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Travel Salem Unveils “Absolutely Oregon”

New brand spotlights the best of what Oregon has to offer

SALEM, ORE. — Travel Salem has formally launched a new brand identity that represents the culture, history, capital city, heart of Willamette Valley — the best of what Oregon has to offer — and further strengthens the alliance in creating a solid front in marketing and positioning the Salem area as a premier destination to the greater community.

“Absolutely Oregon”

Located in the heart of the state, the Salem area highlights the best of what Oregon has to offer. Oregon is recognized worldwide as being clean, green, innovative and progressive. In the forefront is Salem...developing and investing in green job opportunities by attracting environmental and energy related companies to the area. Salem’s groundbreaking of the Sanyo solar cell factory last October and the development of 515-acre of “shovel ready” land in the Mill Creek Corporate Center are examples of how Salem embodies Oregon’s reputation as a green and sustainable state. Additionally, Salem area businesses and organizations are contributing in a unified approach to being green by becoming EarthWISE certified, a Marion County program that recognizes businesses that have made a commitment to environmentally friendly practices.

Travel Oregon has had great success in marketing and promoting the state. Oregon is home to some of the greatest attractions, events, outdoor recreation, agriculture, and arts and culture. Those very features are seen in abundance in the Salem area and embodies the best of what Oregon has to offer: A lively downtown surrounded by historic buildings, museums, and attractions; beautiful and natural environment ideal for outdoor recreational activities; unique festivals and events showcasing the vibrant and diverse community; and the advantage of relishing some of the state’s best performing and visual art in an urban setting, yet be minutes away from a rural retreat with award-winning wineries amid breathtaking views in the heart of the Willamette Valley.

After reviewing research from focus groups, online surveys, and a visitor profile study, Travel Salem found that the word “Absolutely” (e.g., “Absolutely beautiful,” “Absolutely spectacular”) was consistently used by residents and visitors to describe the attractiveness of the area; prompting the formation of the slogan “Absolutely Oregon.”

“We wanted to capitalize on the great diversity and vibrancy that Salem possesses,” said Angie Morris, chief executive officer for Travel Salem. “Salem is clean, green, and rich in diverse products and recreational opportunities. It’s also the capital city, which is very significant to the region and a great point of interest for visitors. There’s a little bit more Oregon here in Salem than anywhere else,” said Morris.

Visual Element

Travel Salem established a Brand Council, chaired by Roger Yost, that consisted of board members (representatives from Salem and Marion and Polk counties) to oversee the formation of the visual aspect of the brand. Travel Salem contracted with *In House Graphics*, a graphic design company based in Salem, to develop the visual element of the brand.

“The actual look of the logo is meant to be sparse and sophisticated but convey the richness of our region,” said Morris. “The actual graphic representation of the image and the colors and fonts were chosen to convey to the visitor and anyone that sees it what the region is all about as a destination.”

Specific Components

Travel Salem’s logo consists of several components that symbolize the overall concept of the brand:

- **Dancer:** Salem is a culturally significant city through diversity and arts (performing, visual, etc.). These things are woven into the community and are part of what shapes this city. Salem is active with one-of-a-kind events and activities. The Dancer illustrates the personal aspect of the community and true movement. Oregon’s State Motto is, “She flies with her own wings.” Oregon is referred to as a woman. As Oregon’s state capital the dancer also represents Oregon.
- **Urban Landscape:** Salem is Oregon’s capital city, where Oregon’s history is alive. It is a bustling community with diverse jobs opportunities (e.g., government, business, industry).
- **Buildings:** Salem is a major city in Oregon with a lively downtown that embraces its historic assets to create a vibrant destination.
- **Mountains and River:** Salem is nestled in the heart of the Willamette Valley in a beautiful setting surrounded by mountains, agriculture and rivers. It is urban yet minutes away from nature. Salem is a healthy environment with many outdoor recreational opportunities.
- **Crops and Wine Country:** Salem is in partnership with nature in the midst of wine country. Agriculture is still very much a part of this urban city with rich soil, green verdant countryside, commodities, bounty and beauty.
- **Absolutely Oregon:** As Oregon’s state capital, the Salem area absolutely represents Oregon. It is where state government and law regarding our state take shape, and where Oregon’s first provisional government was formed (Champoeg/Marion County). The bounty of the region in regards to agriculture, history, culture, natural attractions, scenic beauty, cleanliness, hospitality of the people, and large and small communities is uniquely Oregon.

- **Colors:** Sage green represents the environmental and outdoorsy aspect of the region. Gold represents the Capitol (gold pioneer) and the maroon represents the vibrancy and richness of the Salem area.
- **Font:** The flowing and scripted font for “Travel” conveys life, excitement, art, movement, and vibrancy. “Salem” has a bold and prominent font, expressing the city and the region takes itself seriously as a premier destination.

Establishing Salem’s Brand

“Absolutely Oregon” fits well in Travel Salem’s efforts to position the Salem area as a premier destination. Using the “Absolutely” piece of the slogan as a transferrable marketing element, other industries, businesses and organizations will have the opportunity to create their own catchphrase while establishing synergy in all marketing efforts to create one brand for Salem.

Travel Salem convened a group of key stakeholders to develop a solidified brand position for Salem. Key stakeholders included Mayor Janet Taylor, Mike McLaren of the Salem Area Chamber of Commerce, Ray Burstedt of SEDCOR (Strategic Economic Development Corporation), and Suzi Bicknell of Go Downtown! This group reviewed opportunities related to “Absolutely Oregon,” and settled on an approach that would help give Salem a solidified platform to position and market economic development opportunities. Using “Absolutely” as the through line that ties Salem’s brand together, key economic development partners will incorporate the following into their own brand and marketing strategies:

- **Salem Area Chamber of Commerce:** “Leading Businesses Absolutely”
- **SEDCOR:** “Absolutely Ready”
- **Go Downtown!:** “Go Downtown for Absolutely Everything”

“With the recent name change to Travel Salem and this Salem brand that the organization has created, it has become more clearly defined the important role of our community in attracting tourism to support the economy of the area,” said Janet Taylor, mayor of Salem. “The fact that it ties into the State tourism strategies allows us to leverage our local dollars to reach a wider range of travelers. We are so fortunate to have the passion and skills of our Travel Salem organization to lead this effort,” said Mayor Taylor.

“It’s important that Salem has a strong branding strategy to be competitive among growing cities,” said Bicknell, executive director of Go Downtown! “Furthermore, it’s significant that individual entities within Salem carry on the same message to solidify the Salem marketplace.”

“This provides great opportunities for all organizations in the area to be connected in a unified approach and at the same time keep their own flavor,” said McLaren, chief executive officer for the Salem Area Chamber of Commerce.

The Association has trademarked “Absolutely Oregon” and “Travel Café” and will be implementing these verbiages into all marketing efforts.

All businesses and organizations are encouraged to get on board and tie-in to Salem's brand. If a business or organization is interested in tapping into this powerful brand identity, please contact Travel Salem which will oversee and ensure the integrity of the "Absolutely Oregon" brand.

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****Travel Salem is a non-profit organization that promotes Salem and Marion and Polk counties for leisure tourism and convention and event business. The local annual economic impact of the greater Salem area visitor industry is \$511.8 million. Travel Salem manages the Official Salem Area Visitors Center currently located at Mission Mill Museum (until January 31, 2009 then located at 181 High St. NE, Salem) and the Official Salem Area Website www.TravelSalem.com****