

ANNUAL REPORT

2021 // GO LAUREL HIGHLANDS



GOLAURELHIGHLANDS.COM



TOURISM SHINES

2021

Dear GO LH Partner,

In 2021, the Laurel Highlands tourism industry saw great improvement compared to the previous year, which most certainly will be remembered as the most challenging one in our industry.

Buoyed by our natural resources, wild beauty, and wide open spaces made for exploring, the Laurel Highlands continued to be a destination of choice for visitors from all over the Mid-Atlantic. In fact, many partners have reported that visitation returned to near-normal numbers or even beyond.

Over the course of the year, the GO LH team worked tirelessly to promote our region in new and exciting ways in target markets in order to drive day trip visitors and overnight stays.

Two new visitor centers opened their doors in 2021, the first a collaborative effort along the Great Allegheny Passage in Connellsville. This strategic location helped to serve short and long distance trail riders, as well as the Youghiogheny River enthusiasts in search of big fish and cool waters. In addition, GO LH's new administrative offices and visitors center on the Diamond in Ligonier welcomed visitors who were greeted by the GO LH team as they marveled at the beautiful local imagery on the walls, the extensive visitor information resources, and the newly expanded selection of Laurel Highlands branded apparel and souvenirs.

The Laurel Highlands Pour Tour entered into its second year with continued resounding popularity. Since its inception, the passport-based program has helped to drive business into the greater Laurel Highlands tourism industry as they sip and savor our region's flavors.

I would like to take this time to express our sincere appreciation for the continued support and confidence placed in us by our county commissioners. Commissioners, your recognition of what we do for the region is critical important to our success.

Finally, I want to thank all of you, our tourism partners. Thank you for all that you do to make our Laurel Highlands a treasured and special destination for visitors to relax, reconnect, and make new memories.

Thank you!

Muriel Nuttall

Muriel Nuttall, Chair
GO Laurel Highlands Board of Directors



PUBLIC RELATIONS

LAUREL HIGHLANDS SELECTED AS ONE OF USA TODAY'S TOP 10 BEST DESTINATIONS FOR FALL FOLIAGE

In September, USA Today named Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands a Readers' Choice Winner for the Best Destination for Fall Foliage category in the 2021 USA Today 10Best Travel Award Contest.

The Laurel Highlands placed eighth overall in voting amid a field of 20 nominees that included Vermont's White Mountains, Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains, Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and the Ozark Mountain Region. Winners were selected by readers' choice via a month-long online contest that encouraged travelers to vote daily for their favorite place to explore for fall.

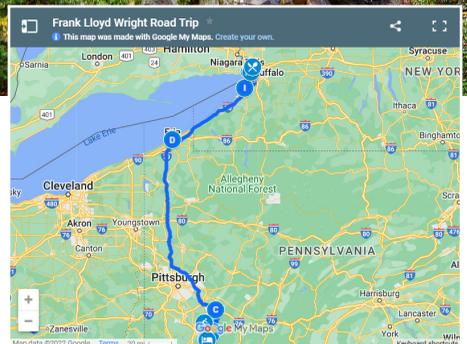
The Best Destination for Fall Foliage award is one of several USA Today 10Best honors bestowed upon the Laurel Highlands. The region previously won third overall for Best Fall Foliage in 2020, one of the top Best New Destinations in 2018 for Flight 93 National Memorial's Tower of Voices, and Best Pennsylvania Attractions for Ohiopyle State Park.



THE GREAT WRIGHT ROAD TRIP

GO Laurel Highlands partnered with Visit Buffalo-Niagara, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and various Frank Lloyd Wright properties to launch a cooperative travel opportunity for visitors – the Great Wright Road Trip. The experience weaves from the Laurel Highlands through Buffalo and features nine Wright creations that can be explored over the course of a few days.

SUMMARY OF 2021 MEDIA COVERAGE





MARKETING

Cleveland | Columbus | Pittsburgh | Baltimore | Washington, D.C.

Travel and tourism saw heavy rebounds in 2021, with pent-up demand from pandemic-related lockdown and travel limitations at an all-time high. The Laurel Highlands region remained a hot market for travelers in the mid-Atlantic and GO LH was ready with significant investments in campaigns throughout the summer, fall, and winter seasons to ensure we kept the momentum going. Travelers flocked to the region seeking outdoor spaces, open-air activities, and private home rentals and campground getaways. Campaign messaging attracted multi-generational visitors by utilizing targeted demographics and interests, letting them know of all of the #freshairFUN opportunities the region offers!

Marketing efforts include both organic and paid social media, search, display and other digital, digital and traditional audio, TV, Billboards, print and more!



2021 MARKETING PROGRAMMING & PROMOTIONS BUDGET

\$972,023

*excludes county tourism grant program expense

SEASONAL CAMPAIGNS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING MEDIA OUTLETS:

- TV Commercials
- Radio Commercials
- Programmatic Audio & Video
- Print Ad Placements
- Billboards
- Social Media Advertising
- Display Advertising
- Search Engine Marketing
- Native Advertising
- YouTube
- TripAdvisor & Expedia
- Hulu



SOCIAL STATS

	68,000	Fans
	13,000	Followers
	230,000	Video Views
	25,000	Followers
	1,500	Monthly Viewers



LH POUR TOUR

Following a successful first year of the Laurel Highlands Pour Tour, GO LH launched Pour Tour 2.0 in September 2020, releasing an updated version of the original program. Version 2.0 features additional properties as well as new prize incentives. By the end of 2021, 227 individuals fully completed the program with more than 15,000 purchases redeemed.

With 40 participating properties spanning the entire LH region, the Pour Tour truly showcases the booming craft beverage-making scene in our region and drives visitation not only to these establishments, but into our communities as well.

- 60,000 Passports Printed
- 140,000+ Stickers Distributed
- 900+ Prizes Awarded
- 800+ Monthly Active Users on the Pour Tour APP



PODCASTS

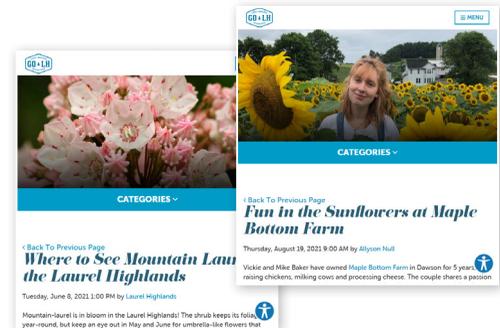
The GO LH Marketing Department created three separate podcasts on a seasonal basis, each with a different theme. All are available for download on iTunes and Google Play.

- Inside the Taproom
- Laurel Highlands Happenings
- Westmoreland Heritage Happenings



BLOGS

The team at GO LH implemented a robust blog content schedule, posting relevant and unique stories. The blogs were pushed out on social media and provide visitors with unique stories, property highlights, top to-do lists and more, all featuring LH properties and partners while showcasing the region.



BREWS FOR CHARITY

Three Cheers for Our Pour Tour Participants! In honor of the holiday season, Laurel Highlands Pour Tour participants could purchase limited edition ugly holiday sweatshirts and add on a special charity donation for Animal Friends of Westmoreland. Fifty-one sweatshirts were sold through the promotion which brought in \$255 and an additional \$138 in giving. GO LH chipped in the balance to round out the donation at \$500. The team at Animal Friends was extremely grateful, as they can use all of the help they can get. Volunteerism and giving both have declined dramatically due to the pandemic, as has the ability to host fundraisers.



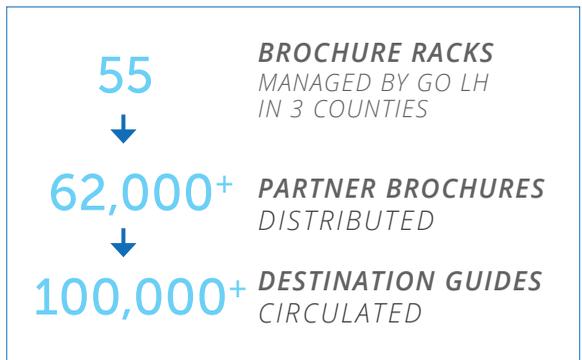
PARTNERSHIP

2021 saw the region continue to recover from the Covid 19 Pandemic. Partnership remained strong and GO Laurel Highlands continued to be grateful for the continued lift from our Supporting Partners. Marketing opportunities for partners returned in 2021 and included the popular Summer Fun Coupon Book, monthly e-newsletter spotlights, Calendar of Event spotlight ads, comprehensive brochure distribution, Pour Tour sponsorships, website advertising, and our Fall Festivals co-op. Educating our partners in the ways of connecting their business with visitors remained paramount.

611 TOTAL GO LH BUSINESS PARTNERS 

 **27** SUPPORTING PARTNERS

3,300 TOURISM BUSINESS LISTINGS



SUMMER FUN COUPON BOOK | 49 COUPON OFFERS

In anticipation of a bustling summer for tourism in the region, partners of the Laurel Highlands purchased coupons for the Summer Fun Coupon Book! These lucrative offers were distributed through social media and online, allowing summer visitors to the region to still access all of the amazing deals available in the region.

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Special thanks to our 2021 Supporting Partners who's financial contribution has helped support the programming and efforts of GO LH throughout 2021.

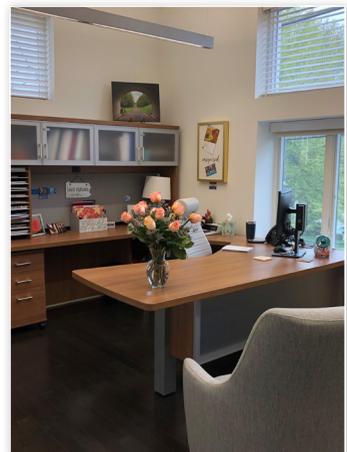


NEW HOME

In 2021, the GO Laurel Highlands team settled into place at 113 East Main Street, Ligonier, PA. This new space, located on 'The Diamond,' provided the organization with a true storefront for showcasing the region, a welcoming visitor center and retail outlet, and room for each division of the organization to work efficiently and creatively. A beautiful, hand-made conference table was designed and built onsite from original chestnut beams covered in dust in the basement of the building. An Open House was held on May 5 & 6 to provide local legislators, county commissioners, stakeholders, and partners the opportunity to visit and be inspired by the new home of GO Laurel Highlands.

New Address:

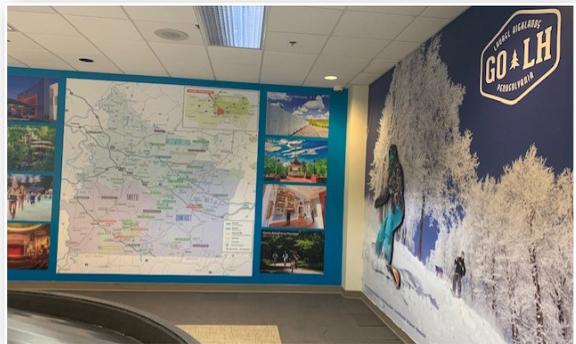
GO Laurel Highlands
113 E. Main Street
Ligonier, PA 15658



WARM WELCOME FOR PASSENGERS AT AIRPORT

ARNOLD PALMER REGIONAL AIRPORT | LATROBE, PA

A brainstorming session in 2020 led to a collaborative effort among leadership at Arnold Palmer Regional Airport, the Westmoreland County commissioners, and GO LH to showcase our stunning region to passengers utilizing the airport. Unveiled in May 2021, more than 50 new installations and a resource wall helps visitors find places to stay, eat, and explore.



NEW VC OPENED IN CONNELLSVILLE

ALONG THE GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE

Visitors to the Laurel Highlands have a new resource available to them as they explore the region! Thanks to a cooperative effort with Fayette County Commissioners, Fayette County Chamber of Commerce, City of Connellsville, General Braddock Fish Club, and GO Laurel Highlands, a new visitor information center opened in April 2021.

Located along the Great Allegheny Passage bike trail and a short distance from downtown Connellsville, the center provides a beautiful welcoming experience to visitors with expansive maps, wayfinding signage, and stunning photography and videography showcasing historic sites, natural beauty, and local attractions. Resources such as restaurant menus, guides, maps, and brochures are also available.



2021 ANNUAL DINNER

Hosted at the historic Aaron's Building in downtown Connellsville on Sept. 29, the annual dinner paid tribute to the region and the return to in-person events. Partners had a great time reuniting with old friends, meeting new people, and celebrating the vibrant tourism community of the Laurel Highlands.

*CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2021
LAUREL HIGHLANDS CHAMPIONS OF TOURISM!*

TOURISM TRAILBLAZER OF THE YEAR

Maple Bottom Farm represented by Susan Ansell

TOURISM PATHFINDER OF THE YEAR

Tissue Farm, represented by Suzanne Ragan Lentz and Jeff Pankey

TOURISM EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Alyssa Lape, Assistant Manager, Betsy's of Ligonier

*CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR
TOURISM SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS*

Thanks to the incredibly generous GO Laurel Highlands Supporting Partners, GO LH presented a \$1,500 scholarship to two very deserving students majoring in hospitality/tourism and communications. Congratulations to **Philisity Varndell** and **Joshua Castanedas**!



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

THE GO LH STAFF STRIVES TO BE INVOLVED AND ENGAGED IN OUR REGION. FROM SERVING ON COMMITTEES AND BOARDS TO VOLUNTEERING THROUGHOUT THE LAUREL HIGHLANDS, GO LH IS ALWAYS HONORED TO SUPPORT OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.



Ligonier Valley Historical Society • Laughlontown Community Center • Westmoreland County Parks & Recreation Citizens Advisory Board • Stahlstown Flax Scutching Festival Board of Directors • Ligonier Valley Chamber of Commerce • Destination: Greater Pittsburgh • Heartland Travel Showcase • Westmoreland County Historical Society • Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy • Fayette County Chamber of Commerce • Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce • Somerset County Chamber of Commerce • Mon-Valley Consortium • Historic Hanna's Town • Reenactment Volunteer • Ohio Pyle Biking Club • Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape • Westmoreland County Food Bank • Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance Board of Directors • Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor Board of Directors • Ligonier Valley Steering Committee • Fort Ligonier Strategic Planning Committee



Clockwise from top left:

USCAA | For 10 years, GO Laurel Highlands supported and promoted the National USCAA Basketball Championships at Penn State Fayette.

100 YEARS | The GO Laurel Highlands team was happy to honor and send a care package to Ruth Schuster who celebrated her 100th birthday in 2021 and 27 dedicated years as a Big Mac Museum employee.

WESTMORELAND COUNTY FOOD BANK | The pandemic put an even greater need on families and their food insecurities. The GO laurel highlands team always enjoys volunteering at the Westmoreland County Food Bank.

VOLUNTEERISM | GO Laurel Highlands never misses a holiday season to volunteer at Overly's Country Christmas. You can even find them serving up burgers, hot dogs, and awesome hot chocolate in December.

IN THE FIELD | There is no better way to share the story of our partners than visiting and attending events like the one held at Laurelville in 2021. After an insightful presentation and lunch, the staff was off for a grand tour of the property including the meditational labyrinth on Sunset Hill.



LAUREL HIGHLANDS D/B/A GO LAUREL HIGHLANDS
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION | DECEMBER 31, 2021

ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 2,087,741	
Accounts Receivable	63,228	
Room Tax Receivable	370,258	
Restricted Room Tax Receivable	733,837	
Prepaid Expenses	59,081	
Inventory	9,357	
Restricted Cash and Cash Equivalents	5,995,639	
Total Current Assets	\$ 9,319,141	

NONCURRENT ASSETS

Security Deposits	438	
Land, Buildings, Improvements & Equipment (Net)	675,436	
Total Noncurrent Assets	675,874	

TOTAL ASSETS

\$ 9,995,015

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts payable	\$ 184,401	
Payroll Tax Payable	7,752	
Accrued Payroll	9,539	
Grants Payable	209,553	
Deferred Revenue	177,792	
Current Portion of Mortgage Payable	27,951	
Refundable Room Tax Advances	6,729,476	
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 7,346,464	

LONG TERM LIABILITIES

Mortgage Payable	267,412	
Total Long-Term Liabilities	267,412	

TOTAL LIABILITIES

\$ 7,613,876

NET ASSETS

Without Donor Restrictions		
Board Designated -		
Marketing Initiatives	900,000	
Capital Improvement	90,822	
Invested in Fixed Assets	380,073	
Operations Fund	1,010,244	
With Donor Restrictions	-	
	2,381,139	

TOTAL NET ASSETS

2,381,139

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

\$ 9,995,015

LAUREL HIGHLANDS D/B/A GO LAUREL HIGHLANDS
STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES | DECEMBER 31, 2021

	Program Activities	Supporting Activities	Total
OPERATIONS			
Contributions & Sponsorships	\$ -	\$ 325	\$ 325
Fees	-	1,873	1,873
Interest	-	16,007	16,007
Property Taxes	-	2,073	2,073
Insurance	-	8,590	8,590
Miscellaneous Operating	844	2,533	3,377
Meetings	362	1,906	2,268
Professional Services	-	45,101	45,101
Office Expense	3,508	54,959	58,467
Bad Debts	230	-	230
Nondepreciable Building Purchase	-	10,732	10,732
MARKETING, PROMOTIONAL, ADVERTISING			
Association Dues & Memberships	2,195	2,683	4,878
Community Relations	954	5,004	5,958
CRM System	25,500	-	25,500
Miscellaneous	1,187	485	1,672
Printing Expense	13,175	6,488	19,663
Research/Subscriptions	15,084	8,123	23,207
Travel Expense	2,976	2,246	5,223
Advertising	798,480	60,100	858,580
Brochure Distribution	10,256	(933)	9,323
Conferences, Seminars, Other	1,573	136	1,709
Consumer Shows	1,013	-	1,013
Events, Marketing, Meetings, Tours	21,472	-	21,472
General Promotion	39,597	6,446	46,043
Postage	22,351	3,945	26,296
Visitor Center Support	16,210	-	16,210
PERSONNEL EXPENSES			
Recruitment	-	200	200
Salaries & Wages	326,741	183,792	510,533
Pension	9,534	5,843	15,337
Insurance	26,578	16,288	42,866
Other Benefits	4,030	1,415	5,445
Taxes	26,167	13,481	39,648
DEPRECIATION			
		24,566	24,566
COUNTY-DIRECTED GRANTS			
Visitor Center Grants	36,990	-	36,990
FUNDRAISING			
Ticket In-Kind Donation Expense		397	397
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>\$ 1,407,007</u>	<u>\$ 484,804</u>	<u>\$ 1,891,812</u>

LAUREL HIGHLANDS D/B/A GO LAUREL HIGHLANDS
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES | DECEMBER 31, 2021

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
REVENUE AND SUPPORT			
Fayette County Administration Fees	\$ 773,348	\$ -	\$ 773,348
Somerset County Administration Fees	436,206	-	436,206
Westmoreland County Administration Fees	803,361	-	803,361
Brochure Distribution	46,075	-	46,075
Basic Marketing Packages	109,364	-	109,364
Seasonal Marketing	7,210	-	7,210
Co-Op Advertising	41,073	-	41,073
Events/Summits	7,838	-	7,838
Miscellaneous Operating	23,906	-	23,906
Interest Income	6,893	-	6,893
Westmoreland Heritage/Informational Centers	8,500	-	8,500
Visitor Center Grants	90,590	-	90,590
Ticket Sales	9,880	-	9,880
Online Promotional Sales	5,220	-	5,220
Cost of Goods Sold Online	(2,580)	-	(2,580)
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	-	-	-
TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT	2,366,884	-	2,366,884
EXPENSES			
Program Expenses			
County-Directed Grant Programs	78,612	-	78,612
Regional Marketing Programs	615,400	-	615,400
Regional Economic Initiative Programs	712,995	-	712,995
Total Program Expenses	1,407,007	-	1,407,007
Management and General	484,407	-	484,407
Fundraising	397	-	397
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,891,811	-	1,891,811
INCOME FROM OPERATIONS	475,073	-	475,073
OTHER INCOME			
Gain on Sale	3,989	-	3,989
TOTAL OTHER INCOME	3,989	-	3,989
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	479,062	-	479,062
NET ASSETS - BEGINNING	1,902,077	-	1,902,077
NET ASSETS - ENDING	\$ 2,381,139	\$ -	\$ 2,381,139

This is a summary of the financial statements as of December 31, 2021 that were included in the audit by Singer Accounting, PC.
A complete auditor's report is on file and can be reviewed upon request.



As the administrator for the Fayette, Somerset, and Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Programs, GO LH works with each county's Board of Commissioners to provide organizational assistance for each program, collect and maintain necessary documents, and assist each tourism grant review committee. The grant review committees evaluate criteria and applications, select recipients, and award grant funds. The annual tourism grant programs are funded by a portion of the room tax dollars collected each month and are unique to each county. Due to the pandemic, some 2020 grant programs extended into 2021 rather than hosting an additional program in 2021. The 2021 distributions are reflected below for those who participated.

FAYETTE

COMMISSIONERS:

Dave Lohr · Vincent Vicites · Scott Dunn

GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Dawn Rice, Tammy Stenson, Warren Hughes, Ann Nemanic, Sean Sypolt

PROGRAM STATS TO DATE

OF GRANTS AWARDED **476**
TOTTALLING **\$5,128,409**

SOMERSET

COMMISSIONERS:

Gerald Walker · Colleen Dawson · Pamela Tokar-Ickes

GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Colleen Dawson, John Weir, Eric Mauck, Kristin Ecker, George Coyle

OF GRANTS AWARDED **772**
TOTTALLING **\$5,559,122**

WESTMORELAND

COMMISSIONERS:

Sean Kertes · Douglas Chew · Gina Cerilli

GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Bob Boscarino, Mary Lou Hugus, Michael Simons, Ann Nemanic, Carol Wentzel

OF GRANTS AWARDED **746**
TOTTALLING **\$5,830,320**



\$16+
MILLION

OVER \$16 MILLION
REINVESTED INTO THE LAUREL
HIGHLANDS REGION.

GO LH STAFF 2021

ANN NEMANIC

Executive Director

GEORGIA ROBINSKY

Senior Director of Finance & Grant Administration

KRISTIN ECKER

Senior Director of Marketing & Project Management

JARED BUNDY

Director of Digital Marketing

ANNA WELTZ

Director of Public Relations & Community Outreach

LOUISE HENRY

Director of Partnership Development

ALLYSON NULL

Marketing Content Coordinator

JESSICA PETROVICH

Westmoreland Heritage Director

MARY HUWALT

Administrative Assistant & Grant Coordinator

CESAR ALVIAR | SUZIE MORRIS | DAVID KLINK

Information Counselors, Farmington

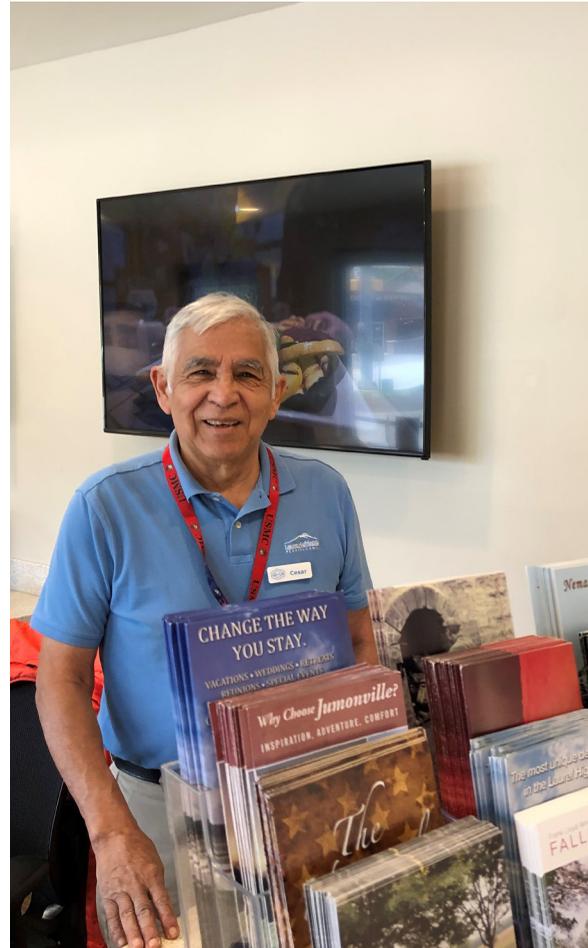
LINDA KUBAS

Information Counselor, New Stanton

LOREN KESSLAR | LYNN JOELLE GARDNER |

FRANK HAINES

Information Counselors, Connellsville



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(as of Dec. 31, 2021)

Muriel Nuttall, Chair
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Karen Post, Treasurer
Tom Guiher, Secretary
Ron Aldom
Christopher Baran
Ken Bisbee
Stephen Clark
Lindsay K. Gates
Alicia Henry
Doug Koscianski
Clinton Piper
Theresa Gay Rohall
Dave Runco

Fayette County Commissioners' Appointee
Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy
The Progress Fund
Log Cabin Lodge & Suites
Somerset County Commissioners' Appointee
Nemacolin
Ohiopyle State Park
National Park Service
Touchstone Center for Crafts
Westmoreland County Commissioners' Appointee
Maple Leaf Outfitters
Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater
Compass Inn Museum
Seven Springs Mountain Resort

MISSION STATEMENT

The Laurel Highlands works to enhance the economic growth and quality of life for the area by serving its community as a collaborative leader in the promotion and development of the region as a preferred tourism destination.

VISION STATEMENT

The Laurel Highlands will be globally recognized as a destination offering a unique opportunity to engage the mind and senses through stunning architecture, uncommon heritage, exceptional outdoor recreation and noteworthy arts and culture.



113 E. MAIN ST / LIGONIER, PA // 724.238.5661