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Sonoma Valley Holds Annual Meeting for Travel and Tourism Industry

Community, Business and Political Leaders Gather to Discuss Travel's Economic Benefits During National Travel Rally Day

SONOMA, Calif. (May 11, 2017) — The Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau led Sonoma Valley's travel and tourism community in "National Travel Rally Day" on Tuesday, May 9, part of the 24th annual United States Travel Association's National Travel and Tourism Week (May 7-13). Caroline Beteta, president & CEO of Visit California, addressed the crowd of approximately 220 attendees as the keynote speaker at the Annual Membership Meeting on May 9.

"It's hard to overstate the impact that tourism has in California's diverse communities, and Sonoma is a perfect example of that," said Beteta. "Statewide, travel is California's biggest export and a vital economic engine that powers destinations across the state. In Sonoma alone, visitors spent \$1.9 billion this past year — a 5.7 percent increase year-over-year. That number will only grow as we continue to work together as a statewide community to showcase tourism's value and spread the California Dream around the world."

National Travel and Tourism Week is designed to unite communities across the country to celebrate what travel means to American jobs, economic growth and personal well-being. The Annual Membership Meeting was held at the Hanna Boys Center and focused on the "Faces of Tourism" in an effort to bring attention to the individuals and families who rely on the tourism industry for their livelihood and quality of life.

"This week, we are celebrating what travel means to our community," said Jonny Westom, executive director of the Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau. "2016 marks a year of accomplishments, and we thank our strategic partners and members for their continued support as these milestones are achieved. We have a week full of events to celebrate Sonoma Valley, community leaders, our residents, and those who work tirelessly to keep our destination beautiful and safe."

View the [Sonoma Valley Annual Recap Video here](#) or download the [2016 annual report here](#).

The Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau gave out four awards at the Annual Membership Meeting, highlighting its very own "Faces of Travel." Recipients included Norman Krug, Steve Page, Teresita Fernandez and The Lodge at Sonoma Renaissance Resort & Spa. The awards include:

1. **Spirit of Tourism** award – *Celebration of longevity in the tourism industry*. Awarded to a person who has been in the Sonoma Valley tourism industry for more than 25 years.
 - *Norman Krug* – Best Western Sonoma Valley Inn



2. **Valley of the Moon** award – *Celebration of partnerships*. Awarded to a person who has cultivated relationships throughout the valley to promote the destination.
 - *Steve Page* – Sonoma Raceway
3. **Sonoma Creek** award – *Celebration of community*. Awarded to the person who has given his or her effort, time, and resources to enhance and embrace the quality of life in Sonoma Valley.
 - *Teresita Fernandez* – La Michoacana
4. **Mayacamas** award – *Celebration of sustainability*. Awarded to a person or organization who has implemented sustainable practices into a business with results that promote a better environment in Sonoma Valley.
 - *The Lodge at Sonoma Renaissance Resort & Spa*

View the [Sonoma Valley Faces of Tourism Video here](#).

“Our industry is one that relies on human interaction,” said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. “Whether it’s the front desk concierge at a hotel, the tour guide in a city’s historic district, or the CEO of a destination marketing organization, our people are what make America a great place to visit and keep our economy strong. This National Travel and Tourism Week, we’re saluting the people behind the travel industry and calling on our nation’s leaders to prioritize travel-friendly legislation for the sake of millions of American workers.”

About the Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau

The Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau is the region’s destination marketing organization representing more than 350 hospitality-related businesses. The Bureau coordinates the collection and dissemination of information about Sonoma Valley to visitors, residents, travel writers, publications and other interested parties. The Bureau operates two visitor centers, which are open year-round, seven days a week to welcome visitors to Sonoma Valley.

For information on Sonoma Valley, please call the Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau toll free (866) 996-1090 or visit www.sonomavalley.com. For maps, guides, and touring instructions, stop by the Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau (23570 Arnold Drive at Cornerstone Sonoma or on the Sonoma Plaza at 453 First Street East).

For Sonoma Valley information, please contact Experience Sonoma Valley at (866) 996-1090 or visit sonomavalley.com. Experience Sonoma Valley is located on the historic Sonoma Plaza at 453 First Street East, Sonoma CA. A second Visitor Center is located at Cornerstone Sonoma at 23570 Arnold Drive, Sonoma CA. www.sonomavalley.com

About Visit California

Visit California is a nonprofit organization with a mission to develop and maintain marketing programs – in partnership with the state’s travel industry – that keep California top-of-mind as a premier travel destination. According to Visit California, spending by travelers totaled \$125.9 billion in 2016 in California, generating 1,096,000 jobs in the state and \$10.3 billion in state and local tax revenues. For more information about Visit California, go to www.travelmattersca.com. For story ideas, media information, downloadable images, video and more, go to www.media.visitcalifornia.com

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