



WELCOME, NEW LHVb MARKETING PARTNERS!

Louise Bates, Sales Development Manager



Bottle Works, Arts on Third Avenue
Laura Argenbright
411 & 413 Third Ave.
Johnstown, PA 15906
814-535-2020
bottleworks.org

Located in the historic cultural district of Johnstown in the former Tulip Bottling Company, this vibrant art center provides a creative outlet for the community, local artists and students offering classes, workshops, exhibits and more. Admission to the gallery is free and they also offer facilities for personal events such as baby showers, weddings and parties.



Cindy Giejda, a.k.a Cindy G the "Moonshiner's Daughter"
581 Turkeyfoot Trail Road
Markleton, PA 15551
732-620-5821
cindygbluegrass.com

Cindy G and her bluegrass band will be performing a special one-time concert to launch her new album, "Moonshiner's Daughter," this May. The concert will be held at the Paddytown Barn in Markleton and Tall Pines Distillery will be serving up their moonshine to celebrate the occasion. Many of Cindy G's songs reflect stories and history of the Laurel Highlands. Definitely a must-see event!



Challenge Program at Saint Vincent College
Dr. Kathleen Beining
300 Fraser Purchase Road
Latrobe, PA 15650
724-805-2981
stvincentschallenge.org

Since 1980, Saint Vincent College has been offering a top-notch summer camp program called "Challenge." Hosted for one week in the summer, the program switches up its theme every year. This year's theme? The Wizard College Presents "Searching Beasts!" The program caters for students from pre-K through to 12th grade. Enrolled students from 5th grade are given the residential opportunity to stay overnight on campus from Sunday to Friday. Students have the opportunity to totally immerse themselves in fun-filled classes and workshops all week long.



Somerset County Fair
Greg Rohrer
7842 Mount Davis Road
Meyersdale, PA 15552
814-634-5619
somersectcountyfairpa.com

This year will mark the 118th County Fair in Somerset. Now that's an achievement! The Somerset County Fair has some of the largest and best livestock shows in Pennsylvania along with nightly entertainment in the grandstand and amusement rides on the midway making this a county fair not to miss!



Sunset Cottages
Jennifer Graham
1651 Route 30
Ligonier, PA 15658
724-261-9040
sunsetcottagesligonier.com

Located on the stretch of Route 30 between Ligonier and Laughlinton, you will discover six new vacation cottages. Conveniently located a short drive from Idlewild & SoakZone, Fort Ligonier, Compass Inn Museum and all the Laurel Highlands attractions, each cottage offers guests two queen bedrooms, a full bathroom and a fully-equipped kitchen.



Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau
120 East Main Street | Ligonier, PA 15658



Headlines is published quarterly. Please contact LHVb's Director of Public Relations, Anna Weltz, with questions or comments at aweltz@laurelhighlands.org.
120 East Main Street, Ligonier, PA 15658 | RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Stephen Clark
National Park Service

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Executive Director
Ann Nemanic
724-238-5661 x103
anemanic@laurelhighlands.org

Director of Sales
Stacey Magda
724-238-5661 x111
smagda@laurelhighlands.org

Senior Director of Finance & Grant Administration
Georgia Robinsky
724-238-5661 x115
grobinsky@laurelhighlands.org

Sales Development Manager
Louise Bates
724-238-5661 x110
lbates@laurelhighlands.org

Senior Director of Marketing
Kristin Ecker
724-238-5661 x104
kecker@laurelhighlands.org

Administrative & Grant Assistant
Rachel Roehrig
724-238-5661 x101
roehrig@laurelhighlands.org

Director of Interactive Marketing
Jared Bundy
724-238-5661 x106
jbundy@laurelhighlands.org

Marketing Communications Coordinator
Allyson Null
724-238-5661 x116
anull@laurelhighlands.org

Director of Public Relations & Community Outreach
Anna Weltz
724-238-5661 x108
aweltz@laurelhighlands.org

Brochure Distribution Coordinator
Jim Hamerski
724-238-5277
warehouse@laurelhighlands.org

Marketing Assistant
Kayleigh Dumas
72-238-5661 x102
kdumas@laurelhighlands.org

Headlines

LAUREL HIGHLANDS NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2018

HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE:

- LHVb NEWS
- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE
- MARKETING NEWS
- WEB STATISTICS
- PUBLIC RELATIONS NEWS
- GROUP TOUR NEWS
- NEW LHVb PARTNERS

LHVb NEWS

New Website

In the summer of 2017, the LHVb marketing staff began a major overhaul of the region's tourism website, LaurelHighlands.org. The current iteration of the site launched in the spring of 2014, and since then has seen a 30 percent increase in unique pageviews, 60 percent increase in time on page and 100 percent increase in entrances to the site. The website has proven to be an extremely valuable asset for the region's tourism product, receiving nearly two million pageviews annually.

LaurelHighlands.org competes with other travel information sites like Tripadvisor and Yelp to provide relevant information to travelers. With these competitors in mind, the site is being redesigned to ensure that the information displayed is helpful, easy to navigate and accessible on any device. The redesign will also showcase a variety of new features such as user-generated content to increase trust with our brand, a booking engine to make direct booking from the website easier than ever and advanced filtering options like a "Near Me Now" feature to easily find the best Laurel Highlands has to offer near a visitor. The new site is scheduled to launch March 28, 2018.

Coming Soon – the LHVb Backyard Tour!

Planning is underway to host the highly-popular Backyard Tour in late April 2018. This full-day event is a fun-filled informative immersion to help you and your staff experience a taste of the region's tourism offerings so you can answer the question "What is there to do in the Laurel Highlands?" Stay tuned to the bi-weekly LHVb newsletter for more information!

Tourism Grant Reporting Deadlines Approaching!

If your organization or business was the recipient of a 2017 tourism grant, don't forget that your final reports are due March 31, 2018. Please visit LaurelHighlands.org/grants to access your county's final reporting form and requirements.

MEETINGS & EVENTS

March 21 | Executive Board Meeting

April 11 | Executive Board Meeting

April 18 | LHVb Full Board Meeting

May 16 | Executive Board Meeting

Please note the LHVb administrative offices will be closed on the following dates:

March 30 | Office Closed – Good Friday

May 28 | Office Closed – Memorial Day

Save the Date – 2018 Interactive Marketing Summit | Nov. 2, 2018



LAUREL HIGHLANDS VISITORS BUREAU
120 E. Main Street, Ligonier, PA 15658
800.333.5661 | laurelhighlands.org





EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Ann Nemanic, Executive Director

Did You Know?

Spring thaw. A time of anticipation and renewal. For the LHVB, spring 2018 will be a rebirth of sorts. Our website will launch with fresh content, incredible original photography and you, our partners. The team has spent a year on the project and the site will continually keep visitors engaged. For the first-time, a visitor will be able to book lodging directly from our website. The "Near Me Now" feature will be useful on mobile devices, aiding visitors to find restaurants, attractions, wineries and other amenities once in the region. Helpful itineraries, ever-changing Instagram images, blogs and a podcast will enhance the site. We're excited about the rebirth of this marketing tool.

Spring is also planting season. Time for you to plant the seeds for summer and fall visitors. When was the last time you updated your copy



MARKETING NEWS

Kristin Ecker, Senior Director of Marketing

Media Campaigns

The LHVB will be wrapping up winter campaigns in March, and encouraging visitors, viewers, and listeners to think spring. The LHVB will continue work on implementing the long term marketing plan established by Red House Communications in 2017, with strategic media placements planned throughout the next three years in key markets. Spring campaigns will reflect the second-year implementation of the improved plan of action, with dozens of diverse Laurel Highlands digital marketing messages hitting segmented audiences in top markets of surrounding states including Ohio, New York, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Washington, D.C. Current ad placements include TV commercials, Pandora radio spots, digital and native ads, search engine marketing, social media ad campaigns, video pre-roll ads, billboard and select print placements.

The LHVB will continue to distribute segmented messages uniquely targeted at baby boomers, gen Xers and millennials with specific themes per generation, ranging from high-adventure to low-impact premium escapes. Research shows that because the region has so much to offer, we have the opportunity to customize our sales pitch per user, further increasing the likelihood of converting the viewer into a visitor.

For instance, here are some results from our winter campaign that utilized these strategies. Targeted campaigns paired with the strong winter, LaurelHighlands.org and our winter pages have seen some dramatic increases in both organic and paid traffic. From Dec. 2017-Jan. 2018, home page pageviews have increased 42 percent, winter festivals increased 125 percent, snow tubing 37 percent, resorts 160 percent, cross-country skiing 48 percent and our winter landing page 62 percent.

Welcome Kayleigh!

The LHVB is pleased to introduce Kayleigh Dumas, newly-hired Marketing Assistant, to the team. Kayleigh is a recent graduate of York College of Pennsylvania with a bachelor of arts in Public Relations and Mass Communications. She comes to LHVB with a wealth of experience in customer resource management, product management, digital marketing and videography. Most recently, Kayleigh managed a Facebook page with more than 1 million followers and also worked as a special events assistant with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

Kayleigh will offer support to the marketing and sales departments for a variety of needs, but will primarily serve as our CRM specialist and events calendar guru in addition to managing image and user-generated content libraries. Please welcome her to the staff at kdumas@laurelhighlands.org.



on LaurelHighlands.org? What's new, what's different and what's on the horizon? Visitors want to know. They're planning now and anticipating getting outside and exploring with the pop of the first crocus.

Spring is a time of transformation. The same-old-same-old is easy, but branching out offers a season of new beginnings. Did you know the Bureau offers 67 different marketing opportunities in 2018? And that does not include spotlight ads and featured listings on our website. Use the LHVB to expand your reach and broaden your marketing base.

Spring in the Laurel Highlands. As the days become longer, may your mind, body and spirit be reenergized in anticipation of what is to come.

2018 Laurel Highlands Destination Guide

The 2018 Laurel Highlands Destination Guide is now available and currently in distribution. This year's edition presents a modern layout full of stunning imagery and a continued flow of listings, identifiable by county within their category, designed to help visitors better plan their trip to the 3,000-square-mile Laurel Highlands.

The 2018 edition features themed content with related travel ideas and suggested stops. Many of the content sections include helpful links back to relevant content on LaurelHighlands.org. An easy-to-read, tear-out map with key Laurel Highlands sites has proven to be popular and has been repeated for 2018. These maps are also available individually for distribution and can also be found in LHVB racks!

What is most important is how the LHVB distributes the guide. Here are just a few key distribution points:

- 175,000 in circulation
- Primary fulfillment piece to potential visitors and residents
- PA Welcome Centers
- PA Visitors Centers (PA Turnpike)
- 81 regional brochure racks
- Arnold Palmer Regional Airport
- Visit Pittsburgh Welcome Centers
- Laurel Highlands Visitors Centers
- LHVB partners

Order your supply of guides and/or maps today! A copy of the beautiful new guide along with an order form has been mailed to you. Just fill it out and send back to us. Or please contact Rachel Roehrig at rroehrig@laurelhighlands.org, 724-258-5661, ext. 101, to request a shipment of guides.



WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

Jared Bundy, Director of Interactive Marketing

Social Media Audience (as of Jan. 17, 2018)

- Likes on Facebook **59,000+**
- Followers on Twitter **11,800+**
- Followers on Instagram **3,300+**
- Video Views on YouTube **230,000+**
- Pinterest Followers **700+**

Notable Web Stats (Nov.-Jan. 2018) Compared to Nov.-Jan. 2017

- Social Media Traffic **260%** increase
- Direct Traffic **90%** increase
- Blog Traffic **82%** increase
- Sweepstakes Traffic **36%** increase

Top Keywords

Laurel Highlands, Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail, Ohiopyle State Park, Christmas Festivals Near Me, Laurel Highlands Trail, Frank Lloyd Wright Falling Water, Hotels Near Overly Country Christmas, Romantic Getaways in PA, Snow Tubing in Pittsburgh

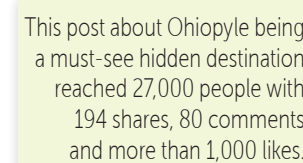
Top Winter Pages (Nov.-Jan. 2018)

Page	pageviews
Winter Festivals	15,721
Homepage	14,918
Frank Lloyd Wright	10,792
Romantic Packages	7,284
Snow Tubing	6,694
Events	5,741
Winter Activities	5,452
Ohiopyle	4,610
Resorts	4,432
Vacation Rentals	3,447

Top Facebook Posts:



This post highlighting the new baby sloth interactive experience at Living Treasures reached 54,000 people with 307 shares, 665 comments and 800 likes.



This post about Ohiopyle being a must-see hidden destination reached 27,000 people with 194 shares, 80 comments and more than 1,000 likes.

Top Instagram Post:



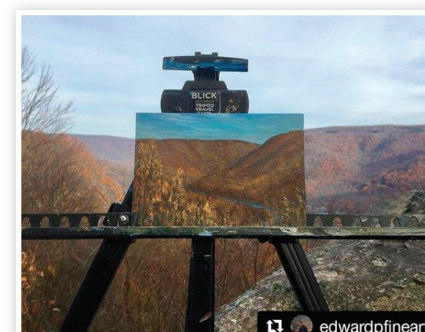
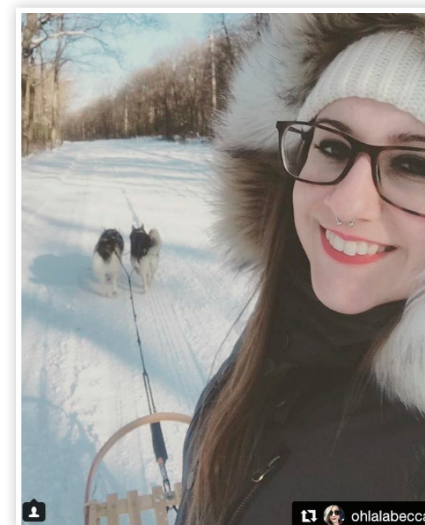
This repost of the Diamond lit up during a snowstorm became our most-liked Instagram post with 374 likes.



Vandy Nelson and Brian McCollum of 60 Minute Missions in Greensburg.

Instagram Hashtag

Have your photos featured on social media by tagging us and using #LaurelHighlands. **New for 2018:** All photos using our hashtag can now be used across our website and other social media platforms via Stackla. Encourage your social media manager and guests to use the hashtag to get their photos featured!



Podcast: Subscribe to Laurel Highlands Happenings, our monthly podcast hosted by LHVB's own Louise Bates that showcases partners, events and our region with a different theme each episode. Subscribe on iTunes, GooglePlay, Stitcher or wherever you listen to podcasts.



PUBLIC RELATIONS UPDATE

Anna Weltz, Director of Public Relations

Top Media Opportunities

- Downhill Destinations: Top 10 Ski Resorts in the Blue Ridge, *Blue Ridge Outdoors*
- The Secrets of Snowmaking, *Blue Ridge Outdoors*
- Winter's coolest food and beverage festivals, *USA Today*
- Winter Lights Week: Laurel Highlands, Pittsburgh Today Live, KDKA
- Laurel Mountain Makes Top 10, *Tribune Review*



GROUP TOUR NEWS

Stacey Magda, Director of Sales

2018 Show Season Kicks Off

The first quarter of the year brings a busy time for outreach to consumer, bridal, group and small meetings markets. Take a look at where we've been in first few months of 2018!

Consumer Shows

- AAA Great Vacations | Columbus, Ohio | Jan. 19-21, 2018
- Travel and Adventure Show | Washington, D.C. | Jan. 19-21, 2018
- AAA Pittsburgh Travel Showcase | Pittsburgh, PA | Jan. 26-28, 2018
- Great American Outdoor Show | Harrisburg, PA | Feb. 2-12, 2018
- Toronto Outdoor Adventure Show | Toronto, ON | Feb. 23-25, 2018
- Pittsburgh Home and Garden Show | Pittsburgh, PA | March 2-11, 2018

Bridal Shows

- Cavanaugh's Westmoreland Bride Show | Greensburg, PA | Jan. 21, 2018
- Cavanaugh's Wyndham Bride Show | Pittsburgh, PA | Jan. 27-28, 2018
- Cavanaugh's Cranberry Bride Show | Wexford, PA | Feb. 25, 2018
- Pittsburgh Bridal Showcase | Pittsburgh, PA | March 18, 2018

Tour and Travel Shows

- American Bus Association Marketplace | Charlotte, NC | Jan. 26-29, 2018
- Heartland Travel Showcase | Buffalo, NY | Feb. 15-18, 2018
- Pennsylvania Bus Association Marketplace | York, PA | March 28, 2018
- Maryland Motorcoach Association Marketplace | York, PA | March 29, 2018

Meetings/Association Market

- PASAE Educational Summit and Expo | Manheim, PA | Feb. 8-9, 2018

2017 GROUP TRAVEL IN REVIEW

- 17,127** hotel rooms booked
- \$ 2,123,748** in hotel revenue
- 471** multi-day tours & **203** day trips
- 803** bus groups
- 40,366** senior and adult visitors
- 20,822** student visitors

Laurel Highlands in the Spotlight

Nov. 1-Dec. 31, 2017

A summary of press and media projects initiated or coordinated by the LHVB. Circulation, digital impressions, and publicity value figures provided by Cision media monitoring service.

- More than \$119,000** in added value
- 45** stories
- More than 56 million** in total reach

Prepping and Planning for the MATPRA Media Marketplace | Sept. 25-27, 2018



Plans are well underway to welcome the Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance annual Media Marketplace in the Laurel Highlands! The three-day event will bring more than 120 travel journalists and tourism marketing representatives to tour and explore the Laurel Highlands. Sponsorship opportunities will be available soon, providing LHVB partners with opportunities to support this once-in-a-lifetime event and connect with this highly-influential audience. Stay tuned for details!



Welcoming the Maryland Motorcoach Association Winter Board Retreat

On Feb. 11-13, Nemaocolin Woodlands Resort and the LHVB welcomed 35 members and tour operators from the Maryland Motorcoach Association to enjoy their Winter Board Retreat. Events included a Laurel Highlands hosted Marketplace that featured 20 regional tourism businesses and a day of familiarization tours that included stops at Frank Lloyd Wright's Kentuck Knob and Stone House Restaurant.

Heartland Travel Showcase | February 15-18, 2018 | Buffalo, NY

Each year, the LHVB hits the road with a team of group sales professionals highlighting group travel in our region. This year, we traveled on a Quest Coach conducting sales calls along the way and engaging dozens of tours operators on group tour options in the Laurel Highlands.

