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National Travel and Tourism Week Rally Shows Why “Tourism Matters” to Vancouver

Southwest Washington CVB Brings Together Local Members of the Community to Showcase the Importance of Travel and Tourism During National Travel and Tourism Week

VANCOUVER, Wash. – Highlighted by the tagline “Tourism Matters,” today the Southwest Washington Convention and Visitors Bureau kicked off National Travel and Tourism Week with a rally at Esther Short Park to show firsthand how tourism benefits Clark County.

“Travel and tourism plays a key role in the Clark County economy,” said Kim Bennett, president and CEO of the Southwest Washington CVB. “Our community relies on travel for tax revenue and jobs and the benefits these bring to our economy. With today’s event we hope to raise awareness and showcase why travel matters to Clark County.”

With business, meetings and event travel facing steep declines across America, nationwide events throughout National Travel and Tourism Week will emphasize the economic benefits travel and tourism brings to local workers and communities and demonstrate the importance of travel. This event is part of a larger effort led by the U.S. Travel Association with rallies in dozens of cities nationwide.

In Clark County the tourism industry employs 4,000 and contributes \$392 million to the economy. Travel and tourism industry employees include everyone from hotel employees and restaurant workers to cab drivers and meetings planners who serve visitors to the area.

“I rely heavily on travelers’ spending to make my living and support my family,” said Savanna Martinez, Lead Front Desk Supervisor at The Heathman Lodge. “Travelers and visitors to Vancouver are what give me my job and keep me employed.”

Travel and tourism is one of America’s largest industries, with \$740 billion in direct travel expenditures by domestic and international travelers. The industry also represents one of America’s largest employers with 7.7 million direct travel-generated jobs and \$189 billion in travel-generated payroll. However, according to U.S. Labor Department data, the U.S. Travel Association reported a loss of nearly 200,000 travel related jobs in 2008 and predicts a loss of an additional 247,000 travel-generated jobs in 2009.

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“Locally, tourism helps fund some of our most essential public services like education and law enforcement,” said Gerry Link, General Manager of Hilton Vancouver Washington. “The travel industry is facing tough times, but it’s important for people to understand the key role travel can play in helping to solve our economic challenges on both the local and national level.”

To help get this message out, a statewide public education and awareness campaign and website www.whytourismmatters.com was launched earlier this year. The site has statistics on the Washington state tourism industry and links to other national initiatives.

The Southwest Washington Convention & Visitors Bureau is an economic development organization responsible for competitively marketing Vancouver and the surrounding area as a destination for meetings, conventions, and group and leisure travelers. The SWCVB is located at 101 E 8th Street, Suite 240, Vancouver, WA 98660. You can reach the Bureau at 360-750-1553, or via e-mail at info@southwestwashington.com. You can also visit them on their web site at www.SouthwestWashington.com.

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