



News Release

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Contact: Linea Gagliano
(503) 729-6021
linea@traveloregon.com

Travel Oregon Announces Recipients of 2010 Tourism and Hospitality Industry Achievement Awards

SALEM, Ore. – April 12, 2011 – The Oregon Tourism Commission (dba Travel Oregon) is proud to announce the recipients of the 2010 Tourism and Hospitality Industry Achievement Awards, presented at the 2011 Governor’s Conference on Tourism in Eugene, Ore.

The annual awards recognize people and organizations across the state that go the extra mile to enhance the tourism and hospitality industry in Oregon. Nominated by their peers, the award recipients are outstanding examples of professionals who, by virtue of their vision, perseverance and dedication, are a credit to Oregon’s tourism and hospitality industry.

The state’s most prized recognition is the Governor’s Tourism Award. This year’s award was given to **Kari Westlund, President and CEO of Travel Lane County**. The Award is a tribute to Westlund’s 30 years of service in the visitor industry. She is the past chair to the Oregon Tourism Commission, and is completing her eighth and final year as a commissioner in 2011. She is a former president of the Oregon Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus (now the Oregon Destination Marketing Organization) and the Western Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus, which awarded her the Spirit of Leadership Award for 2009. In addition, Westlund is the current president of the Oregon Track Club and is committed to the continued resurgence of Tracktown USA as a positive brand for Oregon. Westlund played a key role planning Eugene 08 and the upcoming Olympic Trials.

“It’s an honor to recognize Kari for her years of service,” said Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon. “Her dedication to the tourism and hospitality industry has been instrumental in helping drive Lane County’s economy, creating more than 7,000 jobs and bringing more than \$500 million to the county.”

The 2010 Tourism and Hospitality Industry Achievement Awards were announced in these categories:

The Gene Leo Memorial Award was established in 1994 to honor the late Gene Leo, known for his Oregon tourism contributions as Director of the Oregon Zoo, Portland Rose Festival and the Portland Oregon Visitors Association (now Travel Portland). Gene was an enthusiastic man who revered Oregon’s

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natural beauty, loved her people and enjoyed the outdoors with gusto. This award recognizes an outstanding contribution for a tourism-related activity or attraction focused on Oregon's natural beauty or outdoor recreation. The award was presented to **Baker County - Anthony Lakes Ski Area**. In spring 2010 the owners of Anthony Lakes Ski Area decided, after years of declining revenue, they could no longer afford to operate. The ski area had been for sale, but with no buyers the owners gifted the property to Baker County rather than close. Baker County citizens became the new owners and formed the Baker County Development Corporation to operate and oversee management of the resort. Through strategic sponsorships in nearby drive markets and robust social media outreach they promoted the ski area as an anchor winter recreation attraction for the region. Nearing the end of the first ski season, the resort has doubled skier days, from 12,000 last year to nearly 25,000 in 2010-11.

The Oregon Tourism & Hospitality Industry Exceptional Partnership Award recognizes the efforts of a group of tourism organizations that together created a successful tourism program, promotion or product that is more successful than any single entity could have produced alone. It was presented to the **Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area 25th Anniversary Committee**. In 1986, the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act created landmark legislation that would protect the scenic landscapes, natural habitat, cultural resources and recreation opportunities of the Gorge, while supporting economic development of the community. To commemorate, businesses and organizations of the Gorge collaborated on a 25th anniversary celebration to inspire stewardship of the region as well as long-term local, regional and national support for the Act. Some of the key promotions encouraging visitation to the region were: a 25th Anniversary Weekend Celebration in The Dalles, a program highlighting the top 25 trails in the Columbia River Gorge titled "25 Hikes - 25 years," and a 50-minute documentary produced by Oregon Public Broadcasting.

The Oregon Tourism & Hospitality Tourism Development Award recognizes an innovative program, promotion or product created by an organization, business, community or region in Oregon that exemplifies best practices, sustainability and creative problem solving. The award was given to **Visit Bend - The Bend Ale Trail**. In 2010 Visit Bend launched the Bend Ale Trail to promote the region's craft beer industry as a desirable tourist attraction. The program features a passport that encourages travelers to visit eight local



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breweries and accumulate passport stamps. To date, more than 1,000 individuals have completed the trail with an average \$162 per person spent on food, drinks and memorabilia. The program is supported by a website, Facebook fan page, Twitter feed, a printed and interactive online map and a smartphone application.

The International Marketing Development Award recognizes excellence and creative accomplishment in the marketing and promotion of Oregon as a destination in the international marketplace. The award was given to the **International Air Service Committee** for their diligent work in recruiting and retaining non-stop air service to both Asia and Europe. Through tough economic times, they worked with partners to secure Delta flights to Amsterdam and Tokyo, while representing the smallest market in the U.S. to support non-stop flights to both Europe and Asia. Portland's International Air Service Committee is co-chaired by Bill Wyatt, Executive Director of Port of Portland; Sho Dozono, President of Azumano Travel; and Ted Cullen, Director of Global M&E, WHQ M&E and Travel Nike Inc.

The Outstanding Oregon Tourism Volunteer Award recognizes individuals who exemplify the impact of volunteers in Oregon's tourism and hospitality industry and on Oregon's economy. The award was presented to **Del Stephens and Jim Pex of the Oregon Tuna Classic**. Held in Charleston, Garibaldi, Ilwaco and Newport, the Oregon Tuna Classic brings in an estimated \$250,000 to local economies. Moreover, the classic is an opportunity for anglers to compete and donate their catch to the hungry. In 2010 the Tuna Classic netted more than 20,400 pounds of tuna and \$25,000 in cash for coastal food banks. ESPN recently named the Oregon Tuna Classic the largest and fastest growing charity fishing tournament series on the west coast thanks to the hard work of Pex and Stephens.

The Oregon Sustainable Tourism Leadership Award recognizes an individual who demonstrated a strong commitment to conserving Oregon's natural and cultural resources through leadership in environmental stewardship and socially responsible practices. The award was presented to **Kevin Graham, Executive Chef at the Embassy Suites, Portland - Downtown**. Seeking Green Seal Certification, Graham implemented the "Five Easy Steps" for recycling practices and made all purchases according to "Green Purchasing Procedures" required in the certification process. The hotel underwent rigorous science-based evaluation of its practices and participated in on-site inspections to prove their compliance with



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sustainability initiatives. Graham's efforts ensured that the historic Multnomah Hotel building (built in 1912), now the Embassy Suites Downtown Portland Hotel, was not only Green Seal Certified but the first Embassy Suites, and the oldest facility, to receive the Green Seal Certification - Bronze Level.

The Oregon Heritage Tourism Award recognizes outstanding use of Oregon's cultural or natural history by an Oregon individual, organization, business, community or region, to draw visitors to the state. The award was given to **The Pendleton Round-Up Association**. Last September, the Centennial Celebration of The Pendleton Round-Up brought more than 100,000 visitors to the area and approximately \$55 million in economic stimulus to the community. The Pendleton Round-Up stayed true to its roots and treated visitors to special re-enactments of the "frontier exhibition of picturesque pastimes, Indian and military spectacles, cowboy racing and bronco busting," as the Round-Up was described in 1910. The people of the Umatilla, Cayuse and Walla Walla Tribes participated as they have for the last 99 years, bringing traditional dancing, drumming, handcrafted artwork, a teepee village and more. The Round-Up Association's persistence to maintain and protect the traditions and integrity of its early years led to its recent designation as an Oregon Heritage Tradition by the Oregon Heritage Commission.

Image requests and all other inquiries can be directed to Linea Gagliano at linea@traveloregon.com.

*The Oregon Tourism Commission, dba **Travel Oregon**, works to enhance visitors' experience by providing information resources and trip planning tools that inspire travel and consistently convey the exceptional quality of Oregon. By strengthening economic impacts of the state's \$8.1 billion tourism industry, the commission aims to improve Oregonians' quality of life. Visit www.TravelOregon.com for details.*

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