



# ASHLAND

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Ashland Chamber of Commerce  
Travel Ashland  
(VCB - Visitor & Convention Bureau)

**2016-2017**

**City Report**



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# Executive Summary

Travel Ashland  
(Ashland VCB)

City of Ashland Grant Report

Fiscal Year: 2016 - 2017

Submitted: January 30th, 2018

The following grant report represents the 2016-2017 Fiscal Year and the work completed in compliance with the grant guidelines. By leveraging the dollars received from the City of Ashland grant with the private sector and other organizations, Travel Ashland has successfully increased visitation thus increasing revenues of the Transient Occupancy Tax, the Food & Beverage Tax and the tourism industry. This success is a collective effort seen through leveraging our valuable partnerships and growing the Ashland brand together. The overarching goal is to deliver a unique travel experience that engages the visitor, encourages repeat visitation and converts visitors into Ashland residents. This is done through servicing individuals, industry partners, groups, tours 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, leveraging partnerships, tools and fulfillment**. For each category there is a goal and explanation of how we succeed and continue to grow, not only our programs but the tourism industry itself.

Within the 2016-2017 fiscal year, we expanded our digital platforms including our social media channels and audiences. We hosted travel writers, influencers and the tourism industry through FAM trips and itineraries that resulted in multiple features, stories, articles and blog posts that reached a new and diverse audience. We promoted Ashland as a unique, travel destination highlighting the sense of discovery one can experience in terms of the emerging wine industry, the outdoors and new attractions in Ashland. We saw growth in the culinary industries, an increase in welcoming culinary travelers as well as significant growth in the outdoor industries and travelers looking to enjoy Ashland and the region. We saw a 35% increase in lead generation and requests for Ashland information. 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, fall and holiday business by increased visitation, occupancy, investment and participation. We analyzed that quarter 1 (January – March) is when the greatest need is for promotion with the lowest occupancy. We strengthened our partnerships throughout the industry positioning Ashland as a leading destination, statewide as well as in domestic and international itinerary promotions. 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 continued to expand and diversify our market, inviting new visitors for new reasons, while maintaining the invitation to Ashland's loyal, traditional visitor. Travel Ashland Committee also addressed issues that affect our visitor. Discussions, task forces and some successful implementation have resulted in an improvement in behavior issues, downtown beautification, parking and exploring transportation for our visitors around Ashland and from the airport.

**GROWTH: If Travel Ashland were to receive an increase in funding based on an anticipated increase in the lodging tax revenue, the increase would be focused on content development including story creation, creating effective cooperative campaigns which leverages the strength of our partnerships and building the photography that showcases each season in a compelling way while growing our social media audiences.**

Reaching the visitor while they are making travel decisions is crucial hence why we need a varied presence throughout many digital platforms. With increased funding we could grow our influencer base and leverage our partners' social media audiences such as Travel Oregon, Sunset and Record Searchlight in Redding, for example. This enhances the way we market to our existing audience as well as reaching new visitors. We

will do more 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. Story creation includes differentiating Ashland as a unique destination and highlighting the niche interests and experiences a visitor can have here. By strategically pitching these stories to our partners and niche travel writers, we gain both national and international exposure. We also gain credibility by having a third party share our content and tell our story. Through an assertive, strategic PR effort, we position our brand through themed stories and targeted editorial to engage the visitor.

Ashland's tourism industry continues to strengthen. We are growing as a unique destination that fuels an economic platform for innovation that attracts not only a highly educated resident but sustains a highly educated visitor base. By passionately promoting Ashland, with its sophisticated amenities, colorful seasons and amazing outdoors, we continue to enhance and deliver that authentic experience our visitors seek.

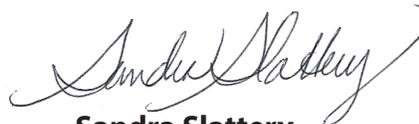
For branding purposes and to maintain a current identity within the tourism industry, Ashland VCB will be referred to as **Travel Ashland** for the remainder of this report and is how it self-identifies within its public relations.

Ashland Chamber and Travel Ashland (VCB) have a unique vantage point, serving as a sounding board and liaison fostering effective partnerships and innovative programs that position our organization. In addition to the traditional responsibilities of a Chamber of Commerce and membership organization, we enjoy the added responsibility of a Destination Marketing Organization and a key element of the City of Ashland Economic Development Strategy.

Travel 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**  
Travel Ashland Director



**Sandra Slattery**  
Executive Director

# The Role of Travel Ashland at a Glance

## What is Travel Ashland?

**Travel Ashland (Ashland Visitor & Convention Bureau) is the official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)** that the City of Ashland relies upon to promote Ashland, year-round to visitors coming from 50 miles away. Travel Ashland works with Travel Southern Oregon, the official Regional Destination Marketing Organization (RDMO), Travel Oregon and the Oregon Tourism Commission. The work between these organizations includes hosting industry, tour operators, travel writers, creating itineraries, conference planning, cooperative marketing and programs and attending trade shows.

## What does Travel Ashland do?

- **Promotes Ashland as a unique travel destination** to be discovered through effective campaigns, branding, content and story development that reach targeted audiences inviting them year-round, each season, with a focus on growing business in times of lower occupancy.
- **Leverages dollars** received from the City of Ashland grant with the private sector and other organizations to increase visitation thus increasing the revenues of the Transient Occupancy Tax, Food and Beverage Tax and the tourism industry. Through its success, Travel Ashland has significantly increased the **TOT and F&B** revenues to nearly 3 million EACH a year with a ½ million dollar increase alone in just three years. Tourism revenues **support businesses** in retail, lodging, food and beverage, attractions and subindustries who serve those businesses.
- **Leverages Partnerships** to grow Ashland's brand (for example) Ashland's Top Chef taking the Iron Chef Oregon title three years in a row elevates Ashland chefs and restaurants notoriety nationally thus further attracting more culinary travelers.
- **Produces, manages and distributes the tools that visitors use to make their travel plans such as:**
  - **Travel Ashland's social media channels on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.** The audience of each digital channel continues to grow with authentic followers who Travel Ashland engages with.
  - Travel Ashland's **website**, [www.travelashland.com](http://www.travelashland.com) guides visitors effectively within the site to serve them the most relevant information in the fewest clicks in mobile, tablet and desktop versions.
  - **Travel Ashland's Visitor Guide** showcases an annual calendar, maps, Itinerary ideas, reasons to make Ashland their next travel destination. The digital version of the Guide can be downloaded for free.
  - The **Ashland Map Guide** provides wayfinding and access to Ashland's recreation and outdoors including Lithia Park, the Ashland Watershed, the City of Ashland and Parks, Crater Lake National Park, Table Rocks, the Mountain Lakes, and the Cascade Siskiyou Scenic Bikeway. Free digital version available.
  - **Seasonal enter-to-win getaways** leverage partnerships by packaging Ashland in an attractive way to entice a visitor to share their information, become a follower of Travel Ashland and possibly win a trip that includes unique experiences based on the time of year.
- Manages the **visitor center and Plaza information kiosk** serving thousands of visitors year-round.
- Operates the **Travel Ashland Advisory Committee** made up of tourism industry representatives from lodging, restaurant, outdoor outfitters, wine industry, theatre and attractions. This advisory committee assesses each season's visitation and provides input to planning campaigns and programs that Travel Ashland carries out.
- Attracts, promotes, services and supports **groups, tours and conferences** through collaborative partnerships.
- Serves as a **sounding board** to the tourism industry, members and businesses, providing support, guidance and facilitating opportunities to grow together depending upon the issue, the partner or timing.
- Travel Ashland and the Chamber **produce major events** including the Ashland Culinary Festival, the Festival of Light Celebration, the Fourth of July and Children's Halloween Celebration. Travel Ashland also supports many **community events**. Travel Ashland and the Chamber provide **educational workshops** and seminars as well.
- Tourism promotion is a **key element of the City of Ashland Economic Development Strategy** and is the front door for economic development inquiries.



# ASHLAND

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Ashland Chamber of Commerce

Travel Ashland (VCB)

**2016-2017 City Report**



# ASHLAND

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## Ashland Chamber of Commerce Travel Ashland (VCB) 2016–2017

### **Purpose**

For thirty-five years, the City of Ashland and the community have relied on Travel Ashland (Ashland Visitor & Convention Bureau or 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, leveraging dollars and partnerships, outreach and exposure, tools and materials to deliver the message, research, analysis and fulfillment showcasing Ashland as a unique travel destination.**

### **Mission**

The mission of Travel Ashland 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 a unique, leisure travel experience that engages the visitor, encourages repeat visitation and converts visitors into residents through servicing individuals and groups, tours and conferences of all sizes.

### **Travel Ashland (VCB) Committee**

Travel Ashland (VCB), which meets monthly, 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 a variety of lodging, restaurant, wine, retail, theatre, outdoor recreation and attractions. These industries rely on Travel Ashland 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.

Travel Ashland (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.

**For branding purposes and to maintain a current identity within the tourism industry, Ashland VCB will be referred to as Travel Ashland for the remainder of this report and is how it self-identifies within its public relations.**

## **Travel Ashland (VCB) Committee Members (current)**

**Committee Member:**

**Don Anway**  
**Vicki Capp**  
**Graham Sheldon (chair)**  
**Julie Gurwell**  
**Ariel Sherman**  
**Pete Wallstrom**  
**Tom Herrera**  
**Michael Stringer**  
**Hiram Towle**  
**Bob Hackett**  
**Brad Niva**  
**Katharine Cato**

**Business:**

Neuman Hotel Group  
Ashland B&B Network/ Iris Inn  
Ashland B&B Network/ Ashland Creek Inn  
Hearsay Restaurant  
Weisingers Family Winery  
Momentum River Expeditions  
Holiday Inn Express  
Mt. Ashland Ski Area  
Mt. Ashland Ski Area  
Ex Officio/Travel Southern Oregon  
Ex Officio/Travel Southern Oregon  
Director/ Chamber Marketing

## **The Ashland Brand**

The Ashland Brand style and messaging continue to evolve each year with a sophisticated, current look and feel to appeal to a visitor to choose Ashland as their travel destination. Through messaging, fresh imagery and effective calls to action, the Ashland Brand showcases the discovery of each season and the niche interests that attract targeted audiences.

### **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**

### **The pillars are the foundation to the Ashland brand.**

#### **Culture – the cornerstone to Ashland’s tourism that can be enjoyed any season**

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

##### **Branding statement:**

Come experience culture like no other. Home to America’s oldest Elizabethan theatre and SOU, Ashland’s long cultural history is built upon innovation, theatre, education and wellness. Enjoy 365 days of theatre, a thriving artist community, art galleries and museums offering a diverse range of fine art from around the world. Attend independent films, markets, festivals and explore a diverse shopping experience with Ashland’s eclectic collection of sophisticated shops. Enjoy discovering on foot or on bike, from Downtown to the Historic Railroad District and Southern Oregon University’s campus.

##### **Examples of Travel Writer Articles:**

- 2017 Emma Krasov - <http://realtraveladventures.com/healing-powers-ashland/>
- 2017 Iris Brooks <https://gutsytraveler.com/ashland-orgeon-shakespeare-to-pinots/>
- 2017 Morgan Joffe – [www.foodiepassport.wordpress.com](http://www.foodiepassport.wordpress.com)

**#1 Top Town to Live and Work as a MovieMaker – MovieMaker, 2015 and 2016**

**“#1 Perfect Summer Getaway for Couples”, [www.datingadvice.com](http://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](http://www.vacationidea.com)**

#### **Culinary – an award-winning culinary scene that is growing in its notoriety of talented chefs as well as the identity of southern oregon’s wine region**

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

##### **Branding statement:**

Explore Ashland’s thriving culinary scene with over 100 restaurants, talented chefs and innovative restaurateurs who incorporate produce and products from local farmers and food artisans. Discover 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 are a reason to visit year-round with events such as the Ashland Culinary Festival, Taste of Ashland, Oregon Chocolate Festival, Oregon Honey Festival, Brews and Boogie all of which Travel Ashland partners with to promote.

- **2017 FEAST Writer article by Marlynn Schotland:**  
<http://www.urbanblisslife.com/ashland-hills-hotel-suites-travel/>
- **Top Australian Freelance Travel Writer, Keith Austin mentions Ashland’s beers in 2017 article:**  
<http://www.traveller.com.au/klamath-falls-oregon-is-brewing-some-of-americas-best-craft-beers-h0ki26>

- **Travel Ashland produces the Ashland Culinary Festival. The 11th annual in 2017** marked the center of this pillar, consisting of twelve chefs competing for Top Chef honor using local produce. With educational workshops, food 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. The event now includes a successful Mixology Competition, Junior Chef Competition and Top Chef Dinner. Three of the past Top Chefs from Ashland have won the Iron Chef Oregon statewide title at the Bite of Oregon giving Ashland larger notoriety in the culinary world.
- **Ashland Culinary Month (February) and Restaurant Week** – expanded to encompass the growing wine region of southern Oregon with events throughout the month. Each February promotes restaurants, culinary events and specials to the regional visitor and to enter to win a night out.
- By hosting culinary travel writers and influencers, the Ashland culinary scene is being noticed and written about through multiple media channels and gaining more followers on social media channels.

**Outdoors – there was significant growth in the outdoor tourism industry, attracting more outdoor enthusiasts each year to enjoy our natural beauty, challenging recreation and access to an amazing region to enjoy.**

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

**Brand statement:**

From Ashland’s walkable downtown and 93-acre, Lithia Park to more adventurous pursuits on the Rogue and other nearby rivers and lakes, including the Ashland Watershed, Mt. Ashland, and along the Pacific Crest Trail, Ashland’s outdoor adventures offer something for everyone. Whether you are a pro-mountain biker, marathon runner, adventure cyclist or taking your first hike or ride with your family, Ashland offers four seasons of **natural beauty** and **adventures**. For trails and suggested hikes request an *Ashland Map Guide* today.

- **Society of American Travel Writers - 2017 Article by Nori Muster:**
  - o <http://surrealist.org/travel/oregon2017-southern1.html#ashland>
- **Travel Ashland served as the Lead Proponent for 2 years, driving the effort to get the official designation for the 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. The Scenic bikeway was seen an increase in ridership. The Up and Down Bike Event each July commemorates the route welcoming over 100 riders. Official signage has been installed along the route to create awareness for riders.
- As the Destination Marketing Organization, Travel Ashland 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). Partnerships include Oregon State Parks and Recreation, Ashland Parks and Recreation, Jackson County and Ride Oregon in this effort.
- **Ashland Map Guide - award winning collaborative educational publication** First Edition of the Ashland Map Guide was produced in 2014. Now in its 4th edition, with increased

demand, we print 50,000 guides. See Publications section for details. Maps include Ashland Watershed, Crater Lake, Table Rocks, Cascade Siskiyou Scenic Bikeway, Mountain Lakes, City of Ashland and Lithia Park. It tells the story of responsible access to the outdoors.

**“Top 10 places to Visit based on Geotourism”.** Noted by *National Geographic Adventure magazine (January 2009)* Ashland attracts more outdoor enthusiasts which is a younger, more active individual.

**“Top 10 Great Public Spaces, Lithia Park”** 2014 American Planning Association

## Promotion

### Goal:

To promote Ashland as a unique travel destination, inviting new visitors for new reasons while inviting back repeat visitors. To increase overnight stays and TOT revenue collected to further grow and expand our tourism industry's economic impact. To market the niche interests and aspects of Ashland along with the 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, long weekend stays and growing business in times of lower occupancy. Promotion includes advertising, campaigns, events, editorial placement, publications and seasonal promotions. We expand our social media channels and audiences constantly by engaging the visitor. We grow our databases and effectively generate leads through our measurable and interactive promotions therefore creating a return on our investment and relationships with new visitors.

**GROWTH: If Travel Ashland were to receive an increase in funding, it would be devoted to content development including story creation, creating effective cooperative campaigns which leverages the strength of our partnerships and building the photography that showcases each season in a compelling way while growing our social media audiences.**

### Promotion-Advertising

**Through our effective promotions, we have seen a 35% increase in demand for information through leads and information request. We have seen a 50% increase in our social media audiences and engagement.**

#### 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 PNW and California. By utilizing Sunset magazine Travel Planner and Sunset.com together, we reached an audience of 350,000 subscribers.

o **Sunset Lead Generation 2016 – 2017: #2653 Leads Generated online/print**

**USA Today Travel Guide** – ad in print and electronically shared with 5 million Orbitz customers.

**Wine Enthusiast Magazine** – using the honor of being in their Top 10 travel destinations – leveraging their Facebook and Instagram audience to gain more followers.

**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,

event promotions, branding for pillars and seasons through their website, DATE A&E publication, newspaper and inserts.

**Portland Monthly magazine** – promoting to the culinary traveler

**Travel Oregon**

- o **E-Newsletter and Interactive magazine:** promoting online traffic to niche markets including culinary and outdoor readership

**AAA Via Magazine** – Oregon/Idaho and Northern California editions. Targeting AAA members, travelers and drivers while promoting Ashland's pillars, seasons, events and promotions.

- o **AAA Lead Generation 2016 – 2017: #1799 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. Online presence purchased through Digital Network, multiple sites and Travel guide lead service. We also promote meetings and events in their meetings publications.

- o **NW Travel online lead generation 2016 – 2017: # 1341 leads generated**

**Eugene Weekly** – promoting the Culinary Festival and Festival of Light

**Edible Portland and Edible Shasta** – online and print targeting culinary travelers and foodie enthusiasts.

**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 through advertising and our visitor guide.

**North State Parent magazine** – to promote to families, Festival of Light and amenities

**Regional Advertising:**

**Oregon Shakespeare Festival:** agreement that enables both parties exposure in a variety of products: exposure on [www.osfashland.org](http://www.osfashland.org), within their Playbills and annual brochure. They market to the 70,000 play goers and depend upon Travel Ashland to market to all 300,000 visitors year round.

**Britt Festival:** online and brochure presence through trade partnership

**Ashland Independent Film Festival:** agreement and in kind sponsorship. Reaching this unique market of independent film goers enables them to learn of all the amenities.

**Taste of Ashland:** agreement for in kind sponsorship and event promotion.

**Local News sources:** Based on events and promotions, we work with each publication to gain exposure and media coverage to attract the regional visitor which is essential in marketing the off season in Ashland:

- o **Daily Tidings**, [www.dailytidings.com](http://www.dailytidings.com) and Revels
- o **Mail Tribune**, [www.mailtribune.com](http://www.mailtribune.com) and Tempo
- o **Sneak Preview** – Ashland, Talent, Medford and Grants Pass
- o **Locals Guide**
- o **Rogue Valley Messenger**

**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 pre-roll video spots that run before news on [www.kdrv.com](http://www.kdrv.com) KOB! Ch.5. We promote for media coverage for events such as the 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 us 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.

**KIXE** – in California on the Create channel to promote culinary festival.

**Ashland TV 20** supports 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 28**

## **Promotion – Events**

Events produced by Travel Ashland attracts both regional and travelers from the West coast and beyond. 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.

### **11th annual Ashland Culinary Festival 2017**

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

Travel Ashland, with the Ashland Chamber, promotes Ashland as a year-round paradise with an award-winning culinary scene, rich culture and epic outdoors. The Ashland Culinary Festival began in 2007 to showcase the bounty of Southern Oregon during the fall, inviting culinary locals and visitors to taste, enjoy and learn about all things culinary.

Over the years, it has grown to encompass four days of a dynamic destination festival. The Top Chef Dinner honors the legacy of talented chefs that have won the competition in past years. Three of these top chefs have gone on to take the Iron Chef Oregon title at the Bite of Oregon’s Iron Chef Competition in Portland. This elevates Ashland not only state-wide but nationally in terms of what types of Chefs we produce here and underscores Ashland as a culinary destination.

The Mixology competition provides a platform for bartenders to show their skills and build camaraderie while showcasing local distilleries and ingredients used to make the specialty cocktail. As a membership organization, the Ashland Chamber alongside Travel Ashland supports the growth of the food and beverage industry not only through this festival but through workshops, conferences and providing a venue such as this event to network and partner.

The new Celebrity quick fire challenge this year turned the table on the judges where they found themselves faced with a challenge and 15 minutes to get it done. The audience enjoyed watching local restaurateurs, chefs and news personalities do what the chefs do each year.

Also, as an educationally based Chamber, the Ashland Chamber’s role includes economic development for Ashland. In this case, we are cultivating potential future chefs through the Junior chef competition. The Junior Chef competition welcomes talented high school, aspiring chefs. The positive impact of this part of the event is felt by entire classes who engage, fine-tuning their skills prior to the competition. The service industry has a need for more skilled workers. This event inspires high schoolers to pursue their culinary path and gives them insight into the culinary industry.

At the heart of the event, the Top Chef competition puts the spotlight on local chefs that work hard year- round welcoming thousands of visitors and locals alike. It gives the restaurants an opportunity to share small bites from their menu as well as gain exposure through the many channels of promotion. We also see restaurateurs discovering new wines to add to their menu or new artisans to collaborate with. The local farms and their contributions make the ingredient table that the chefs use truly abundant and interesting for the audience to see how they incorporate the produce to compliment the secret ingredient.

The workshops provide culinary education with something new each year. From knife skills to 'sip and paint' classes, from holiday citrus to fruit tarts, the culinary festival offers a variety of ways to engage the "culinarian".

Southern Oregon is best exemplified through the vendors that surround the room. Restaurants share their samples, food artisans provide holiday gift ideas, award-winning wineries explain how the wine was made and you can make a good dent in your holiday gift list for sure finding everything from mustards to pinot.

This event, that attracts over 1000 each year is not only measured by how many visitors come from around the west coast but rather how many people it engages. The power of partnership and collaboration that delivers a collective impact to our local economy is felt not only in those four days but throughout the year. That is why we take great pride in producing this event each year.

Save the date for next year, November 8th – 11th, 2018. [www.travelashland.com](http://www.travelashland.com)

**Festival of Light Celebration, Thanksgiving through New Year's "Find your Holiday Spirit in Ashland"- 25th annual in 2017 drew over 10,000 attendees for the Grand Illumination. Kicking off the day after Thanksgiving through New Year's, this promotion's success results in increased business year over year each December in retail, lodging and restaurants and provides a unique holiday destination.**

**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 & Travel Ashland organize the festivities the day after Thanksgiving including entertainment on the Plaza, Santa's Parade, the Grand Illumination and Santa's workshop.

In addition to the kick off event, this program includes caroling on the weekends, the installation and hanging of **refurbished, historic lanterns, wreaths, snowflakes, decoration and lighting** of the plaza and around town to create a welcoming, holiday ambiance.

**The Holiday Gift Guide (formerly the Coupon Book)** promotes 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. 8,500 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. In 2017, it was direct mailed to 7,500 targeted residents and 1,000 were distributed to retailers, hotels and motels. This generated an increase in local business.

## Promotion – Seasonal Campaigns

### Gift Certificate Program

This program has grown each year keeping more than \$100,000 in Ashland. Promoting green gift giving and shopping local, we continue this very successful program of selling Ashland Chamber Gift Certificates that are good at over 48 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.

### Ashland Culinary Month and Restaurant Week – early February each year

Now in its fifth year and encompassing southern Oregon's wine scene throughout February, this promotion has grown to include over 20 restaurants, lodging and theatres offering specials and an enter to win a night out. The goal of Culinary Month is to draw attention to the wineries, culinary events, dinners 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. Restaurants have reported the event generated business they would not have enjoyed this time of year without this promotion.

**Getaway to Ashland** – Each winter, 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". Our database then grows to include these people while we invite them to follow us on our social media channels and create a long-term relationship with them. 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. We leverage our partnerships to grow Ashland's brand with contributing partners that help to create a desirable enter to win package.

## Outreach & Exposure

### Goal:

To expand upon our promotional message, reach and audience with the consistent Ashland brand. Outreach and exposure efforts includes working with the tourism industry, hosting travel writers and influencers, hosting and welcoming groups, tours and conventions, working with partners

to generate group business, distributing our materials and brochures effectively and having a presence at conferences and trade shows that bring return on investment for Ashland. 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.

## **Outreach – Hosting Industry, Travel Writers and Creating Editorial**

Hosting the tourism industry, influencers and travel writers results in valuable coverage and an authentic perspective for Ashland from a third party. Hosting a travel writer involves a cost as well as a high level of coordination and collaboration with partners to provide hosted lodging, dining and access to attractions and unique experiences. All this must 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, tours of the city and attractions 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. 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. **We hosted over 75 individuals made up of travel writers, influencers and industry.** These consisted of FAM (familiarization tours) with travel writers attending the FEAST culinary event in Portland that came down pre and post event; welcoming Influencers for a Culinary Fall Tour that was a result of a grant from Travel Oregon to Travel Southern Oregon; hosting the Society of American Travel Writers which helped to double our Instagram audience by connecting with one of the writers. Each fall we also host a PR tour from Travel Oregon to learn about what is new in Ashland and our region. Individual travel writers that we hosted included those that focused on the outdoors, the desserts and bakeries of Ashland, culinary travel writers, unique experiences in Ashland, undiscovered, new things about Ashland, mixing culture with outdoor experiences and Ashland as a spa and wellness destination. We look forward to cultivating and inviting new travel writers to showcase our outdoors and continue to tell the story.

## **Outreach - Groups, Tours and Conventions**

Ashland's group, tour and conference business has grown significantly since the reopening of the convention center at Ashland Hills. There is 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. Travel Ashland 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 2016 in alumni and medical association year over year

**In welcoming large groups, tours and conferences, Travel Ashland has implemented its role in attracting, growing and servicing large conventions and groups once again in Ashland.** The role of Travel Ashland 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 to invite them back to experience Ashland as a leisure traveler. A meeting web page was launched on [www.travelashland.com](http://www.travelashland.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. We are seeing strong bookings over the next 5 years already.

### **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. There is an ongoing collaborative effort between group partners: Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Neuman Hotel Group and Travel Ashland to best promote, welcome and service the groups and conferences we are seeing come to Ashland. 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.

### **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. Travel Ashland participates in many trade shows around the west coast by either attending, providing In & About Visitor Guides or providing information as part of an 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 partnerships with Travel Southern Oregon, Mt. Ashland and Rogue 5 Media, Travel Ashland 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. Travel Ashland has a presence at:

**Bay Area Trade Show** in Sacramento, CA

**Sunset Trade Show** in Menlo Park, CA

- Special placement of our Visitor Guide as a current Sunset advertiser, 1000 copies of our Guide are handed out by Sunset and at the Travel Southern Oregon booth.

**Feast**, Portland

**Golf Shows** in Oregon, Nevada and California

**Canada Sales Mission**- VCB's meet with tour operators and travel planners.

**NTA (National Tour Association)** and other group/tour industry trade shows to promote to meeting planners. We strategize with local partners attending to Ashland can be represented and leads shared.

## 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*. Travel Ashland distributes this Guide through a variety of methods at various locations, both locally, regionally and nationally. Methods include direct mail, 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 Travel Ashland'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 have seen 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. Our online request form streamlines requests both for individuals and groups which has also contributed to increased demand.

## 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, Travel Ashland Director

Membership provides opportunities for exposure at trade shows that market directly to tour operators and group coordinators. Examples are the Go West Summit and Canada Sales Mission. 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

**OTTA** – Oregon Tour and Travel Alliance

**ODMO** – Oregon Destination Marketing Organization

**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, Travel Ashland 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 & Travel Ashland uses the tools below to effectively implement, showcase and communicate the message of the Ashland brand year-round to visitors, set forth by Travel Ashland and partners. Our tools include social media channels, 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

Travel Ashland's social media channels are effective ways to reach our visitors, both new and existing. Our audiences on each channel have nearly doubled in the past year, garnering a significant following and reach to new visitors nationwide. Like a marketing plan, an effective social media and 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, Travel Ashland's Facebook and Instagram followers (both visitors centric) and Pinterest. While much of the initial messaging was driven by events, Travel Ashland has engaged its followers with enter to win contests, inspiring live video and photos, rewarding followers and inviting them share information. We have also leveraged the audiences of travel writers and influencers to grow our followers. Our website analytics tell us Facebook is the leading referral site to our website besides Google and organic search. Our 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 Chamber Facebook Page:** By investing time, effective campaigns and fresh content into Facebook, the Ashland Chamber now has over **2109 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 (492 fans)** also become effective tools for our events and working with influencers helps us gain a broader reach.
- **Travel Ashland Oregon Facebook:** 595 followers – all visitor related content
- **Travel Ashland on Instagram:** 862 followers – this has grown the fastest through our effective promotions. Pinterest and Twitter are where many features and travel writer articles are published.
- **Ashland Culinary Festival Facebook Page:** 1167 followers. and on Instagram 369 followers

## Tools – Research and Analysis of Visitor and Lodging Industries

**Background:** For years, the tourism industry has been researched and assessed providing direction to the approach we use in our marketing. 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.

Travel Ashland has a unique perspective and access to industry insight. 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.

**2016 - 2017:** We analyzed OSF, TOT and F&B data comparatively to best assess visitor demand, market changes and price sensitivity. We concluded that quarter 1, January – March has the greatest opportunity to grow with the lowest occupancy and then created some campaigns to target that window of time in the 2017-2018 winter. The strongest growth we saw was in the Fall year over year.

Travel Ashland also conducted a campaign to tourism related members regarding their business from May – August in 2017. Feedback from this survey showed a variance in half of the respondents being down in May and June and half of the respondents having increased business in July and August despite the smoke from the surrounding fires. There were some emerging trends and 62% of respondents shared a change in their visitors. Changes and trends they shared included a younger age range of 20 – 40 year old's, weekday sales being up, a larger variety of visitors, not necessarily OSF playgoers but those here for the wine, culinary scene and outdoors. Many more first-time visitors.

**Future:** We will continue to study the visitor sector 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, 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 must constantly be in front of the visitor, digitally, directly and in print. However, we saw less last-minute travelers or walk-ins this past summer in 2017. We are keeping an eye on this trend. 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 28. As well as within our publications and on [www.ashlandchamber.com](http://www.ashlandchamber.com).

## Tools – Website [travelashland.com](http://travelashland.com) / [ashlandchamber.com](http://ashlandchamber.com)

**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.com](http://www.travelashland.com) – We own this domain name and route it directly to the homepage of [www.ashlandchamber.com](http://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.

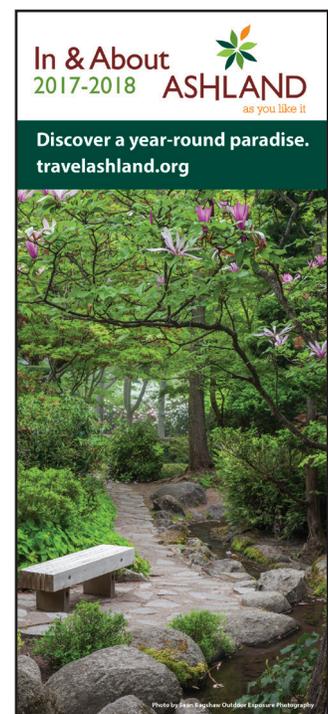
**Events:** Our events have a year-round presence on our site through cross promotion, photo galleries, promotional and recap videos and a more interactive presence to assist visitors in making their travel plans.

**Relaunch in 2017 to be more responsive** to the user and which device they are using along with incorporating the most current technology in all parts of the site. The site is 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 in March to target the spring traveler and coincide with the launch of each visitor season annually. It 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



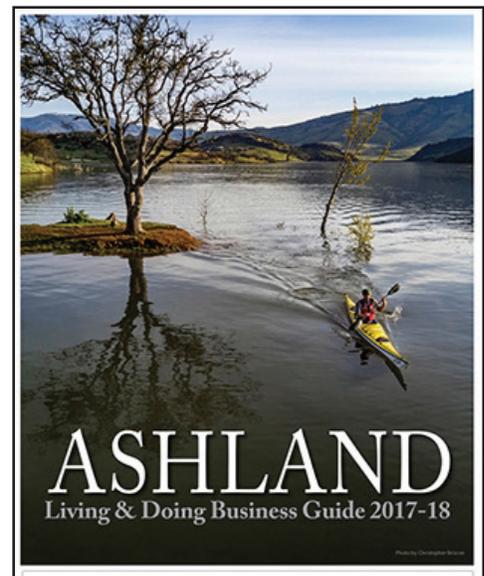
Ashland experience is. We have seen demand increase for this publication both through increased individual requests as well as increasing the distribution points.

### **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.

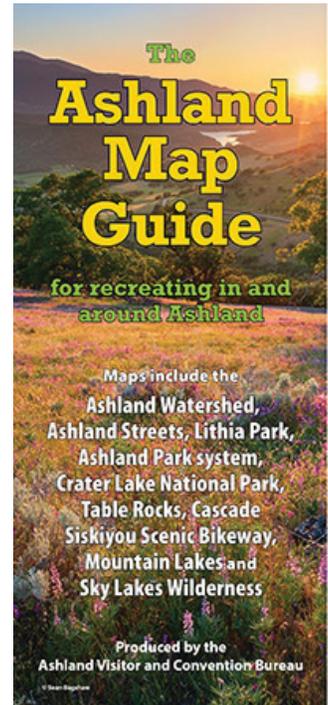
**Content:** Each year, this publication is revised to reflect the current 700+ Chamber membership, efforts and themes surrounding Ashland lifestyle, economy and its businesses. The Guide is annually critiqued by the ESC committee with staff to create the most dynamic and reflective publication of Ashland’s 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 - 4th edition to publish Spring 2018**

The Ashland Chamber & Travel Ashland 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 & Travel Ashland. 25,000 copies were printed and distributed from 2014 – 2016. Now in its 4th edition to publish this spring, due to increased demand there will be 50,000 copies printed to meet increased demand. To educate locals and visitors, the Map Guide includes maps of the Ashland Watershed (with the most recent USFS approved trails and new AWTA trails), Lithia Park, and City streets, other maps will rotate to showcase various outdoor destinations in the region. Recent ones have included the Cascade Siskiyou Scenic Bikeway, Crater Lake National Park, Table Rocks Hiking Trails and the Mountain Lakes. **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 also includes references 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 4th edition.

### **Tools - Video:**

Video is one of the leading tools that engage a visitor. We use video often to tell the story of Ashland, especially through social media channels. Videos include live streaming, :15, :30 or :60 second videos and 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.

We continue to produce videos that showcase the pillars of culinary, culture and the outdoors. They live not only on [www.travelashland.com](http://www.travelashland.com) but also our sister site [www.ashlandbusinessresource.com](http://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 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. The Economic Development Video Series showcases various industries that make up Ashland's economy including the visitor industry. These are housed on [www.ashlandbusinessresource.com](http://www.ashlandbusinessresource.com). 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

## **Tools - Image Library**

There are so many talented local photographers, we constantly are refreshing and adding to the inventory of Ashland images. It is important to show a fresh perspective of Ashland on a consistent basis whether it be portraying the Ashland scenes, the culinary world, the outdoors, the culture, the people or the moments of Ashland that draw visitors. Travel Ashland works with both new and established photographers. Fresh images and graphics are needed for all 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. Travel Ashland serves as a clearinghouse and a connector to those skilled photographers.

## **Tools – Databases and Lead Generation = Return on Investment & Followers**

**In the 2016 – 2017 fiscal year, lead requests increased by 35% due to effective promotion and new lead sources.** 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, AAA and TravelGuidesFree service. (See Advertising section for leads generated.) By generating the leads through effective advertising, we have grown and diversified our databases to include visitors who want to receive ongoing updates, become event attendees, members, workshop participants, **followers on our social media channels** and enter to win entries who we have become a part of our fan base. We utilize our multiple databased to communicate out the message effectively. 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 & Travel Ashland 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 ads showcased on these panels.

## **Tools – Volunteers & Plaza Information Booth**

As a non-profit, the Chamber & Travel Ashland 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. Each day the Chamber & Travel Ashland 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 current and new 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 & Travel Ashland staff is made up of six individuals who to deliver the Ashland message and respond to all visitor and relocation needs daily. 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 350,000 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, Travel Ashland can 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 Travel Ashland produces, there is a repertoire of printed materials. This includes brochures, signage, monthly calendars, advertising and rack cards. For example, with Ashland Culinary Month, 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**

Postage is a necessary cost to meet the demand of our ever-increasing lead generation and visitor requests. Postage enables our office to respond to all inquiries received in the Chamber & Travel Ashland 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. 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**

Discover why Ashland is one of the top ten best wine travel destinations in the world. *Wine Enthusiast* '16.



11th annual  
**Ashland Culinary Festival**  
 November 2nd - 5th

\* Mixology \* Chef Showdown \* Tours \* Ultimate Top Chef Dinner

[www.travelashland.com](http://www.travelashland.com)



Discover Ashland, Oregon  
[www.travelashland.org](http://www.travelashland.org)



come play  
 in Ashland



10th annual Ashland Culinary Festival  
 Nov. 3rd - 6th

[www.travelashland.org](http://www.travelashland.org)

Enjoy  
**Ashland Restaurant Week**  
 February 6th - 12th, 2017



- Delicious specials
- Talented chefs
- Win a dinner out!



[TravelAshland.org](http://TravelAshland.org)

Photo by Jeffrey McDaniel



10th annual

# Ashland Culinary Festival

**November 3rd – 6th, 2016**

Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites, 2525 Ashland Street

- 4 days of culinary magic including a Top Chef Dinner, delicious demos, Mixology and Junior Chef Competitions, workshops, vendor samplings and the 2016 Top Chef Showdown!

• **2016 Competing Restaurants and Chefs:**

<b>Tom Bates</b>	Bella Union
<b>Mario Chavez</b>	Onyx Restaurant & Bar
<b>Javier Cruz</b>	Standing Stone Brewing Co.
<b>Josh Dorcak</b>	Scarpetta (2015 Top Chef)
<b>Skye Elder</b>	Brickroom
<b>Dustin Farley</b>	Porters – Dining at the Depot
<b>Dale Fowler</b>	Regency Grill
<b>James Moreau</b>	Wiley's Trattoria
<b>Morgan McKelvey</b>	Smithfields
<b>Serena Murno</b>	Liquid Assets
<b>Will Shine</b>	Hearsay Restaurant
<b>Shay Spear</b>	Neuman Hotel Group (Luna Cafe and Mercantile & Larks Restaurant)

- **2016 Judges Panel:** James Beard Award Winner - Cory Schreiber, Food Blogger - Fabiola Donnelly and Food + Travel + Lifestyle Consultant - Judiaann Woo



Let's Go Places

Produced by Ashland Chamber's Visitor & Convention Bureau

To purchase tickets and for a complete schedule visit: **ASHLAND** as you like it

**www.travelashland.org**  
**(541) 482-3486**



**ASHLAND**  
festival of light

Find your holiday spirit  
in Ashland's

**Season of Celebration**

24<sup>TH</sup> annual

**Festival of Light  
Celebration**

kicks off **November 25th**

**Santa's Parade**

5pm

**Grand Illumination**

with over one million lights

**Santa's Workshop**

6:15-8pm

**Caroling each Saturday**

**Shop Local -**

**Support Independent Businesses  
this Holiday Season**

**Holiday Gift Guide available**

**Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>**

**Give Back Wednesdays:**

**November 30<sup>th</sup>, December 7<sup>th</sup>  
& December 14<sup>th</sup>**

visit

[ashlandchamber.com/livelocal](http://ashlandchamber.com/livelocal)  
for participating businesses

[www.ashlandchamber.com](http://www.ashlandchamber.com)

## **Appendix A**

### **Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors 2016 - 2017**

<b>Cindy Bernard</b>	Rogue Valley Roasting Co. ~ <i>Past President</i>
<b>Deena Branson</b>	Branson's Chocolates
<b>Sheila Clough</b>	Asante Ashland Community Hospital
<b>Mary Gardiner</b>	Southern Oregon University ~ <i>Vice President</i>
<b>Livia Genise</b>	Camelot Theatre Co.
<b>Drew Gibbs</b>	Alchemy Restaurant and Bar at the Winchester Inn
<b>Julie Gurwell</b>	Hearsay Restaurant, Lounge and Garden
<b>Annie Hoy</b>	Ashland Food Co-op
<b>Marie Lange</b>	Ashland Homes Real Estate ~ <i>President</i>
<b>Jac Nickels</b>	Architectural Design Works ~ <i>Secretary/Treasurer</i>
<b>Meiwen Richards</b>	Honorary Life Member
<b>Larry Steiner</b>	Edward Jones
<b>Eric Weisinger</b>	Weisinger Family Winery ~ <i>Vice President</i>

### **Visitor and Convention Bureau Advisory Committee Members 2016 – 2017**

<b>Committee Member:</b>	<b>Business:</b>
<b>Don Anway</b>	Neuman Hotel Group
<b>Pete Wallstrom</b>	Momentum River Expeditions
<b>Ariel Sherman</b>	Weisinger Family Winery
<b>Vicki Capp</b>	Ashland B&B Network/ Iris Inn B&B
<b>Graham Sheldon (chair)</b>	Ashland B&B Network/ Ashland Creek Inn
<b>Julie Gurwell</b>	Hearsay Restaurant
<b>Michael Stringer/ Hiram Towle</b>	Mt. Ashland Ski Area
<b>Tom Herrera</b>	Holiday Inn Express
<b>Brad Niva</b>	Ex-officio/Travel Southern Oregon
<b>Bob Hackett</b>	Ex officio/Travel Southern Oregon
<b>Katharine Cato</b>	Director/ Chamber Marketing & Sales