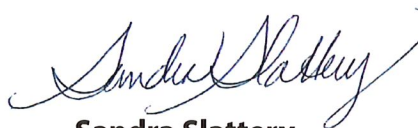
Ashland's designation as one of the Top 10 Best Wine Destinations by Wine Enthusiast magazine (2016) as well as being the #1 Top Town to Live and Work as a Moviemaker by Moviemaker magazine (2015 and 2016) continue to prove that with a population of 20,000 and a visitor base of over 300,000, steeped in culture, Ashland's tourism industry continues to strengthen as a competitive destination and economic platform for innovation and creativity that attracts not only a highly educated resident but sustains a highly educated visitor base.

Ashland Chamber wears many hats, including the traditional responsibilities of a Chamber of Commerce and the added workload of a Destination Marketing Organization and an economic development entity.

Ashland VCB serves as the gateway to Ashland, Southern Oregon and the entire state with approximately 60% of visitors arriving to Oregon through our corridor. We are open to the public year-round, free of charge, providing an authentic message and superior travel experience. We submit this report for your review and thank you for your continued partnership and investment.



Katharine Cato
Visitor & Convention Bureau Director



Sandra Slattery
Executive Director



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Ashland Chamber of Commerce

Visitor & Convention Bureau

2014-2015 City Report



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Ashland Chamber of Commerce Visitor & Convention Bureau 2014–2015

Purpose

For thirty-three 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. Efforts include promotion, outreach and exposure, partnerships, the tools and materials to deliver the message, analysis and fulfillment showcasing Ashland as a desirable travel destination.

Mission

The mission of the VCB is to promote visitor stays year round with a primary focus on the fall, winter and spring seasons by increasing our capacity to extend our message, reach and audience. The goal is to deliver an unsurpassed, leisure travel experience that creates unique, lasting memories, encourages repeat visitation, enriches lives and converts visitors into lifelong Ashland ambassadors and potential residents through servicing individuals and groups, tours and conferences of all sizes.

Overview of 2014-2015 Ashland VCB

In addition to fulfilling the mission of the VCB as set by the City of Ashland, in fiscal year 2014 – 2015, we diversified and expanded our reach while evolving our brand onto multiple platforms including print, digital, video and industry channels. We built upon the established marketing pillars of cultural, culinary and outdoor experiences while inviting visitors to enjoy Ashland, 'as you like it' year round. We created seasonal, enter to win getaways to promote Mondays in Ashland and long weekend stays. Enter to wins generated new leads that grew our visitor database. We created a new Ashland Map Guide to promote the outdoor pillar and stewardship of our natural resources. We generated return on our investments through effective promotions, events and measurements while expanding our database and partnerships. We saw business growth with strong spring, summer, fall and holiday business in the tourism industries by increased visitation, occupancy, investment and participation. We strengthened our partnerships throughout the industry positioning Ashland as a leading destination. We saw the return of large group business

and enacted our role in promoting, servicing and supporting the growth of this group business sector. Through promotion, outreach and exposure, partnerships, tools and fulfillment, we continue to expand and diversify our market, inviting new visitors for new reasons, while maintaining the invitation to Ashland's loyal, traditional visitor. The Ashland VCB Committee also addresses issues that affect our visitor. Discussions have included the need to address behavior issues, improving downtown beautification, establishing adequate transportation for our visitors around Ashland and from the airport as well as parking. By passionately promoting the unique quality of life & small town charm of Ashland, combined with its world class amenities and local innovations and talent, we continue to enhance and deliver that authentic experience our visitors seek.

With anticipated increase in lodging tax revenue and thus an anticipated increase in our VCB grant, the additional funds will be used for funding these three main areas of growth: expanding our Digital Platforms, (see page 22); executing strategic Public Relations and story development effort, (see page 17); and expanding our capacity to service and welcome large meetings, tours and convention business, (see page 19).

Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) Committee

The VCB, which meets on the first Tuesday of every month, is comprised of members from various segments of the tourism industry who offer their input, business expertise and knowledge thus creating a collective voice of the Ashland tourism industry. Industries represented on the VCB include a variety of lodging, restaurant, wine, retail, theatre, outdoor recreation 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 Ashland's 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) or Travel Southern Oregon (formerly SOVA). Travel Southern Oregon is one of seven RDMO's within the state of Oregon that work in coordination with the Oregon Tourism Commission dba, Travel Oregon, the entity that handles Oregon's statewide tourism promotion. Ashland is proud to have a direct and valuable partnership with Travel Oregon.

VCB Committee Members

Committee Member:

Don Anway
Bob Hackett/Peter Wickliffe
Livia Genise
Vicki Capp
Graham Sheldon
Julie Gurwell (Chair)
Brad Niva

Lisa Beam

Katharine Cato

Business:

Neuman Hotel Group
Oregon Shakespeare Festival
Camelot Theatre Company
Ashland B&B Network/ Iris Inn
Ashland B&B Network/ Ashland Creek Inn
Oregon Cabaret Theatre
Rogue Wilderness and Winehopper Tours
Northwest Brochure Services
Sesame Asian Kitchen/Pasta Piatti
Board Liaison/President 2011-2013
VCB Director/ Chamber Marketing & Sales

The Ashland Brand Evolves

After implementing the refreshed brand in 2012 & 2013 that was established through the VCB, Branding subcommittee and DVA ad agency out of Bend, OR. , we continued to expand our reach and evolve our brand through a variety of mediums and ways in which we express the brand.



After implementing the refreshed brand throughout our entire promotional efforts and tools, we established consistency in our branding and strength in the year round messaging. We diversified our brand to include event promotions and messages by using variations of our logo, tagline, destination brand descriptions, layout and imagery. We stepped “outside the leaf” to show a greater impact with images and use the leaf in a transparent way to enhance the variety of ways

our brand can be seen. Partners are using our logo more frequently endorsing the brand which strengthens the depth of its effectiveness.

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.

Brand Statement:

At the convergence of the Cascade and Siskiyou Mountains, where forested alpine peaks give way to some of the most fertile and bio-diverse lands to have ever been shaped by geologic wonder and the hands of time, lies a town that’s just as unique and authentic as the terrain that surrounds it. Nowhere else do so many experiences- from performing, visual and culinary arts, to education, wellness and outdoor recreation – combine to create something so inspiring. While others may try, there’s only one authentic Ashland, Oregon. (there are 31 in the United States!)

Pillars within Brand – Culture, Culinary and Outdoors

Culture

“Discover a year-round cultural paradise. Welcome to Cultureland.”

- **Branding statement:** Home to Southern Oregon University and America’s oldest Elizabethan theatre, Ashland’s long cultural history is built upon natural beauty, theatre, education and wellness. We invite visitors to enjoy 365 days of theatre, world-renowned art galleries, museums, live music, independent film, festivals and a diverse shopping experience by exploring Ashland’s eclectic collection of sophisticated boutique shops and meeting the innovative artisans and community that bring this to life each day.
- Most widely known for the **Oregon Shakespeare Festival**, 70,000 of Ashland’s 300,000 visitors come to Ashland for the OSF plays.

- In summer 2015, Ashland's 'Monday, Monday Getaway to Ashland this Summer' offered 4 enter to win packages highlighting each of the pillars plus long weekends. The contest generated over 1,200 entries while creating awareness for all there is to do on Mondays in Ashland while encouraging visitors to extend their stay for a long weekend.
- **#1 Top Town to Live and Work as a MovieMaker – MovieMaker, 2015 and 2016**
- **Ashland Independent Film Festival – “25 Coolest Festivals in the World,” 2013**
- **“#1 Perfect Summer Getaway for Couples”, www.datingadvice.com**
- **“America’s Best Small Towns”, Fodor’s Travel**
- **“Best of the North State: Best Weekend Getaway” Redding Record Searchlight**
- **“22 Best Small Town Family Weekend Destinations” – www.vacationidea.com**

Culinary

“Discover a year-round culinary paradise. Welcome to Cuisineland.”

- **Branding statement:** Ashland’s culinary scene is becoming more and more recognized internationally. It attracts foodie travelers and writers from around the world. We invite visitors to enjoy year-round culinary excellence with over 100 restaurants, talented chefs and restaurants that showcase the abundance of locally grown produce and locally made products in their creative cuisine. Explore coffee shops, farms and taste delicious specialty foods made by local artisans who take pride in their sustainable practices. Sip and taste local at Ashland’s three micro-breweries and distinguished wineries.
- Culinary events abound and give visitors a reason to visit year round with events such as the Taste of Ashland, Oregon Chocolate Festival, Oregon Honey Festival, Brews and Boogie all of which Ashland VCB partners with to promote.
- **10th annual Ashland Culinary Festival, produced by the Ashland VCB**, marks the center of this pillar, consisting of twelve chefs competing for Top Chef honor using local produce. With educational workshops, food and mixology demos, participation from food artisans, farmers, wineries and breweries, it is evident that Ashland offers an unmatched culinary destination for both locals and visitors to experience. Save the Date for the 10th annual Ashland Culinary Festival November 4th – 6th, 2016 now at the Ashland Hills Hotel and Suites where Top Chef 2015 Josh Dorcak of Public House will defend his title.
- **Ashland Restaurant Week** each February promotes restaurants to the regional visitor and invites guests to take part in specials and win a night out.
- **“Ashland – the Center for Culinary Arts”, Oregon Wine Press, 2013**
- The culinary adventure also showcases our emerging wine industry described by **Sunset magazine, Jan. 2010** as, *“The next big wine country: Southern Oregon.”*
- **“Ashland - Top 10 Best Wine Destination in the World”, Wine Enthusiast, 2016**

Outdoors

“Discover a year-round outdoor paradise. Welcome to Outdoorland.”

- **Brand statement:** Ashland’s national reputation for the arts is complemented by its burgeoning recognition for recreation. From downtown’s 93 acre, Lithia Park, Southern Oregon’s first park established in 1908, to more adventurous pursuits on the Rogue and other nearby rivers and lakes, including Mt. Ashland, and along the Creek to Crest and Pacific Crest Trails, Ashland’s outdoor adventures are neither gratuitous nor are they an afterthought. It’s not the X games extreme and it’s not underwhelmingly easy. It’s somewhere in-between, and it’s just right.

- **Accolades:**
 - **“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 10 Great Public Spaces, Lithia Park”** 2014 American Planning Association
- Offering **four seasons of natural beauty and adventures**, Ashland hosted Cycle Oregon’s 25th anniversary ride in 2012, hosting 2200 cyclists from all over the world, inviting them each to return and enjoy Ashland once again. Cycling has continued to grow and create an increase economic impact.
- **Officially Designated: Cascade Siskiyou Scenic Bikeway (CSSB), one of 14 Scenic Bikeways in Oregon was designated by the Oregon State Parks and Recreation commission on June 25th, 2015.** Of the thousands of proposed miles the Scenic Bikeway committee reviews, less than half is recommended. The route begins at Garfield Park on East Main, travels up the Green Springs Hwy 66, over Hyatt and Howard Prairie and back down Dead Indian Memorial Road to Garfield Park, totaling 52 miles. Upon designation, there was a ribbon cutting held, a celebratory ride by the Siskiyou Velo Club, official signage installed along the route and in July, 2016 there will be the first ever Up and Down Event. This event will feature the CSSB bikeway welcoming a projected 300+ riders with support stations, a BBQ dinner, awards and festivities at Emigrant Lake. As the Destination Marketing Organization, Ashland VCB is leading the effort on creating more Bike Friendly Businesses and awareness for the positive economic impact of cycle tourism which brings \$400 million to Oregon and nearly \$40 million to Southern Oregon annually (Travel Oregon). Ashland VCB partners with Parks and Recreation, Jackson County and Ride Oregon in this effort.
- **Ashland Map Guide**
 - Award-winning:**
 - 2014 NW GIS Conference – Best Public Services and Best Cartographic Display.** The Ashland Chamber & VCB partnered with AFR (Ashland Forest Resiliency) to create this collaborative, educational, free Map Guide to foster stewardship and create awareness for the history of fire, our source of drinking water, precious resources and the balance of recreational uses in the Ashland Watershed. We contracted with Lea Richards, GIS analyst for City of Ashland to build the maps. Editorial, images collection, layout and graphic design was done by Katharine Cato and Dana Welsh, in house at the Chamber & VCB. 25,000 copies were printed and distributed from 2014 – 2016. The 2nd edition is now in production to publish in spring of 2016. To educate locals and visitors, the Map Guide will include 7 maps: Ashland Watershed (with the new USFS approved trails and new AWTAs trails), Lithia Park, City streets, the newly designated Cascade Siskiyou Scenic Bikeway (new), Crater Lake National Park (new), Table Rocks Hiking Trails (new) and Sky Lakes Wilderness and Mt. McLoughlin with proximity to the Pacific Crest Trail and Grizzly Peak. Meeting the demand of needing a quality map and way finding to hiking trails, new suggested hikes and bike rides have been added along with ways to get outdoors and explore with way finding, day trip ideas, length of trips and what to expect. The Ashland Map Guide will also include reference to Story Maps created by Lea Richards that provide an online intuitive experience for Lithia Park Trails, History and Public Art around Ashland. The response has been very positive from

requests of individuals, real estate offices to outdoor stores, public libraries, REI and cycling shops. Our partnerships continue to strengthen through this project including The Nature Conservancy, Lomakatski, Public Works, City of Ashland and Ashland Parks & Recreation. The Map App was successfully launched late last fall on iTunes by Project A, for iPhone and Androids. There is also an online presence of the Map Guide on ashlandchamber.com as PDF's that online visitors can download, view and read. Both electronic versions will be updated upon the release of the 2nd edition.

Promotion

Goal:

To increase awareness of Ashland as an unmatched travel destination, inviting new visitors for new reasons while inviting back repeat visitors. To increase total TOT revenue collected and to further grow and expand our tourism industry's economic impact. To share the collective message of Ashland and its pillars of culinary, culture and the outdoors, providing further reach to markets with relevant and timely messaging that creates a call to action. To promote year round, each season as well as Mondays in Ashland and long weekend stays. Promotion includes advertising, campaigns, events, publications and seasonal promotions. We expand our databases and effectively generate leads through our measurable and interactive promotions therefore creating a return on our investment and relationships with new visitors.

Promotion-Advertising

Statewide and National Advertising Online, Print and email

- **Sunset Magazine and online:**
 - Results in lead generation with individual lead requests and ROI while reaching potential and returning visitors throughout California where 60% of Ashland's visitors come from. Strategy includes broad reach and increased lead generation. By utilizing Sunset magazine Travel Planner and Sunset.com together, we reached an audience of 350,000 subscribers from the Oregon border to the middle of California including Monterey and Carmel as well as parts of Nevada with the "Discover Ashland, as you like it" message.
 - **Sunset Lead Generation 2014 – 2015: #2006 Leads Generated online/print**
- **1859 Magazine and online:** statewide magazine promoting lifestyle, culinary and outdoors
- **Southern Oregon Magazine:** print, online and direct email marketing to their database
- **Golf Oregon and online:** Cross marketing to golfers who enjoy high-end travel
- **Redding.com and Redding Record Searchlight:** Redding is one of the top five sources of traffic to our website. Targeting this market and region, we promote enter to win getaways, branding for pillars and seasons through their DATE A&E publication, newspaper, website features and inserts.
- **Portland Monthly magazine** – promoting to the culinary traveler
- **Race Center Northwest** – promoting to outdoor enthusiast Ashland's recreational events
- **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 translation and events.
- **AAAViaMagazine**–Oregon/IdahoandNorthernCaliforniaeditions.TargetingAAAmembers, travelers and drivers while promoting Ashland’s pillars, seasons, events and promotions.
 - **AAA Lead Generation 2014 – 2015: #1956 Lead Generated**
- **NW Travel Magazine** – greater Seattle and Pacific NW readership with expendable income and travel interest throughout the West Coast. Featured advertiser with destination stories.
- **Comcast** – targeting the Eugene market and Willamette Valley with two :30 TV commercials and online ad takeover for Xfinity sign in customers.
- **Alaska Airlines and Horizon** – inflight advertising reaching business and leisure travelers
- **Edible Portland** – online and print mix targeting culinary travelers and foodie enthusiasts.
- **MovieMaker magazine** – to coincide with Ashland’s #1 Top Town to Live and Work as a filmmaker in 2015. (#1 awarded in 2016 too).
- **Collier Interpretive Welcome Center** - At the junction of Hwy 97 and I-5, we have a presence inviting north board travelers to come to Ashland with year round branding.
- **North State Parent magazine** – to promote to families, Festival of Light and amenities

Regional Advertising:

- **Oregon Shakespeare Festival:** trade agreement that enables both parties exposure in a variety of products: exposure on www.osfashland.org, within their Playbills and annual brochure. They market to the 70,000 play goers and depend upon the Ashland VCB to market to all 300,000 visitors year round.
- **Britt Festival:** online and brochure presence through trade partnership
- **Ashland Independent Film Festival:** Trade agreement and in kind sponsorship. Reaching this unique market of independent film goers enables them to learn of all the amenities they find by attending the festival.
- **Taste of Ashland:** agreement for in kind sponsorship and event promotion.
- **Local News sources:** Based on events and promotions, ads are placed in the following places that speak to the regional visitor which is essential in marketing the off season in Ashland:
 - Daily Tidings, www.dailytidings.com and Revels
 - Mail Tribune, www.mailtribune.com and Tempo
 - Sneak Preview – Ashland, Talent, Medford and Grants Pass
- **Regional television and radio:** To ensure the regional visitor market is reached in more than one way with our message of visiting Ashland, we purchase airtime with KTVL Ch.10, KDRV Ch.12 and www.kdrv.com, KOBI Ch.5 and radio with BiCoastal Media (KRWQ/KISS/KOOL/Valley) that each match our ad buy with additional airtime based on our non-profit status. Prior to events, we give away tickets and visit the TV morning news to promote attendance to events such as Ashland Culinary Festival, Fourth of July and Festival of Light and Restaurant Week. Press releases promote events without having to pay for advertising hence why we foster our media relations constantly by pushing out news stories and being a resource for them as they call upon the Chamber & VCB as an information source for news, trends and the latest happenings in Ashland.
- **JPR** provides access to the valuable audience of Ashland and the region that may not watch

television or listen to mainstream media.

- **Ashland TV 20** supports the VCB by airing event videos we produce.
- **Facebook & Social Media platforms** - by increasing our investment with ads, content, current information and more fans, we increased our traffic from Facebook to our website by 20%.

For Advertising Examples – please see Addendum B on Page 32

Promotion – Events

Events produced by the Ashland VCB attract both regional and travelers from as far as Redding and Seattle. They showcase the main three pillars of culture, culinary and outdoors, depending upon the event. They live year-round through video and promotion on our website and digital platforms, provide a tangible element to each pillar and continue to grow each year. We survey our event attendees and participants to better understand their preferences and opportunities for growth.

9th annual Ashland Culinary Festival November 6th – 8th, 2015

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 and many weekend events, it is a weekend that has grown in popularity for the culinary traveler.

Sales and Promotion: Attendance and online ticket sales have grown each year, totaling over 700 guests over the course of the weekend in 2015. New image libraries, videos, Facebook page, Instagram, Twitter, (@AshCulinaryFest #AshlandCulinaryFest) ads and travel writer relations contributed to growing the event’s exposure.

Top Chef 2015: Josh Dorcak of Public House will defend his title at the 10th annual Ashland Culinary Festival November 4th – 6th, 2016.

Top Chef 2014 James Williams of Omar’s went on to compete and win at the Portland based Bite of Oregon, Iron Chef Competition taking the statewide title of **Iron Chef Oregon 2015**. James judged the competition alongside Cory Schreiber and Fabiola Donnelly.

Attendance: Primary attendee is the culinary traveler. This event is promoted as a destination event with lodging packages and a long weekend invite. This event welcomes return visitors from Los Angeles, Eugene, Seattle, San Francisco and the Redding market. There is also a strong draw for locals and regional visitors that come to support their favorite chef or restaurant.

NEW Venue: The event moved to the Ashland Hills Hotel and Suites to expand the capacity of the event prior to the 10th annual. It worked well with more workshop space and an upscale setting that matched the sophistication of the event.

Networking: The event creates an opportunity for industry networking with farms, food artisans, wineries, breweries and restaurants to associate, discover and carry new products.

Friday Night Kick Off: Meet the Chefs, food and wine samplings with culinary and mixology demos invited a new group of attendees. Past winning Chefs return that shows the legacy of talent.

Vendors: The number of vendors has grown to 30 with the new venue space.

Partners:

- Sysco was a Lead sponsor in 2015 for the 2nd year, underwriting the cost of the kitchen units the chefs use for competition
- Neuman Hotel Group – partial in-kind/partial paid catering, staff and volunteers
- Cooks Kitchen – kitchen units used for competition
- Ashland Food Cooperative
- Weisingers Family Winery
- Darex* - new sponsor
- Organic Alcohol Company* - new sponsor
- Rogue Valley Growers Market, THRIVE and local farms
- Cory Schreiber – Chef, author and educator - Farm to School program
- Fabiola Donnelly – Food Blogger from Portland with strong following boosted awareness
- Past Top Chefs- Neil Clooney, Franco Console, Billy Buscher and Dustin Farley
- FlowerTyme
- SOU Hospitality Club
- SOU Digital Media CenterCaldera Brewing company
- Winchester Inn, Spice & Tea Exchange, Rogue Creamery and 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, Oregon, Idaho, Washington and beyond. 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. **SAVE the DATE: 10th annual Ashland Culinary Festival November 4th – 6th, 2016**

**Festival of Light Celebration, Thanksgiving through New Year's
"Find your Holiday Spirit in Ashland"- 23rd annual Celebration 2015**

Festival of Light invites **families** and the regional traveler 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 10,000 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. *Businesses saw an increase in December of 2015 due to our collective promotion efforts. These businesses ranged from hotels, inns and B&B's to restaurants and retailers.*

Weekends in December: The Festival of Light celebration was extended through the month of December each weekend since 2008. NEW in 2015, we organized caroling each weekend that created a welcoming ambiance for shoppers to enjoy Ashland during the holidays.

Adopt-A-Wreath 2009: Volunteers, local businesses and the City of Ashland, together refurbished the frame, eliminated the rust and wrapped the wreaths with new garland and LED lights. 56 wreaths were created, most of which were adopted for \$250 in 2009. They are hung on East Main

Street each year with large red bows.

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: We refurbished 33 snowflakes 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. 2013 Update: Lanterns were finished with the installation of LED candle lights in each lantern to provide a bright enough glow that solar could not provide. More electrified poles are needed to hang all of the lanterns. The goal is for more electrified poles on North Main and in the Railroad district.

Ashland Holiday Coupon Book 2014 and 2015—To promote our retail sector, shopping and dining locally in Ashland while creating awareness for Ashland's retailers, in 2014 we created, sold and published a sophisticated branding piece that had 48 coupons good at local businesses, told the story of Ashland's holidays and Festival of Light and showcased the winter season and upcoming events. 5,000 copies were printed and all copies were distributed and utilized by visitors, locals and businesses. In 2015, we successfully grew the publication with more coupons and wider distribution.

Small Business Saturday – The Ashland Chamber & VCB were once again deemed small business 'champions' and served as the funnel point for Small Business Saturday promotion 2 days after Thanksgiving. *Businesses saw an increase in revenue this weekend as well as throughout the holiday.*

Holiday Open House – NEW IN 2015 – We encouraged retailers to stay open later (from 5pm – 9pm) on Friday December 12th and provide holiday activities that welcomed shoppers. Santa made an appearance and we will be growing this promotion each year with more festivities and promotion.

Continued efforts to reduce waste by the Chamber's Green – Best Practices Committee: This committee works on making events as sustainable as possible, by lessening the waste created and changing 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 and the weekly Greeters meeting. The committee created a baseline of how much trash was collected at this event so we can reduce the amount of waste and measure our success for next year. Local coffee shops offered discount incentives for those that brought their own mug during the event and holiday season to lessen the waste of paper cups.

Promotion – Seasonal Campaigns

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 over 50 participating Ashland businesses year round. Promoted most aggressively during the holiday months, businesses who participate in 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 Asante Ashland Community Hospital and local schools 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 2015 with participation growing to over 50+ businesses and sales steadily increasing.

Ashland Restaurant Week – early February each year

For the past four years, this promotion has grown to include over 20 restaurants, lodging and theatres offering specials and an offer to enter to win a night out. The goal of Restaurant Week is to draw attention to the restaurants and culinary scene for regional visitors to enjoy before the busy season begins. We've expanded the promotion to include a winemaker and brewers' dinners, cooking classes, Ashland Culinary Festival chef creations that cross-promote our culinary events, lodging packages, theatre performances and tours. Each restaurant provides gift certificates to participate and those are what folks can enter to win by dining at one of the participating restaurants. Diners can download the enter to win form online at www.ashlandchamber.com/food2016 which is a measurable link that can be tracked.

Getaway to Ashland – Each spring and summer we build getaway packages with partners for an enter to win campaign that engages visitors. The packages consist of lodging, meals and a unique, memorable experiences that will create a memory for them. With the growing trend of more consumer spending going to experiences rather than products, it is our job to connect these Ashland experiences with visitors so they will return to us again. Each enter to win we do garners a minimum of 1,000 entries, builds our database and drives traffic to our site while building awareness for new ways to enjoy Ashland including long weekends and the brightness of Mondays in Ashland when OSF is "dark". Some enter to wins are straightforward, others require an essay for the visitor to tell us why they love Ashland. Positive exposure comes from these efforts as it invites first time visitors.

Projected Growth: With anticipated increase in lodging tax revenue and thus an anticipated increase in the amount of the VCB grant, one of the 3 main areas of growth and expansion in the Ashland VCB's work will be broadening our Digital Platforms that we use for promotion to expand our reach, diversify and increase our visitor audience. This includes enhancing the way we market to our existing audience as well as reaching new visitors. Examples of this are through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, targeted e-news stories to niche audiences, online stories through video and editorial and enter to wins that increases our database through direct marketing to visitors with a personal invitation. We will be launching our new www.ashlandchamber.com site that will provide better wayfinding for the visitor planning their trip, a more intuitive site to cater to the 50% traffic coming from a mobile device as well as the most current tools that provide the online experience the visitor is looking for.

Outreach & Exposure

Goal:

To constantly expand upon our message, reach and audience with the consistent Ashland brand. Outreach and exposure efforts include participating in the Oregon Welcome Center brochure

program statewide, brochure distribution of our publications to advertisers, establishing relationships and hosting travel writers, tourism industry representatives, public relations efforts to create editorial on Ashland, welcoming groups, tours and now, large conventions in the near future. We accomplish this with a staff of six plus 120 volunteers. We respond to all media inquiries, fact checking and serve as the credible source for Ashland's visitor industry, economic development and business community. Attending and providing representation at trade shows is a way we provide outreach for Ashland.

Projected Growth: With anticipated increase in lodging tax revenue and thus an anticipated increase in the amount of the VCB grant, one of the 3 main areas of growth and expansion in the Ashland VCB's work will be building the public relations strategy through story creation, strategic PR relations, forming new partnerships and leveraging existing partnerships with those who have effective channels in reaching new visitors while expanding our own channels. This encompasses creating compelling stories of Ashland that show trends. Stories that invite visitors into the unique quality of life, beautiful setting, amazing offerings and amenities that Ashland has along with the local characters who create the visitor experience such as food artisans, athletes, artists, musicians, talented chefs, brewers and wine makers. By strategically pitching these stories to our partners, for example Travel Oregon, Sunset magazine and niche travel writers, we gain both national and international exposure in leveraging our partnerships and their channels. Through an assertive, strategic PR effort, we position our brand through themed stories to engage the visitor and provide additional exposure spoken by the author as opposed to an ad. This is what we will be building and rolling out over the next year. Additional funding will be needed to support the story creation, labor and time it takes to pitch the stories, selling and fulfillment.

Outreach - Brochure Distribution

We continue to see an increase in demand and distribution points for the In & About Visitor Guide as well as the Living & Doing Business Guide and Ashland Map 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 PDX Welcome Center at the Portland International Airport. Locations also include Chambers and Visitors Centers throughout Northern California and Oregon. Through the VCB's membership and participation with Travel Southern Oregon, our Guides are distributed in the Bay Area Travel Show, Sunset Show, Portland Ski Show and Golf trade shows in Oregon, Nevada and California. It is actively 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, any group, tour or conference in Ashland and in goodie bags for recreation events. We anticipate an increase in demand for the Guide with large groups and meetings coming to Ashland. In addition, we have increased the number of locations where the Guide can be found including Crater Lake Lodge whose visitor counts continue to meet record visitation with the international market.

Outreach - Travel Writers and Editorial

Travel writers offer valuable coverage and a fresh, authentic perspective for Ashland. Hosting a travel writer involves a high level of coordination and collaboration with partners to provide hosted lodging, dining and access to attractions and unique experiences. 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 by the VCB. Below is a recap of travel writers and industry representatives that the Ashland VCB has worked with during the reporting fiscal year and beyond. 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 internationally.

Travel Writers and Industry visits:

- **September 2014**
 - **Feast - Food Bloggers** including 4 food bloggers from around the country via Travel Oregon in coordination with the fall Feast event Portland. 2015: Sammich, Ashland based restaurant, participated in the Sunday Brunch event representing Ashland.
 - **Suzanne Wright and Verna Gates** – wellness and culinary travel writers
- **November 2014**
 - **Fabiola Donnelly**, Food Blogger for Portland, served as one of the judges at the 8th and 9th annual Ashland Culinary Festivals.
 - **Cory Schreiber**, founder of Wildwood Restaurant and James Beard award winner has served as lead judge and emcee each year at the Ashland Culinary Festival.
- **December 2014**
 - **Cheryl Strayed** – author of the book *Wild*, made into a major motion picture. In conjunction with Southern Oregon Film and Media, Oregon Film and Television office and Travel Oregon, Ashland was one of the four premier movie locations with Cheryl Strayed attending and hosting the attendees.
- **March 2015**
 - **TV Hokkaido Broadcasting team** – Kenichi Hasegawa, Director along with Takaaki Hirakawa, translator from LA and cameraman Tomoyasu Yoshino. Their goal was to capture the essence of Ashland's quality of life, active lifestyle and the connection between a strong economy, workforce, healthy community and vibrant visitor base. They met with President Roy Saigo at SOU and interviewed students, toured Ashland Creek Inn, met with Bill Rauch, Cynthia Rider and Mayor Stromberg. They toured OSF archives, Ashland wineries and SOU campus along with downtown Ashland and scenic footage.
 - **Fujian (China) Fam Tour** – China Sister Park Project. Crater Lake Trust and National Park Service have been fostering the growth of the sister state relationship between Oregon and Fujian. They are establishing the Sister Park relationship between Crater Lake and Mt. Wuyi Heritage Site in Wuyishan, Fujian China. Travel Southern Oregon and Ashland VCB welcomed 3 representatives from there for 2 nights in Ashland for a tour and welcomed them to the Travel Southern Oregon symposium.

- o **NW Travel Magazine** – Nick Neely toured Ashland to gather story ideas.
- **April 2015**
 - o **Craig Bower** – Oregon geocaching story with outdoor adventure focus
- **May 2015**
 - o **Travel Oregon PR and Media Team** – exploring Ashland hosted by Katharine Cato, the goal was to show them new places and learn new things about Ashland. Experiences ranged from hiking to Sammich to, Caldera Brewing and Chozu Bath and Tea Gardens.
 - o **International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) and Travel Oregon** – welcomed Eric Porter from IMBA with filming team and mountain bikers to explore Ashland and showcase the world-class mountain biking in the Ashland Watershed with proximity to award winning micro-brews, coffee, restaurants, bike friendly lodging and the Rogue River. Video to be shown on www.rideoregonride.com
- **July 2015**
 - o **Brian Johnston** – Scenic Tours freelance travel writer for New Zealand based FairFax media and loyalty magazine. Showcasing 17 day tour of Pacific NW from Columbia Gorge to Ashland.
- **September 2015**
 - o **Susan Montgomery**, International Food and Wine Travel Writer. Interviewed Billy Buscher at Alchemy Restaurant, Al Silbowitz at Grizzly Peak, Eric Weisinger at Weisingers Winery to capture the Ashland’s emerging culinary and wine scene.
- **October 2015**
 - o **World Affairs Council International Visitors** – Group of 14 to Ashland.

Outreach - Groups, Tours and Conventions

Ashland is back on the map to welcome large groups, tours and conferences with Ashland Hills Hotel and Suites already booking well into 2017, 2018 and 2019. We are already seeing an increase in lodging tax revenue from that which we had anticipated. This increase is not just for Ashland Hills but is felt throughout Ashland at many restaurants and various lodging properties. With the increased groups there are significant others here to enjoy town, conference attendees that arrive early and stay longer and the chance to invite someone back to Ashland for leisure. While Ashland annually welcomes different sizes and types of groups, associations, school and youth groups and travel industry representatives, we can now welcome groups of 500 which is an opportunity for Ashland as well as local organizations to host their national conference. Many religious groups and alumni associations annually convene in Ashland. Ashland VCB assists in welcoming the groups, servicing and supporting our partners through a variety of ways. Some of our lodging establishments and those who cater to group business continue to see an increase in 2015 in alumni and medical association year over year.

In welcoming large groups, tours and conferences, the Ashland VCB has implemented its role in attracting, growing and servicing large conventions and groups once again in Ashland. The role of the Ashland VCB is to assist the private sector, local organizations and businesses in convention and meetings with solicitation, service, welcoming and support for group and convention business. This includes outreach, solicitation and service whether prior to, during or

following up after their time here. For each convention attendee, there is an opportunity for the Ashland VCB to invite them back to experience Ashland as a leisure traveler. A meeting web page was launched on www.ashlandchamber.com in December of 2014 to attract and guide meeting planners to the resources they need to plan their meeting in Ashland. There is great anticipation for growth and expansion in future years as we RETURN to our role as a group destination with our large convention center.

Groups and Tours Development:

On a weekly basis, we field many inquiries of groups and tours that seek planning advice, logistical recommendation such as transportation, group accommodations, dining options, itinerary building and venues. The most conclusive list for all groups visiting Ashland is being compiled as a collaborative effort between group partners. Cooperatively, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Neuman Hotel Group and the Ashland VCB are working together to establish that comprehensive list that continues to grow as conferences are booking 2017, 2018 and 2019. This partnership between the three entities sells Ashland's brand as a consistent message to new groups interested in holding their tour or conference here, enjoying the amenities along with welcoming back groups who visit annually.

With the return of snow and the winter season, Mt. Ashland is able to host the OISRA High School State Ski Championships in March, 2016. This race welcomes thousands of racers and parents to Ashland not only to Mt. Ashland Ski Area but to hotels and restaurants for the weekend. Should consistent winter snowfall continue, we could return to the days when we welcomed ski clubs and groups to spend the weekend on the mountain and in town enjoying Ashland's amenities.

Projected Growth: With an anticipated increase in lodging tax revenue and thus an anticipated increase in the amount of the VCB grant, one of the 3 main areas of growth and expansion of Ashland VCB's work will continue to be promoting more group, tour and conference business. We anticipate the servicing of these groups will take more staff time, use more materials in welcoming the groups along with attending applicable trade shows selling to meeting planners. Promotion includes attending trade shows, working with partners to support their efforts in hosting large groups, promoting to tour operators and building on established partnerships with OSF and Neuman Hotel Group. The partnerships are strong but with increased business, there will be more work on everyone's plate to execute the level of service we provide collectively.

Outreach - Trade shows

The decision to participate in certain trade shows is driven by reaching our target audience whether we partner with the region or as a standalone destination. 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 a themed 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 to our region and sell them to their groups. As current advertisers of Sunset, our Visitor Guides are distributed directly by Sunset staff with a higher traffic count being the host of the show. Through Ashland VCB's partnerships with Travel Southern Oregon, Mt. Ashland and Rogue 5 Media, the Ashland VCB is able to have a presence at other trade shows by advertising or paying a small 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
 - Special placement of our Visitor Guide by being a current Sunset advertiser, 1000 copies of our Guide are handed out by Sunset team in addition to the Travel Southern Oregon booth.
- **Portland Ski Show**, Portland
- **Feast**, PortlandG
- **Golf Shows** in Oregon, Nevada and California
- **Canada Sales Mission**- VCB's meet with tour operators and travel planners.
- **Preview:** Consideration to attend **NTA (National Tour Association)** and other group/tour industry trade shows to promote to meeting planners in 2017.

Partnerships

Goal:

To maximize and leverage exposure for Ashland as a destination through strong cooperative efforts by sharing the message of the brand with partners while growing partnerships within the industry and fostering the growth of industry relations locally, regionally and statewide.

Regional Relationships

Oregon Tourism Commission dba. Travel Oregon (statewide tourism)

Ride Oregon – cycle tourism branch of Travel Oregon

Travel Southern Oregon (formerly Southern Oregon Visitors Association)

Current Board Member: Katharine Cato, Ashland VCB Director

Membership provides opportunities for exposure 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. Membership results in creating itineraries and welcoming them to Ashland to experience the town while researching the amenities for their group. Many leads for travel writers come through this partnership channel.

ORLA- Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association (now combined)

Travel Medford – destination marketing organization

Discover Klamath – destination marketing organization

Travel Grants Pass – destination marketing organization

Central Oregon Visitors Association – regional destination marketing organization

SOHO (formerly SKAL) - international tourism group OACVB- Oregon Association of Convention & Visitor Bureau's Oregon Film and Television Office

OTIC- Oregon Tourism Information Council

NTA- National Tour Association

IFWTW – International Food & Wine Travel Writers

BATW – Bay Area Travel Writers

THRIVE – The Rogue Valley Initiative for a Vital Economy

SOFaM – Southern Oregon Film and Media

Oregon State Parks and Recreation

Scenic Bikeway Committee

The Nature Conservancy

Bureau of Land Management

United States Forest Service
Jackson County – bicycle and pedestrian, roads and parks divisions
Ashland Parks and Recreation
Ashland Forest Resiliency Project (now AFAR)
Ashland Independent Film Festival
Ashland Lodging Association
Ashland Bed and Breakfast Network
Ashland Gallery Association
Britt Festival
Oregon Shakespeare Festival
Southern Oregon University
International Mountain Bike Association
Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association
Siskiyou Velo Club
Rogue Valley Growers and Crafters Market
Klamath Bird Observatory
Scienceworks Hands On Museum
Mt. Ashland Ski Area
Southern Oregon Winery Association and regional winery associations.
ODOT – with the construction of the Oregon Welcome Center beginning in January of 2016, the Ashland VCB will play a role in the visitor information that is displayed and distributed at that location. Once open this will serve all north bound visitors with much needed travel information and welcoming them to our city, state and region.

Tools

Goal:

Founded in analysis, our strategy is set by determining the current behavior, needs and trends of our visitor base and responding to that with timely and relevant messaging through a variety of mediums and channels. The Ashland Chamber & VCB uses the tools below to effectively implement, showcase and communicate the message of the Ashland brand year round to visitors, set forth by the Ashland VCB and partners. Our tools include social media, research, analysis, our brand style guide, website, publications, video, image library, databases and lead generation, City Directory Board, identity pieces, volunteers and serving the visitor on the front line.

Tools – Digital Strategy

Similar to a marketing plan, an effective social media and comprehensive digital plan is just as crucial in delivering relevant information to today's visitors. Ashland Chamber's Facebook page has grown in traffic and content along with the Ashland Culinary Festival page. Ashland Chamber & VCB launched a Twitter account during the Ashland Innovators Conference and launched a presence on Instagram during the Ashland Culinary Festival showcasing the amazing chefs and food. While much of the efforts have been driven by events, going forward, the Ashland VCB will be expanding the social media strategy to increase the various audiences and channels through how we reach people. Using website analytics to track on the effectiveness of each message and topic, the social media strategy internally includes identifying the channels or websites, the topics and messaging, the timing and relevancy of each, along with a calendar of when each message needs

to either expire or be updated. Ashland VCB will be launching a Facebook page specifically to reach Ashland visitors, in addition the existing Ashland Chamber Facebook page that attracts a local and membership audience. Ashland VCB will be launching a visitor based Twitter account and growing a consistent presence on Instagram. While some sites can be trendy such as My Space which is now in the past, the sites mentioned meet the needs of our visitor base profiles and demographics. With increased funding the Ashland VCB can continue to enact this plan and increase exposure for Ashland while staying competitive with other destinations.

(As noted in the Promotion section) Projected Growth: With anticipated increase in lodging tax revenue and thus an anticipated increase in the amount of the VCB grant, one of the 3 main areas of growth and expansion in the Ashland VCB's work will be broadening our Digital Platforms that we use for promotion to expand our reach, diversify and increase our visitor audience. This includes enhancing the way we market to our existing audience as well as reaching new visitors. Examples of this are through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, e-news stories to niche audiences, online stories, enter to wins that increases our database that directly market to visitors with a personal invitation. We will be launching our new www.ashlandchamber.com site that will provide better wayfinding for the visitor planning their trip, intuitive experience to cater to the 50% traffic coming from a mobile device and the most current tools that provide the online experience the visitor is looking for.

Tools – Research and Analysis of Visitor and Lodging Industries

Background: 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, well maintained and welcoming.

We annually analyze the Food and Beverage tax collections and the Transient Occupancy Tax collections. We chart the data and look for strengths and weaknesses in seasonal fluctuations. This tells us where we need to then effectively target areas that need focus. Hence why we created the Ashland Culinary Festival in November to increase visitors and spend a strong portion of our marketing dollars promoting the off season from October through April.

As the Visitor and Convention Bureau, we have a unique perspective and access to industry insight. Each VCB meeting, we discuss with partners how their business is doing, where their clients are coming from, trends they are seeing and if business is up, down or flat and why. We gain collective industry knowledge by ongoing communication with our tourism industry partners. Depending upon the need, we then plan accordingly in our marketing to meet the demands we hear.

Future: We anticipate further studies on the visitor sector to update and analyze current trends,

behavior and growth with the growing tourism economy which has been seen through the strength of increased revenue during the fall and holidays. Trends such as the last minute traveler for an example, with a very short decision making window affect how we market to them, not rewarding the last minute behavior but offering incentives to choose Ashland. Last minute decisions are often made using online tools hence why we have to constantly be in front of the visitor, digitally, directly and in print. Trends in growing niches such as the culinary traveler and those seeking Ashland as a wine destination are resulting in the execution of regional surveys with partners such as Southern Oregon Winery Association and Travel Southern Oregon. We continue to research our market, geographically, psycho - graphically and demographically. Monthly, we track the analytics and traffic of our websites to tell us who is coming to our site, where they are, what their preferences and behavior are. We use Google and Facebook to measure those behavior markers of visitors and trends to keep current on a weekly basis and adjust our messaging accordingly.

Tools – Ashland, as you like it: Brand Style Guide

The Brand Style Guide is an internal graphic design guide that provides a suggested framework for how to execute and utilize the brand's logo, taglines, positioning, color palette, orientation, specified fonts and execution guidelines in various mediums. The result of using this guide can be seen in the Advertising examples Addendum B on Page 32. As well as within our publications and on www.ashlandchamber.com.

Tools – Website www.ashlandchamber.com

Calendar Year End 2015 Website Performance and Statistics

- **2015 Statistics UPDATE - the power of ashlandchamber.com:**
 - o 156,000 users on the site- (up 13% from 2014)
 - o 70% of users are unique
 - o 201,600 sessions on the site
 - o Average time on site: 2:15 minutes
 - o Average pages per view: 3
 - o 576,000 total page views
 - o 49% of website traffic comes from mobile or tablet device
 - o 62% of users are female
 - o 25% of users are 55 – 64 years old

- **Website Ad Performance – average of all ad spaces (Premium and Basic ads)**
 - o Performance of ads increase with strong Call to Action, relevance and engaging link
 - Average Impressions: 60,000
 - Average Clicks: 1,200
 - Average CTR: 2% (Industry average is 2%)

Effectiveness: One of the most effective tools we have to market the Ashland brand is our website as that is the way most people initially find or research us. Demand for print is still very strong and continues to grow based on the demographic of our visitor base. While visitors find information online they still desire to be inspired by our print publications, by requesting and using both.

www.travelashland.org – We own this domain name and route it directly to the homepage of www.ashlandchamber.com. To build branding to our visitor base we use this URL in our visitor messaging to diversify our reach and promote visitor traffic to our site that has the chamber name

in it. Though the chamber site is visitor friendly, this URL is more readily understood as a visitor resource.

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. Redding, Eugene, San Francisco, Portland and Seattle continue to be the cities where the majority of our traffic comes from. Enter to win getaways that we build and promote seasonally drive traffic to our site where folks enter to win and sign on to become a subscriber of the site.

Member Directory: By enhancing each Member page to house video, photos, their social media channels 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: Our events have a year round presence on our site through cross promotion, photo galleries, promotional and recap videos and a more interactive presence to assist visitors in making their travel plans. With the launch of the new www.ashlandchamber.com in spring of 2016, events will have an expanded presence and become more prominently placed on our site with more opportunity for interaction.

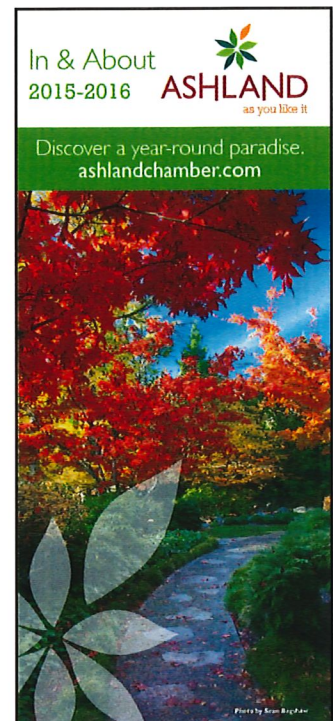
Ashland Chamber Facebook Page: By investing time, effective campaigns and fresh content into Facebook, the Ashland Chamber now has over 1497 fans from around the country. Members refer to the Chamber Facebook page as a resource for current information. It is also the #1 direct referring site to our site. Twitter and Instagram also become effective tools for our events and working with influencers helps us gain a broader reach.

The NEW www.ashlandchamber.com coming spring 2016. The website will be overhauled with a complete new redesign. The online world is constantly changing with new technology. The new site will be intuitive to the user and which device they are using along with incorporating the most current technology in all parts of the site. The site will also be more user friendly in way finding and serving up the information that meets the need of the user which depends on whether they are a visitor, local, business, member or someone looking to relocate.

Tools - Publications

In & About Visitor's Guide

Our Visitor Guide publishes prior to Memorial Day each year and is an effective tool for marketing tourism with a distribution of 60,000 that is designed all in house. It is mailed as a response piece to all online and phone inquiries and provided to all walk-in inquiries. It is annually distributed at Portland International Airport, all Oregon State Welcome Centers and Chambers/Visitor Bureaus and many trade shows including Bay Area Trade Show, Sunset, Portland Bike and Ski shows, Go West, an international trade show and many more. It is also distributed to all groups visiting Ashland, within all travel writer welcome bags, recreation event goodie bags, all lodging properties, restaurants, members and advertisers in addition to realtors and anyone locally that can use it to help showcase Ashland. Showcasing the annual events, food, lodging, shopping, fine arts, museums, maps, entertainment and outdoor recreation that Ashland offers, it is a complete picture of what the Ashland experience is. We have seen demand increase for this publication both

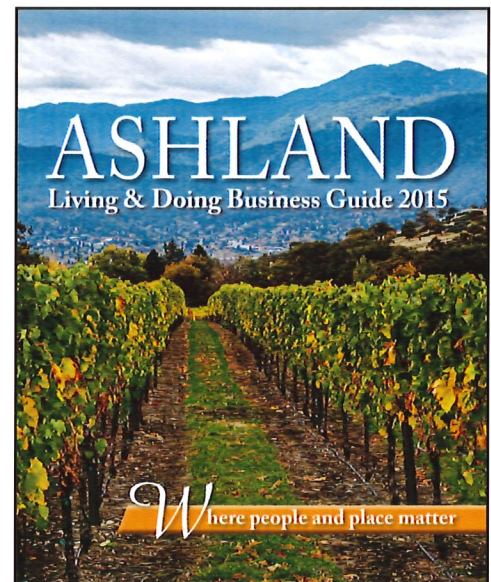


through increased individual requests as well as increasing the distribution points. The publication has grown in number of pages, which grew 8 pages in 2013-2014 and in new advertisers each year. Tools Implemented:

- Culinary, Cultural and Outdoor adventures – themed
- Sample itineraries to enjoy Ashland’s pillars, amenities, unique experiences, Mondays and long weekend stays.
- Annual Calendar to assist in visitor planning and year round promotion while being a community resource promoting advertiser’s events and partnerships.
- Travel info, maps, Lithia Park, transportation info and locators to assist visitors in getting here.
- Driving traffic to our website and other publications – each page lists our website address encouraging visitors to pursue information online. References to the Living & Doing Business Guide and the Ashland Map Guide help to provide further information.

Living & Doing Business Guide

The ***Living & Doing Business Guide*** is the primary economic development marketing print 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 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. Many **visitors** use this publication to consider converting to residents of Ashland. Ashland’s amenities are highlighted along with the strength of Ashland’s ever growing tourism industry.



Grand Award for Communications Excellence, July 2009

given by ACCE (American Chamber of Commerce Executives) – the premier national organization for Chamber Executives. This is the highest national 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 700+ Chamber membership, efforts and themes surrounding Ashland lifestyle, economy 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. Each year, new photography and editorial showcase Ashland. Staff works with photographers and partners to ensure beautiful, current and correct information.

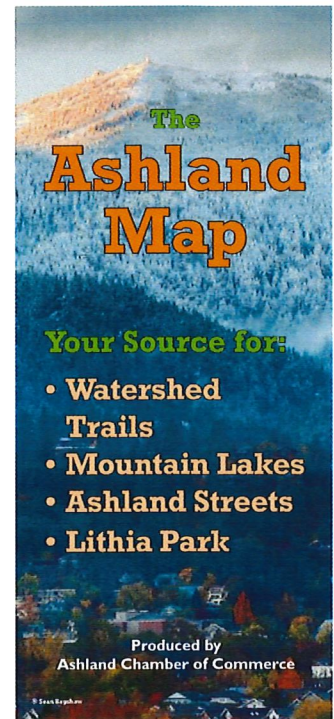
Growth in Demand and Distribution: We have seen an increase in the demand for this publication from individual requests to increased needs from local realtors who use this with each client from out of town. We have diversified and increased the number of distribution points to grow readership. It is used in recruitment and distributed at Asante Ashland Community Hospital, Providence Medford Medical Center (Medford and Portland), Asante, Southern Oregon University and the City of Ashland along with medical offices, lodging properties, members and advertisers.

Local businesses regularly use the data in this publication to assist in their planning.

Ashland Map Guide

Award-winning:

2014 NW GIS Conference – Best Public Services and Best Cartographic Display. The Ashland Chamber & VCB partnered with AFR (Ashland Forest Resiliency) to create this collaborative, educational, free Map Guide to foster stewardship and create awareness for the history of fire, our source of drinking water, precious resources and the balance of recreational uses in the Ashland Watershed. We contracted with Lea Richards, GIS analyst for City of Ashland to build the maps. Editorial, images collection, layout and graphic design was done by Katharine Cato and Dana Welsh in house at the Chamber & VCB. 25,000 copies were printed and distributed from 2014 – 2016. The 2nd edition is now in production to publish in spring of 2016. To educate locals and visitors, the Map Guide will include 7 maps: Ashland Watershed (with the new USFS approved trails and new AWTA trails), Lithia Park, City streets, the newly designated Cascade Siskiyou Scenic Bikeway (new), Crater Lake National Park (new), Table Rocks Hiking Trails (new) and Sky Lakes Wilderness and Mt. McLoughlin with proximity to the Pacific Crest Trail and Grizzly Peak. Meeting the demand of needing a quality map and way finding to hiking trails, new suggested hikes and bike rides have been added along with ways to get outdoors and explore with way finding, day trip ideas, length of trips and what to expect. The Ashland Map Guide will also include reference to Story Maps created by Lea Richards that provide an online intuitive experience for Lithia Park Trails, History and Public Art around Ashland. The response has been very positive from requests of individuals, real estate offices to outdoor stores, public libraries, REI and cycling shops. Our partnerships continue to strengthen through this project including The Nature Conservancy, Lomakatski, Public Works, City of Ashland and Ashland Parks & Recreation. The Map App was successfully launched late last fall on iTunes by Project A, for Iphone and Androids. There is also an online presence of the Map Guide on ashlandchamber.com as PDF's that online visitors can download, view and read. Both electronic versions will be updated upon the release of the 2nd edition.



Tools - Video:

We use video often to tell the story of Ashland and engage the visitor. Videos include :15, :30 or :60 second commercials, 2+ minute promotional videos of events and campaigns as well as longer videos when telling the compelling story or insight into the industry involves more time.

Following our pillars, in 2013 & 2014, we created videos showcasing the Ashland Culinary Festival, Festival of Light and Ashland's innovation and technology used in the emerging Film, Video and Animation industry that we showcased at the 2014 Ashland Innovators Conference. These videos are housed not only on our site www.ashlandchamber.com but also on our sister site, www.ashlandbusinessresource.com. This enables the presence of events to live year round on our site and provide insight into the "magic" created at each event. The footage we have and own can be edited into: 30 commercials that we air both regionally and in the Eugene and Redding markets. We continue to expand our content related to our marketing pillars in the outdoor, culinary

and cultural realms. We are constantly building upon 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. Now that drone footage is available from partners, we can incorporate that for a different vantage point. Video is an effective tool to engage our targeted markets. On our website, launched in April of 2014, www.ashlandbusinessresource.com, you can find interviews with community leaders and business owners representing various business clusters such as manufacturing, health care, higher education, technology, tourism, organic farming, and wineries. In 2015, we held the Food and Beverage Industry conference that was a success and with that created a video that provides insight into the emerging industry and the characters that are making it literally grow. When tourism and economic development meet, we showcase the industry side of tourism from arts and entertainment to the outdoors and outfitters. With the launch of the new www.ashlandchamber.com coming spring 2016, it will showcase our videos in a more prominent way on our site and be more engaging for visitors to feel the Ashland experience before they arrive.

Tools - Image Library

It is important to show a fresh perspective of Ashland on a consistent basis whether it be portraying the downtown, Plaza, Lithia Park, or an iconic scene of people enjoying Ashland's amenities and natural beauty. The Ashland VCB works with both new and established photographers to constantly expand the image library. Fresh images and graphics are needed constantly for all of our marketing channels, 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.

Tools – Databases and Lead Generation = Return on Investment

A lead is a request for information from an individual that is generated by our strategic ad placements in reader services online and in print, primarily by way of Sunset and AAA. By generating the leads through our measurable and affective advertising, we have grown and diversified our databases to include visitors who want to receive ongoing updates, become event attendees, members, workshop participants and enter to win entries who we have become a part of our fan base. With each lead we generate, we send an *In & About Visitor Guide* to that individual, hand addressed via first class mail that same day. We include the *Ashland Map Guide* and the *Living & Doing Business Guide* when applicable. Our timely response often exceeds other Chambers and Bureaus while exceeding visitor's expectations.

Tools – City Directory Board

Reaching the visitor foot traffic and providing way finding, the City Directory Board is the three panel board in front of the Chamber & VCB office that gets daily exposure of our visitors and locals. Our brand showcases Ashland's pillars and seasons. Chamber and community events throughout the year are highlighted. The city map with parking, Dog Park, public restroom and street information helps visitors orient themselves. We update the City Directory board four times a year, each season, to reflect the current events and timely messaging. Advertisers on this board see results from their

messaging in their ads showcased on these panels.

Tools – Volunteers & Plaza Information Booth

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 120 community volunteers and operates May through October, serving over 15,000 visitors annually. Our faithful volunteers collectively worked 3,933 hours from November 2014 – November 2015 including our events, booth and office. 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 is necessary for the volunteers, which we conduct through a training each May to kick off the summer season by providing updated information from local partners and attractions, updates on current issues and travel information relevant to visitors. We provide a volunteer appreciation gathering 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.

Fulfillment

Goal:

The Ashland Chamber & VCB staff is made up of six individuals who work very hard to deliver the Ashland message and respond to all visitor and relocation needs on a daily basis. Serving as Ashland's welcome center to all visitors, every day, year-round, we offer free information services and provide professional and knowledgeable service while operating our office, the Plaza Information booth, maintaining our equipment, tools and conducting daily operations to serve over 300,000 visitors annually. Our staff provides a warm welcome to all questions whether received via phone, email or walk-ins.

Fulfillment - Printing

Besides our publications which we go to bid on each time, Ashland VCB is able to print the majority of all materials in house which saves time, money and keeps the look authentic to the brand. Producing these materials, in addition to the graphic design and coordination is a significant part of promoting tourism that takes staff time, talent and effort. For every event and promotion the Ashland VCB produces, there is a repertoire of printed materials. This includes brochures, signage, monthly calendars, advertising and rack cards. For example, with Ashland Restaurant Week, there are packets provided to each participating restaurant, enter to win forms, flyers and posters distributed along with enter to win forms and gift certificates to be won. **In conserving energy wherever possible**, we use electronic versions of these printed materials to communicate the messages via email where appropriate and effective. As more of our members desire electronic communication, we respond to that to match their needs and save paper wherever possible.

Fulfillment - Postage

To meet the demand of our ever increasing lead generation and visitor requests, we must maintain a timely response. Postage is necessary to enable our office to respond to all inquiries received in the Chamber & VCB from emails, walk-ins, phone calls and referrals. We maintain a high level of customer service by corresponding via first-class mail to each inquiry, mailing them an *In & About Visitors Guide* for visitor inquiries, *Living & Doing*

Business Guide for relocation inquiries and an *Ashland Map Guide* upon request. The personal touch of a hand addressed envelope and **timely** receipt of information introduces a potential visitor or resident to Ashland and begins a relationship. Postage supports communication to our members, invitations to events, invoicing, partnership correspondence and daily operations. With the growth of meetings and conventions in Ashland and our role, we are seeing an increase of information we are sending for solicitation and outreach to meeting planners. Media kits, correspondence to travel writers and our brochure distribution model are also supported through postage as a cost of doing business.

**Addendum B:
Online and Print
Advertising Samples**



**23RD annual
Festival of Light
Celebration**
kicks off **November 27th**

ASHLAND
festival of light

Santa's Parade 5pm • Grand Illumination with over one million lights • Santa's Workshop 6:15-8pm

Caroling each Saturday

Shop Local -
Coupon Books available Nov. 27th,
Small Business Saturday, Sat., Nov. 28th,
Ashland Holiday Open House Fri., Dec. 11th
5 - 9pm and all season long

Thank you to our valued sponsors at the Mrs. Claus level and above



www.ashlandchamber.com

**Ashland Visitor & Convention Bureau's
Ashland Restaurant Week
January 31st – February 6th**



Photos by Embarr Lewis

- Amazing Specials
- Enter to win a night out
- Enjoy dishes made by the Ashland Culinary Festival competing Chefs

Discover a year round culinary paradise. Welcome to Cuisineland.

ASHLAND
as you like it

TravelAshland.org



Monday, Monday - Win a Getaway to Ashland this Summer!

ENTER
HERE



Photos by Graham Lewis

9th annual **Ashland Culinary Festival** **November 6th – 8th, 2015**



A destination culinary weekend celebrating
Southern Oregon's food, drink, talent and creativity

- 3 days of culinary magic
- 12 local chefs compete for Top Chef Honor
- Demos, culinary workshops, tours and local tastings
- Enjoy Ashland's culinary scene from restaurants to wineries and artisans to breweries
- Produced by the Ashland Chamber's Visitor & Convention Bureau

For tickets and all event info visit:

Ashlandchamber.com/Culinary2015

Discover a year-round
outdoor paradise.
Welcome to Outdoorland.
Ashlandchamber.com



Photo by Graham Lewis



9th annual **Ashland Culinary Festival**
Nov. 6th – 8th Buy tickets here

Appendix A

Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors 2014 - 2015

Lisa Beam	Pasta Piatti/Sesame Asian Kitchen ~ Past President
Cindy Bernard	Rogue Valley Roasting Co. ~ President
Marie Donovan	Ashland Homes Real Estate
Livia Genise	Camelot Theatre Co.
Drew Gibbs	Alchemy Restaurant and Bar at the Winchester Inn
Annie Hoy	Ashland Food Co-op
Nancy Morgan	Yala
Jac Nickels	Architectural Design Works ~ Secretary/Treasurer
Judith Pavlik	Judith Pavlik Photography
Meiwen Richards	US Bank
Sue Springer	Illahé Studios and Gallery
Jim Teece	Ashland Home Net/Project A
Eric Weisinger	Weisinger Family Winery ~ Vice President

Visitor and Convention Bureau Advisory Committee Members 2014 – 2015

Committee Member:	Business:
Don Anway	Neuman Hotel Group
Bob Hackett	Oregon Shakespeare Festival
Peter Wickliffe	Thanks for the Memories/OSF
Livia Genise	Camelot Theatre Company
Vicki Capp	Ashland B&B Network/ Iris Inn B&B
Graham Sheldon	Ashland B&B Network/ Ashland Creek Inn
Julie Gurwell (Chair)	Hearsay Restaurant
Brad Niva	Rogue Wilderness, Winehopper Tours and Northwest Brochure Service
Lisa Beam	Sesame Asian Kitchen/Pasta Piatti Board Liaison/President 2011-2013
Katharine Cato	VCB Director/ Chamber Marketing & Sales