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Travel Oregon Announces 2017 Travel & Tourism Industry Achievement Awards

BEND, Ore.—April 30, 2018— The Oregon Tourism Commission (dba Travel Oregon) is proud to announce the recipients of the 2017 Oregon Travel and Tourism Industry Achievement Awards, presented at the 2018 Oregon Governor's Conference on Tourism in Bend, Ore.

The achievement awards recognize people and organizations that enhance travel and tourism experiences across Oregon. The award recipients are outstanding professionals who demonstrate perseverance and dedication to the state. They go the extra mile. It's because of their vision and commitment to making Oregon a better place for Oregonians and visitors that this industry is successful.

The state's most prized recognition is the **Oregon Governor's Tourism Award**. This year, **Alana Hughson**, who has led the Central Oregon Visitors Association for the past 25 years was honored for her incredible leadership. Alana has been able to unify the communities in the region under one Regional Destination Management Organization umbrella. She was appointed to the Oregon Tourism Commission in 2010, reappointed in 2014 and elected to serve consecutive years as Chair of the Commission in 2015 and 2016 where she has worked to support tourism legislation and has been an ambassador for tourism, representing Oregon to the world through several Travel Oregon international business missions. Through her leadership, the Central Oregon tourism industry survived the recession in 2010 and is now thriving. Nearly \$1 billion has been generated in the region during her tenure.

"Central Oregon's travel and tourism industry is enjoying improved economic impacts and an exponential growth in job numbers as a direct result of Alana's exemplary leadership, collaborative spirit and strategic vision," said Todd Davidson, Travel Oregon CEO. "Her selfless service and innovative strategies have positioned Central Oregon, along with the entire state, as a premier vacation destination for both domestic and international travelers."

The 2017 Oregon Travel and Tourism Industry Achievement Awards were announced in these categories:

The **Gene Leo Memorial Sustainable Tourism 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). 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 **Jon Tullis**, a planner, Forest Service liaison, special events coordinator, spokesperson, governmental affairs manager, and all-around advocate for the National Historic Landmark Timberline Lodge for more than three decades. Jon has been an ardent advocate for outdoor recreation, historic preservation, conservation, public lands and sustainable tourism practices. He has served on the Oregon Heritage Commission, Ski Oregon, the Pacific Northwest Ski Area Association, Travel Oregon's Sustainable Tourism Advisory Council, and is a member of the Outdoor Recreation Initiative Leadership Team.

The **Oregon Tourism Development Award** acknowledges the creation of an innovative program, promotion or product utilizing best practices, sustainability and creative problem-solving. This year's award was presented to the **Oregon Timber Trail Alliance**. This epic 670-mile backcountry mountain bike route spans Oregon's diverse landscapes from California to the Columbia River Gorge. The trail traverses a variety of landscapes, communities, ecosystems, terrain, and, most importantly, mountain bike trails. Divided into four unique tiers, the trail is approachable by a wide variety of cyclists. What sets it apart is that it's designed with mountain biking in mind and consists of more than 50 percent singletrack trails.

The **Outstanding Oregon Tourism Volunteer Award** recognizes significant commitment by an individual or a group of individuals who exemplify the positive impact volunteers have on Oregon's travel and tourism industry. The award was presented to **Caroline Park** from Thunder Island Brewing. In the wake of the 2017 Eagle Creek Fire, Caroline stood out as a pillar of strength, ingenuity and resilience for her community in the Columbia River Gorge. She created a GoFundMe account to support local volunteer firefighters, raising nearly \$25,000. Caroline created Cascade Locks Strong, a campaign and online shopping portal for people to buy gift certificates to support businesses in Cascade Locks to help create much-needed cash flow in the community. The site raised more than \$20,000 for local businesses. Caroline's unwavering support for her community has been invaluable through the aftermath of the fires.

The **Oregon Heritage Tourism Award** honors outstanding incorporation of Oregon's authentic cultural or natural history to draw visitors to the state. This year, two award recipients were honored:

Oregon Black Pioneers, a Salem-based non-profit that shares the stories of people who weren't always welcome in Oregon. Though the history is troubled, Oregon Black Pioneers recounts our history with thoughtfulness and inspirational perseverance for new generations. "Racing to Change" is one of their recent projects exhibited at the Oregon Historical Society. The hope for the exhibit is for visitors to feel the love for Oregon's black pioneers, while also drawing a line to current events "Racing to Change" is a powerful story, one that's crafted for children, as well as adults. It leaves the visitor with a deep appreciation for Oregon's black pioneers and a wellspring of hope for the future.

The co-honoree is the **City of Woodburn**, for its Fiesta Mexicana, a three-day celebration of community and culture. The Fiesta began in 1964 as a celebration to mark the end of the harvest and an expression of gratitude from the community to its farmers and workers. True to its roots, today's Fiesta celebrates the variety of Latino cultures in Woodburn and the surrounding area through music, dance, food, artisans and sports. Woodburn Fiesta Mexicana acknowledges the critical role Latino community members have played in this region for decades.

The **International Sales and Development Award** recognizes excellence in creative sales, marketing and development of Oregon as a destination in the international marketplace. The award was given to **Travel Portland** for their work to bring the No. 1 reality show in The Netherlands to Oregon. *Wie is de Mol?* (Who is The Mole?), is a popular show that filmed their 2017 series in Oregon—the first time the show was filmed in the United States. Individual episodes highlighted more than five regions across the state and was seen by nearly 41 million people, helping Travel Portland raise awareness of Portland and Oregon as a premier vacation destination for the Dutch traveler.

The **Outstanding Oregon PR Program Award** celebrates the best domestic PR program that resulted in quality earned media coverage and inspired travel to Oregon. The **Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)** received the award for its outstanding planning, communication and response to the 2017 Solar Eclipse. Recognizing the potential crisis that could occur when hundreds of thousands of people flock to the state for an event that spread across the 350-mile long, 60-mile wide path of the moon's shadow, ODOT ensured visitors and residents had a safe and enjoyable experience. Oregon was the first state to witness the

total eclipse on August 21, 2017 that crossed 14 states. The celestial event was enjoyed by thousands in Oregon and no traffic fatalities, major crashes or human-caused eclipse-related wildfires were reported.

The **Outstanding Oregon Social Media Program Award** recognizes the best international or domestic social media program that engages audiences and inspires potential travel to Oregon. The **Oregon Coast Aquarium** was recognized for its strong social media presence over the past year. They've made impactful changes to their communications by sharing a unique mix of entertaining and educational content that engages their followers on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter resulting in an 86 percent increase in followers on Instagram and 19 percent increase on Facebook.

The **Outstanding Oregon Visitor Guide Award** celebrates the best domestic or international content program that inspires travel to Oregon. **Visit Bend's** 2017 "Adventure Journal," replaced the traditional visitor guide, including a cleaner, simplified design, carefully crafted copy and inspiring photography, resulting in a guide that feels more like a coffee table book than a commercial advertisement. They also included a tear-out map and tear-out Bend Ale Trail Atlas for a better on-the-ground experience for visitors.

The **Oregon Outstanding Advertising Award** commends superior, creative advertising communication, regardless of budget size or medium. The award was presented to **Union County Chamber of Commerce** for their simple idea: To highlight what Union County has to offer. The result? A breathtaking and beautiful video series, "You'll See Union County," designed as a social media campaign to drum up county spirit and inspire people to visit. The video series had more than 100,000 views. Union County will use these commercials for years to come to entice visitors to spend time in the area.

The **Outstanding Oregon Website Award** celebrates websites that utilize industry best practices in design, technology, strategy and content to positively impact travel to Oregon. This year's award went to **Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory** for their content-driven website redesign that allows them to use Facebook and Instagram as vehicles to deliver niche-specific content to key markets and identified demographics. The website redesign resulted in 2,394 more unique visitors to partner websites and social media channels over the previous year.

The **Outstanding Overall Oregon Marketing Program Award** recognizes the best integrated domestic or international marketing program or campaign that attracted visitors to Oregon. The award was presented to the **Willamette Valley Visitors Association** for their promotional campaign that began at the San Jose airport, where a custom acrylic design was formed in the shape of an Oregon Pinot noir bottle spanning 14 feet. The display was strategically positioned in a heavy traffic area in San Jose Airport's Alaska Airlines terminal. and reached 660,000 travelers during the eight-week activation. It was a tangible way to bring the Oregon Wine Country Experience to life for travelers.

The **Oregon Tourism Leadership Award** honors individuals who champion the value of tourism and whose leadership behind the scenes contributes significantly to the recognition and impact of Oregon's travel and tourism industry. This year, the award was presented to **Natalie Inouye** who has dedicated 30 years to our industry, working at the local, regional and state level. During her time at Travel Lane County, she has served in leadership roles for the Willamette Valley Visitors Association, the Oregon Coast Visitor's Association's marketing committee and Chaired the Oregon Scenic Bikeways Committee.

The work of these awardees enhances the travel and tourism industry and contributes to diversified economies and increased job opportunities throughout the state.

About Travel Oregon

The Oregon Tourism Commission, dba Travel Oregon, works to enhance visitors' experiences by providing information, resources and trip planning tools that inspire travel and consistently convey the exceptional quality of Oregon. The commission aims to improve Oregonians' quality of life by strengthening the economic impacts of the state's \$11.8 billion tourism industry that employs more than 112,000 Oregonians. Visit Industry.TravelOregon.com to learn more.

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