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Salem Tourism Group Adopts New Moniker and Sets Bar for Visitor Information

Travel Salem makes biggest move in its 25-year history

SALEM, ORE. — Reinvention is the name of the game for the Salem Convention and Visitors Association (SCVA). The Association changed its name, has secured a new downtown location for its headquarters, and is expanding visitor information to two locations on Interstate 5.

New Name

The Association, formerly known as SCVA, will now be Travel Salem. The new name is more concise, a call to action, and is in line with recent name changes within the industry such as Travel Oregon and Travel Portland.

Location Change and Launch of New Travel Café

By year's end, Travel Salem will be relocating its administrative operation as well as the official Salem Area Visitors Center to the Grand Hotel (181 High Street) in the heart of historic downtown Salem.

Travel Salem coined their new downtown destination visitors center the "Salem Travel Café." This state-of-the-art destination visitors center will be designed to showcase the region's amenities and economic development opportunities, and will serve as the hub for driving visitation and economic impact to the region.

Travel Salem has contracted with CB2 Architects and Construction to design and build the tenant improvements for the Travel Café estimated at \$236,000. The sophisticated design incorporates a bold vision for flexible space that is modern, while also honoring the historic features of the building. The design creates a variety of spaces that can evolve depending on use and function, and ideally suit needs of marketing partners and events.

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Travel Salem has operated the official Salem Area Visitors Center currently located at Mission Mill Museum (1313 Mill St. SE) for 25 years. Gaining access to travelers along Interstate 5 has been a long-time goal of the Association, along with serving Salem residents and visitors in the historic downtown core.

Travel Salem plans to unveil the Travel Café to the public on December 13, 2008 in celebration of the Festival of Lights Holiday Parade occurring in downtown Salem that same evening.

Innovative Travel Café Showcases Region, Partners and Technology

Along with personal assistance and traditional brochures, the Travel Café will offer innovative technology and showcase new non-traditional partnerships. From Garmin AT providing GPS units with pre-programmed tours, to the Salem Art Association's retail gallery featuring the best-of-the-best from around the region. From Wi-Fi access and plasma screens with podcasting to revolving exhibits and promotions - the new Salem Travel Café will be one of a kind.

"The Travel Café is designed to connect with visitors and consumers in new, exciting ways," said Angie Morris, chief executive officer for Travel Salem. "We wanted to blow the lid off of a traditional visitors center and come at this concept from a totally new perspective. It's critical that we capture the visitors' attention and deliver information and resources the way they want it. The Travel Café will provide the platform for innovative partnerships, events and technology to mash up and ultimately drive economic impact for the region."

I-5 Satellite Visitor Information

In addition to the downtown Travel Café, Travel Salem will be opening two Visitor Center locations on I-5 via partnerships with the Best Western Mill Creek Inn (3125 Ryan Dr. SE /I-5 exit # 253) and the Red Lion Hotel (3301 Market St. NE/I-5 exit 256). The Best Western Mill Creek Inn location will be a designated Oregon Travel Information Council Travel Plaza. The Red Lion Hotel will be a Travel Salem satellite Visitors Center. Both locations are along highly traveled Salem entryways and will be open year round, 24 hours a day.

"This is an exciting example of a public private partnership and a creative approach using existing resources to deliver successful outcomes," said Cheryl Gribskov, executive director of the Oregon Travel Information Council (OTIC). "OTIC is developing a system for travelers touted on a national scale and Salem is an integral part of this system. By leveraging partnerships in the industry and transforming the delivery of visitor information, Travel Salem has come up with a refreshing and highly effective strategy."

Community Support and Non-Traditional Partners bring Vision to Life

Travel Salem has secured a myriad of partners to bring the Travel Café and the satellite I-5 visitor information centers to life.

- Grand Hotel property owners Carole Smith and Eric Kittleson structured a lean and affordable deal allowing Travel Salem to secure a 10-year lease, with three five-year extensions.

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- Garth Brandaw, principal of CB2 Architects/Construction, and his LEED certified team have developed the vision for the Travel Café, and will also serve as the general contractor for the build.
- Garmin AT will invest in the Travel Café which serves to support their recruitment and retention programs, and will also provide GPS units which Travel Salem will rent out to visitors. The GPS units will be pre-programmed with hotspots and walking and driving tours of the Salem area.
- Additional partners include Marion County, the Salem Conference Center, Salem Electric, PGE and Huggins Insurance. Chemeketa will contribute technology to power the Travel Café, and Salem Sign Company will provide signage and graphics to create a vibrant and interactive space.
- Marketing partnerships have been formed with Salem Art Association for an art gallery and retail storefront; Go Downtown Salem! to promote events and downtown merchants; and The Relocation Group to provide turnkey services for businesses and individuals relocating to the Salem area.

Travel Salem Chairman Dwane Brenneman applauds community support for the project. “With roughly half of the funds raised to date, we are delighted with the significant partnership of the business community and their commitment to helping Travel Salem make this project a reality. We are at a defining moment here in the Salem area, as we look to position ourselves as a premier destination, and we have the vision, drive and partners ready to make it happen.”

Businesses interested in supporting the greater Salem area by partnering with Travel Salem and the launch of the new Travel Café destination are encouraged to contact Angie Morris, Travel Salem CEO, amorris@TravelSalem.com or 503-581-4325 ext. 26.

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****Travel Salem is a non-profit organization that promotes Salem and Marion and Polk counties for leisure tourism and convention and event business. The local annual economic impact of the greater Salem area visitor industry is \$511.8 million. Travel Salem manages the Official Salem Area Visitors Center currently located at Mission Mill Museum and the Official Salem Area Website - www.TravelSalem.com****