



News Release

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Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau reports successes at annual Tourism Partners breakfast

Highlights included guest speakers from PA Tourism Office and PA Restaurant & Lodging Association

Harrisburg, PA (October 11, 2016) – The Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau ([HHRVB](http://www.HHRVB.org)) today hosted their annual Tourism Breakfast for Partners at the Hershey Country Club. The local business leaders and tourism stakeholders in attendance received an update on the tourism bureau's fiscal year accomplishments for 2015-2016 with a brief recap of plans for 2016-2017. The event concluded with presentations by two special guests representing the Pennsylvania Tourism Office and the Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association.

Highlights from the bureau's annual report were presented by Mary Smith, HHRVB President and CEO who touched briefly on the many achievements in sales, marketing, public relations, and partnership from the organization's fiscal year which ended June 30, 2016.

Smith reported the bureau's Sales Department exceeded annual goals with a 22 percent increase in room-nights booked by HHRVB clients and she emphasized the important role that meetings, events, groups, and sports tourism play in the bureau accomplishing its mission of leading economic growth for the region through tourism. Smith highlighted that the bureau's [TOP20 Clients](#) in 2016 alone will draw 400,000 people to the area and generate \$142 million for the local economy.

Smith also addressed the positive response to the bureau's increased efforts in developing the international travel segment since [hiring](#) Audrey Bialas as Director of Sales in 2014. This year HHRVB contracted a sales and marketing representative in the United Kingdom and created a cooperative marketing program with the region's top producing international receptive operators.

The Sales Team also generated an increased number of new business leads worth 190,000 room-nights for HHRVB Partners who are actively engaged in the bureau's Sales Leader Program.

Smith commended the Sales Department for their endless energy, endurance, and enthusiasm, citing the fact that each member of the Sales Team spends between 20-30 percent of their time on the road and away from home every year recruiting clients at sales conferences, selling the region at trade shows, or making personal visits to important clients.

The bureau also scored positive results from the seasonal advertising campaigns that generated 72 million impressions and over 153 print and online articles that generated an estimated 240 million earned media impressions.

Smith was also happy to report 60 new businesses joined the region's official non-profit Destination Marketing Organization in the past year.

In addition to reporting results from the past year, Smith briefly addressed the details of the bureau's new [Sports & Events Authority \(HHSE\)](#) that officially [launched](#) on July 20, 2016 with the mission of enhancing the sales and client services for sports tourism and special events clients. These two sales markets have become the region's [most lucrative](#) over recent years, according to Smith.

Smith then introduced the new [hires and in-house promotions](#) that have taken place since the HHSE division launched. In July, the bureau promoted their longtime sports marketing manager Gregg Cook to Executive Director of the Sports & Events Authority, taking with him the bureau's manager of content marketing Allison Rohrbaugh to serve as the division's new Marketing & Communications Manager. Kaytlyn Hunt then joined the bureau that same month to replace Rohrbaugh, and Dean Polk was hired in October to join Cook and Rohrbaugh as the new Business Development Manager for HHSE.

David Black, HHRVB Board Chair presented the overall positive economic impact of tourism in the region, citing the latest statistics issued by the PA Tourism Office earlier this year. The report showed nearly 27,000 local jobs and \$1.05 billion in income were tied to tourism in the Hershey and Harrisburg Region, according to Black. The report also revealed the region again ranked fourth (#4) among 49 tourism areas in Pennsylvania for visitor spending which reached a record high of \$2.36 billion for Dauphin County.

The breakfast concluded with two special guest speakers from the [Pennsylvania Tourism Office](#) and the [Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association](#).

Carrie Fischer Lepore, Deputy Secretary for the Office of Marketing, Tourism and Film under the PA Department of Community & Economic Development presented the Commonwealth's new tourism marketing campaign "Pursue Your Happiness" that officially launched this summer.



The new slogan and logo are just the beginning, according to Lepore, with a new brand declaration and corresponding video available at www.visitPA.com/happiness. The Pennsylvania Tourism Office has also incorporated the new brand elements in all promotional materials and on social media with hashtag #PATravelHappy. The next edition of the state's travel guide will be called *Happy Traveler* and the e-newsletter renamed *Happy Thoughts*.

John Longstreet, President & CEO for the Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association presented the findings from the organization's latest research which analyzed the national competitiveness of Pennsylvania's Tourism funding. The Executive Summary showed the Commonwealth's share of national overnight leisure trips has declined in recent years. The report correlates that significant slide to the lack of state funding dedicated to marketing Pennsylvania as a travel and tourism destination. One slide revealed Pennsylvania's share of overnight trips compared to the surrounding states declined nearly 17 percent since 2007. The visuals also demonstrated how hotel room demand and hotel revenue were negatively affected by the lack of proactive promotion by the state. Longstreet's presentation connected these negative results directly to the state lawmakers' decision to cut Pennsylvania's Tourism Marketing Budget by 80 percent since 2007. The report shows the Commonwealth's state tourism budget ranks last in the nation despite its top ranking among tourism economies in the country.

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Mary Smith, President & CEO of the Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau is available for media interviews regarding the contents of this news release. Please try to make interview requests at least 12-hours in advance. The bureau will make every effort to accommodate all interview requests. Contact Rick@HersheyHarrisburg.org or cell 717.884.3328.

ABOUT THE HERSHEY HARRISBURG REGIONAL VISITORS BUREAU

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The HHRVB is the official non-profit partnership-based Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) leading economic growth for Pennsylvania's Hershey & Harrisburg Region through destination marketing and tourism development. The organization, accredited by Destination Marketing Association International ([DMAI](#)) since 2010, is committed to actively marketing the tourism assets in Dauphin & Perry County to business and leisure travelers both domestic & international. The bureau also leads regional sales efforts to attract meeting & event organizers, sporting event producers, and group tour leaders. For more information go to VisitHersheyHarrisburg.org or call 877-727-8573. Media can use #HHRVB and #HHRVB4Media when tagging stories and social media posts related to the region.