

Travel Salem sets sights on sports tourism



[Laura Fosmire](#), Statesman Journal 7:30 a.m. PST February 9, 2015



A runner is called out in a close play at the plate during an ASA Western National Championship game at Wallace Marine Park in West Salem. Travel Salem has made efforts to bring similar sports tournaments to the Salem area. (Photo: DANIELLE PETERSON / Statesman Journal)

A major baseball tournament will come to Salem in August, bringing with it the possibility of thousands of dollars in tourism revenue.

Travel Salem announced that, thanks to a newly created sports marketer position, the agency has won the bid for the Oregon AAA American Legion State Baseball Championships. The tournament will be hosted in Salem this year and next year, and two other tournaments are expected to come to Salem in the next year, as well.

What that means to Salem's tourism industry is several hundred people coming to the area and an estimated economic impact of \$83,000.

"Increasingly, communities across Oregon are recognizing the positive economic impact that sports tourism has on the local economy," Brian Chung, sports and events sales manager with Travel Salem, said in a news release. "Salem has long been a popular destination for youth softball and soccer tournaments, but there are opportunities to host tournaments in other sports such as ultimate Frisbee, racquetball, water polo and more."

Chung's position was created within Travel Salem just last year, thanks to funding increases from the city of Salem and Marion and Polk counties.

Chung, who started just a few months ago, has been tasked with attracting regional and national sporting events to the Salem area and helping grow existing events.

His efforts have evidently paid off. Travel Salem announced this week that Salem will play host to the 2016 Sub League Ground Warrior Submission Challenge, the 3v3 Live National Soccer Tour and the American Legion baseball championships.

The Ground Warrior Submission Challenge is a Brazilian jiu-jitsu tournament, sponsored by the Oregon National Guard. On Jan. 31, it will be held at the Salem Armory Auditorium. The event was held in Salem this year, too, and previously has been held in the greater Portland area.

The soccer tour, as its name suggests, runs more than 125 tournaments across the country. Its first Oregon appearance for 2015 will be June 6 in Salem.

The baseball championships are exciting in particular, Travel Salem officials said, because they open the way for even larger regional or national events to be hosted in the future.

"Salem has been a hot bed for American Legion baseball for many years," said Ron Long, chairman for Oregon State Legion Baseball, in a statement. "It is exciting to have the State AAA tournament in Salem for the first time."

Last year, Travel Salem reported that sports-related tourism generated more than \$3.781 million in economic impact for Marion and Polk counties.

Statewide, sports tourism is a valuable facet of Oregon's tourism industry, supporting 94,000 jobs and bringing in \$9.6 billion in revenue.