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## Travel Oregon Announces Travel & Tourism Industry Achievement Awards

**Portland, Ore. (April 4, 2023)** - Last night, the Oregon Tourism Commission (dba Travel Oregon) announced the recipients of the 2022 Oregon Travel and Tourism Industry Achievement Awards, presented at the 2023 Oregon Governor's Conference on Tourism at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland.

The 2022 Oregon Travel and Tourism Industry Achievement Awards were announced in the following categories:

The **Oregon Governor's Tourism Award** represents the culmination of our industry's deep appreciation for the long-time commitment, accomplishment and service by an individual or individuals who have enhanced the Oregon visitor experience and elevated the travel and tourism industry. This year, Governor Kotek awarded two recipients with the Oregon Governor's Tourism Award.

The first recipient, **Travel Lane County**, hosted Oregon22 in July 2022, welcoming more than 170,000 visitors from across the globe, including almost 2,000 athletes representing more than 200 nations to compete at University of Oregon's Hayward Field. In addition to the athletes, families, friends and press from around the world were in attendance – many who experienced Oregon for the first time. Congratulations, Travel Lane County and thank you for welcoming the world to Oregon.

The second Governor's Award recipient, **Bobbie Conner**, is a member of the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). Bobbie's ancestry is Umatilla, Cayuse and Nez Perce. She is a community and national leader, museum director, curator, speaker and author. Since 1998, Bobbie has served as the Director of the Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute, which preserves, protects and promotes the culture of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla. This facility houses an interpretive center, library, photo archive, gallery and theater. Bobbie has served on boards at both the state and local level, including as vice chair of the National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Board of Directors and as co-chair of its Circle of Tribal Advisors as well as the board of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial in Oregon. She also served on the boards of the Wallowa Homeland Project and the Oregon Cultural Trust. In addition to the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, she currently serves on the

American Alliance of Museums board. Congratulations, Bobbie, and thank you for your work on Travel Oregon's Tribal Tourism Working Group and for your advocacy across the state.

The **Oregon Tourism Rising Star Award** recognizes an individual who is new to the tourism industry – within the last five years – and has shown leadership, commitment and a passion for Oregon's tourism industry.

The first Rising Star award went to Eastern Oregon's **Jennifer Piper**, the Executive Director of the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce. In the few short years that Jennifer has held this position, she has shown great leadership and a strong commitment and passion for Oregon's tourism industry. Born and raised in Enterprise, Jennifer moved back to Wallowa County in 2020 to help promote tourism in her home county and help local businesses survive and thrive through the pandemic. Her optimism, connection and love for the area and its people and communities shows in her work and the relationships she's built with community members, business owners and partners.

The second Rising Star award recipient, **Lauren Gonzalez**, owner of Lolo Pass, an 87-room hotel/hostel hybrid in central eastside, has already had an impact on the community, creating connection and opportunity for all. Since opening the doors in 2021, Lauren has curated an incredible community space for neighbors and locals to share. An art gallery in the lobby showcases underrepresented artists at no cost to them and Lauren has partnered with organizations such as Ahivoy, Junos, Rosehaven and others to collaborate on fundraising events, community gatherings and activities such as sliding-scale yoga, trivia and stand-up comedy. Lolo Pass has become more than a hotel – it's a vibrant hub of the community thanks to Lauren's passion for Portland, hospitality and people.

The evening's next Rising Star moved to the U.S. from Germany to attend Southern Oregon University and, after graduating, she hit the ground running. In her first three months as the Sustainability & Accessibility Project Manager for the Columbia Gorge Tourism Alliance, **Nicole Wahner** promoted the new coordinated transit Gorge Pass at any live event she could find; up-leveled the social media of *Ready Set Gorge*; and helped to coordinate the Waterfall Corridor Accessibility Audit, turning the findings into both a visitor-facing brochure and a formal report for land agencies. In January, she led the development of the *Accessible Gorge* website, gathering information from visitor-facing businesses so travelers with disabilities know what to expect before they arrive.

The **Gene Landsmann Gemütlichkeit Award** honors an individual of the Oregon Ski Community (Industry/Sport) who embodies the spirit and effect of Gemütlichkeit. A German-language word used to convey the idea of a state or feeling of warmth, friendliness and good cheer. Other qualities encompassed by the term include coziness, quality of life, and a sense of belonging and well-being.

For the past 43 years, **Donna Sanders** has inspired skiers young and old at the Ski School at Hoodoo with an emphasis on safety, skill and fun. Her warm personality, friendliness and love of people combined with her passion for skiing has been an incredible gift for the ski community at Hoodoo. Donna served for ten years on the board for Professional Ski Instructors of America and her focus during the later years of her career was to encourage female skiers to try the sport and/or to come back to it later in life. Known to some at Hoodoo as the "matriarch of skiing," Donna is an incredible asset to Oregon's skiing community and tourism industry.

The **Oregon Leadership Award** honors individuals, DMOs, or businesses championing the value of tourism, whose vision and commitment help make our communities, tourism regions, and state stronger

visitor destinations, and whose leadership contributes significantly to the recognition and impact of Oregon's travel and tourism industry.

**David Penilton** is one such leader whose impact on Oregon's tourism industry extends far beyond his business, America's Hub World Tours. An established leader and powerful voice for tourism, David's broad contributions to the industry resonate on both a local and global scale. In addition to serving on the Oregon Tourism Commission and numerous other boards and committees that positively impact the industry, David has taken on an important mentorship role at Oregon Tourism Leadership Academy. He serves on the core leadership team for the program and is not only a valuable contributor to shaping the educational experience but takes the time to get to know each participant and share his vast experience in the industry. David was recognized for his commitment to the future of tourism in Oregon through investment in the Oregon Leadership Academy and the significant time and energy he invests in developing leaders to ensure tourism has a positive impact on Oregon's economy, communities and cultures.

The second Leadership Award was received by CEO of Travel Portland, **Jeff Miller**. Portland has faced many challenges over the last few years which have made recovery of the tourism economy difficult. With Jeff Miller at the helm, the team at Travel Portland rose to meet those challenges and helped put Portland on the path to recovery. Thanks to the hard work and strategic thinking of Travel Portland's dedicated teams in Sales, Services, Marketing, PR, Community Engagement, EDI and more, Portland is seeing major convention bookings and more high-profile positive media coverage on the city in the past six months than we've seen since before the pandemic. Jeff also led a positive and thoughtful shift to position the tourism industry in Portland by incorporating a strong commitment to EDI initiatives in Travel Portland's work, hiring and overall business practices.

The **Oregon Partnership Award** recognizes a creative partnership that enhances the visitor experience and/or promotes a region or destination. By leveraging traditional and non-traditional partnerships, organizations and businesses can maximize budget, capacity and skill set, creating an increase in efficiencies and a higher-level aligned outcome.

This year's Oregon Partnership Award recipient, **K'Lynn Lane**, Executive Director of the Oregon Frontier Chamber of Commerce, has provided guidance and leadership, expanding the Chamber's membership beyond Condon city limits. Within the last year, the Condon Chamber of Commerce rebranded to the Oregon Frontier Chamber of Commerce, proudly serving Gilliam, Wheeler and Sherman counties. K'Lynn's passion and enthusiasm for the people and the communities she serves is contagious and is carried forward in her work and through her networks and partnerships with Business Oregon, RDI, The Ford Family Foundation, Oregon Main Street and many more. K'Lynn has been able to leverage these partnerships to maximize the impact on her communities.

The **Oregon Tourism Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Award** celebrates a business or destination that has demonstrated leadership in raising awareness, or facilitating change, to build a more inclusive and welcoming environment for visitors to Oregon.

Our Legacy Harvested's **Tiquette Bramlett** received this year's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Award. In May 2021, Tiquette Bramlett became the first Black woman to lead a winery in the U.S. when she was named the President of Compris Vineyard (formerly known as Vidon Vineyard). A year prior, Tiquette founded Our Legacy Harvested, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting diversity, equity and

inclusion in Oregon's wine industry. Our Legacy Harvested launched a first-of-its-kind internship in Fall 2022 for members of the BIPOC community that includes mentorship and coaching, lodging, transportation, as well as the ability to work in the intern's desired field of the wine business whether that's the tasting room, vineyard or in production. Tiquette is committed to helping create opportunities for diversity at all levels of Oregon winemaking—and has already done so through her commitment to Our Legacy Harvested.

The **Hospitality Award** recognizes a person, company or organization that has made significant contributions to delivering excellence in hospitality for Oregon's tourism industry.

Congratulations to **Leslie Wangler**, founder of Pacific Northwest Experience, an association of industry leaders and front-line professionals in the hospitality industry whose mission is to gather, share, explore, educate and celebrate all things Pacific Northwest. She leads a dedicated group of volunteers planning monthly events in Portland for front-line employees, including visitor center staff and volunteers, tour guides, front desk employees and many more. When Portland's hospitality industry experienced a drop of 80% in business during the pandemic, the city lost an immense amount of experience and knowledge. Leslie kept information flowing during this challenging time by hosting virtual events and e-newsletters and she has been working hard to rebuild the frontline knowledge base in Portland and re-build community pride in our destination.

The **Stewardship Award** recognizes an activity, event, project or program that utilizes a stewardship approach to positively impact Oregon's economy, cultures and natural environment.

This year's Stewardship Award goes to **Two Foxes Singing**, or "Nunpa" to many, of AntFarm Youth Services. For over 25 years, Two Foxes Singing has dedicated his time and energy to helping youth who are houseless or otherwise at risk overcome challenges by providing culturally aware and responsive learning experiences. The center and hub of activity for AntFarm is a large community space in Sandy that houses a café and bakery where youth interns gain valuable hospitality skills and training that they can use to gain future employment in the industry. AntFarm employees work in outdoor recreation and manage the Mount Hood Farmers Market as well as a community garden where they educate youth, locals and visitors about food insecurity. Nunpa radiates genuine care and concern for the youth he works with and for the stewardship of his community.

Congratulations to the awardees who make Oregon a unique destination for residents and visitors alike. Your contributions to communities across the state richly impact the industry and we're grateful for your service.

### **About Travel Oregon**

The Oregon Tourism Commission, dba [Travel Oregon](#), is a semi-independent state agency whose mission is to inspire travel that uplifts Oregon communities. Collaborating with stakeholders to align as stewards of Oregon, we work to optimize economic opportunity, advance equity and respect the ecosystems, cultures and places that make Oregon... Oregon. Travel Oregon aims to improve Oregonians' quality of life by strengthening the economic impacts of the state's \$13.8 billion tourism industry, which employs more than 117,360 Oregonians.

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