

Irene Bernards, Tourism Marketing and Public Relations Director (Assistant Director)

Brief Position Description: Responsible for all phases of developing, implementing and evaluating the leisure tourism promotion for the Salem area. Responsible for the management and implementation of SCVA's public relations/community relations and image positioning. Responsible for oversight of all Association marketing.

BIO - Irene Bernards

Irene Bernards has worked as Tourism Marketing Director and Assistant Director for the Salem Convention and Visitors Association (SCVA) since 1987. As Tourism Marketing and Public Relations Director, she is responsible for creating, implementing and evaluating marketing and public relations programs promoting Salem to potential and repeat leisure visitors as well as Salem residents.

Under Irene's leadership, Salem's tourism program promotions and leveraged funds have dramatically increased including advertising, media and publications. Irene's management of Salem tourism related research projects including visitor profile and economic impact studies enabled SCVA to obtain the greatest return on investment. Irene spearheaded the creation of the Salem Area Visitors Guide, which is now in its' eleventh edition. The development of the Visitors Guide and creative approach to funding its' production enabled SCVA to redirect Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) funding to other marketing opportunities.

Irene led the Association through a Salem area branding process during FY 03-04, which resulted in the tagline *Naturally Inspired!* and corresponding visual logo. The *Naturally Inspired!* brand inspired Salem's cultural community to adopt *Culturally Inspired!* and the Salem Conference Center to adopt *Meet Inspiration!* Irene also led the Willamette Valley Visitors Association through a similar branding process which resulted in *Oregon Wine Country* and corresponding visual logo.

Irene has been called upon to assist the Oregon Tourism Commission/Travel Oregon office numerous times throughout her tenure at SCVA. In fiscal year 1998-99 Irene was asked by Travel Oregon to participate in a job share with Julie Curtis, who was the Assistant Director of the Travel Oregon office. Irene managed statewide visitor attendance surveys, organized the 1999 Governor's Conference on Tourism and served as the State's Industry Relations Manager. She managed the 1994 *Official Group Travel Planner* for Oregon, which demonstrates her ability to work with organizations throughout the state. In 1992 she served on the Travel Oregon committee that developed the *Oh! In Oregon* hospitality training, and she is currently certified as an official "Q" Service trainer. She served on the first Group Tour Task Force formed by Travel Oregon.

Irene is currently the Vice President of the Willamette Valley Visitors Association and served as President in 1995. Irene was the youngest recipient of the Governor's Tourism Award for Oregon in 1997. This award is presented to one individual each year by Oregon's Governor. Irene's marketing leadership led to SCVA's receipt of the 1991 & 1993 Governor's Regional Tourism Award and the 2005 Governor's Cooperative

Partnership Award.

Irene is well respected within Oregon's tourism industry and has forged important relationships throughout Salem, Marion County, Polk County and Oregon. These relationships are essential to building new partnerships and retaining current alliances that are beneficial to Salem.

Irene is viewed as a tourism expert within the industry. She has been a presenter for many organizations such as the Salem Chamber (Leadership Salem and Leadership Youth classes), Rotary Club, Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, City Club, Chemeketa Community College Hospitality Tourism classes, local high school Hospitality Tourism classes and the Oregon Governor's Conference on Tourism.