

Registration Opens for the Oregon Rural Tourism Studio Program

Polk County Residents Invited to Participate September 2014 – January 2015

Polk County, Ore. – Aug. 19, 2014 – Oregon’s Rural Tourism Studio (RTS), offered by Travel Oregon, is open for registration. The fall/winter program will focus on communities in Polk County, including The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, Dallas, Falls City, Independence, Monmouth and Willamina.

Oregon’s RTS program is a series of tourism development workshops designed to assist rural communities interested in stimulating their local economies through sustainable tourism development, while protecting and enhancing local resources.

As a result of the program, Travel Oregon hopes to see an increase in authentic experiences for travelers across the state. This will strengthen Oregon’s position as a premier tourism destination by enhancing community livability and healthy, local environments.

The RTS professional development program offers hands-on skill-building through seven days of interactive sessions that will assist residents and businesses in Polk County with:

- Shaping a vision and plan for local tourism development within the county
- Identifying strategies for creating unique visitor experiences from local resources
- Integrating principles of sustainable development to protect and enhance the community and its natural assets as the industry is developed
- Harnessing the potential of cycling tourism in the area
- Developing experiential tourism that integrates culinary and agritourism opportunities in the region
- Marketing strategies on a shoestring budget
- Developing effective community action teams to move great ideas into reality

Community leaders, tourism business entrepreneurs, tour operators, lodging property owners, land managers, guides, outfitters, outdoor enthusiasts, restaurateurs, event producers and anyone interested in strengthening the local economy through tourism are encouraged to participate in the program.

The following workshops and events will be offered as part of the program:

Sept. 17, 2014 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. Independence	Event: Fall Community Networking Session
Oct. 14 3 p.m. - 8 p.m. Independence	Event: Community Tourism Visioning <i>Determine the essence of this destination, create the future and galvanize community members in working toward the fulfillment of a common purpose</i>
Oct. 15 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Independence	Community Tourism Planning Workshop <i>Set a path for sustainable tourism based on current trends and local assets</i>
Nov. 5 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Independence	Culinary & Agritourism Development Workshop <i>Create ways for better connecting your local agricultural markets with the visitor industry to strengthen your local economy</i>

Nov. 5 TBD	Evening Networking Event Capitalizing on our cultural heritage
Dec. 2 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Independence	Bicycle Tourism Development <i>Tap into the growing segment of bicycle travelers by developing new cycling experiences and learn how to attract them to your region</i>
Dec. 2 TBD	Networking Event <i>Birding Tourism</i>
Jan. 13, 2015 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Independence	Rural Tourism Marketing – Part 1 Workshop <i>Learn from Travel Oregon about state and regional marketing programs to help you market your tourism business and the region</i>
Jan. 14 9 a.m. - Noon Independence	Rural Tourism Marketing – Part 2 Workshop <i>An in-depth session on marketing best practices with time to develop a plan for the region and your business</i>
Jan. 27 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Independence	Teaming for Success Workshop <i>Establish powerful local action teams in order to bring ideas developed during the program to fruition</i>
Jan. 27 5 p.m. -7 p.m. Dallas	Event: Community Tourism Kickoff! <i>Participants share their vision of tourism for the region with the community and celebrate completion</i>

Although Travel Oregon recommends that participants attend all workshops and events in order to maximize the impact from the RTS program, community members are encouraged to attend any workshop or event they can. Participants who attend at least four of the six workshops or events will receive a certificate of completion from Travel Oregon.

The cost to participate in any one workshop is \$5 (and includes lunch), or \$25 for all six workshops. Events are free. Space is limited to 50 participants per workshop. The RTS is specifically designed for residents, businesses and organizations operating in Polk County.

For more information, or to register online, go to Industry.TravelOregon.com/PolkCounty.

To find out more about the Polk County RTS, contact Shawn Irvine with the City of Independence at irvine.shawn@ci.independence.or.us or 503-837-1191.

For general inquiries about the program, contact Linda Andrews, Destination Development Coordinator at Travel Oregon, at 971-717-6204 or Linda@TravelOregon.com.

Oregon’s RTS is offered with support from a local steering committee, including representatives from: City of Monmouth, City of Independence, Polk County, MaMere’s B&B, Emerson Vineyard, Carol Infranca & Associates, Left Coast Cellars, Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce, Travel Salem, Dallas Area Chamber of Commerce, Salem Area Trail Alliance, Oregon State Parks, US Bureau of Land Management and Oregon Department of Forestry.

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. The commission improves Oregonians’ quality of life by strengthening economic impacts of the state’s \$9.6 billion tourism industry that employs nearly 94,000 Oregonians. www.TravelOregon.com

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