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Western CVBs Take Top Honors Among Peers
Best Idea Program Achievement Awards

Four convention and visitors bureaus received achievement awards in a recent competition with their colleagues from the West. Sponsored by the Western Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus (WACVB), the annual **Best Idea Program** showcases innovative projects and creative marketing strategies as submitted by WACVB members.

This year's Best Idea Program awards were presented during the 2013 WACVB Annual Conference, September 18-20, in Los Angeles.

Following receipt of the entry forms, a Board-appointed Task Force reviewed the submissions and selected several ideas for presentation. Representatives presented their best ideas during the conference.

WACVB congratulates the following member bureaus for receiving outstanding achievement awards for their organizations in the 2013 WACVB Best Idea Program.

- **Albuquerque (NM) Convention & Visitors Bureau**
Project Title: Breaking Bad Tourism

The popular AMC television series Breaking Bad is set and filmed in Albuquerque. Film tourism has continued to grow as an attraction for destinations across the country. The Albuquerque CVB was cautious to make any connection throughout the early seasons of Breaking Bad because of the dark subject matter of the show. The show's popularity has spawned national and international interest in the show setting—Albuquerque. The challenge of film tourism is that there must be a solid visitor experience in the destination for the CVB to be able to promote it to travelers. The ABQ Trolley Co., a local city tour company, launched a BaD Tour themed around locations from the show in 2012 and the industry took off. ACVB was able to help promote this tour along with other Breaking Bad-themed products and experiences that were being developed by enterprising local businesses. The basic strategy was to create a central portal to find out about Albuquerque's Breaking Bad film tourism offerings. The bureau supported the tourism offerings by highlighting all of the positive things being said about Albuquerque by cast/producer interviews into one place on the ACVB website. This page also contained the growing list of products and tours related to Breaking Bad around Albuquerque, which were optimized through SEO. The CVB worked with its PR agency to develop a pitch related to film tourism and specifically Breaking Bad and to invite journalists to come to Albuquerque to experience it firsthand. The CVB created www.ItsATrip.org/BreakingBad. It highlights products and tours related to Breaking Bad in Albuquerque, quotes related to the show being filmed in Albuquerque and media mentions related to Breaking Bad tourism. Despite being concerned with the notion of "Breaking Bad tourism," Sony Television granted permission for ACVB to include a Breaking Bad image and story in the 2013 Albuquerque Visitors Guide as one of the top 10 reasons to visit this year. The ACVB and its PR agency developed a media pitch to attract attention for the destination based on the film theme. The Bureau hosted journalists on individual and group media visits. The ACVB printed 200 t-shirts that were distributed during the premiere of the second half of Season 5 in August 2013. The t-shirts read: "Albuquerque + Breaking Bad. We've bonded." They are now selling the t-shirts for wholesale and retail purchase. The t-shirt included a hash tag and ACVB's twitter handle. The hash tag #BrBaABQ and a webpage at www.BrBaABQ.com highlighted all of the connections between the city and the show.

- **Aspen (CO) Chamber Resort Association**

- **Project Title: Defy Ordinary**

- In late 2010, the Aspen Chamber Resort Association staff members were charged with launching a rebranding campaign for Aspen. While Aspen is well known, many people have preconceived notions of what a vacation to Aspen would entail. The goal was to show the true soul of the town, the people and places that make it the community that it is, and differentiate ourselves from other mountain-town destinations. The resort association staff interviewed more than 30 locals for an hour each and got to the core of what Aspen meant to them. In 2011, the Aspen Defy Ordinary campaign was launched. The brand film conveys the essence of this campaign: <http://www.aspenchamber.org/defy-ordinary/>. The next steps were to integrate the brand throughout the resort. First, the website homepage received a facelift by incorporating the branding as well as upgrading the page to include a huge hero image. Also on the website, Defy Ordinary itineraries were created to inspire travelers when they were planning their vacations: <http://www.aspenchamber.org/defy-ordinary/itineraries/>; and interviewed local personalities to get their top five summer and winter recommendations: <http://www.aspenchamber.org/defy-ordinary/get-local/>. Digital and print advertising was designed to convey the Defy Ordinary brand promise and the destination's social media presence was expanded to Defy Ordinary in the social space as well. The four in-town visitor centers also received a redesign to align with the brand. Updates include new imagery, information displays and onsite iPads. For summer 2013, a time-lapse video titled "Summer in Aspen: Day to Night Defy Ordinary Time Lapse" was launched to show the breadth of offerings in Aspen <https://vimeo.com/65772934>. The staff plans to continue to evolve campaigns with the Defy Ordinary premise; future ideas include an overhaul of the Guest Service program, a Defy Ordinary Wedding Sweepstakes giveaway, an International component, and strategic partnerships with national or international brands.

- **Visit Mendocino County (CA)**

- **Project Title: Director of Barketing**

- Visit Mendocino County (VMC) contracted for a Director of Barketing from 2010 to 2013. Hairy Putter, a canine terrier, joined the team to assist in the promotion and development of pet-friendly travel throughout Mendocino County. Hairy hosts his own blog, reviewing wineries, restaurants, hotels, attractions, beaches, etc. in the eyes of a canine to highlight the "pet-friendliness" of the destination. The blog was used throughout the website and social media channels. An annual brochure was produced highlighting those businesses that were not just "pet-tolerant," but "pet-friendly." Hairy joined the VMC team at specific events both inside and outside the County. He was a "VIP guest" at travel shows including "Bark in the Park" and the "Bay Area Travel Show." He was the star of the event and drew thousands of people to the VMC booth to meet the destination's "celebrity."

- See blog and website at www.hairysblog.com and www.visitmendocino.com/pets.

- When the recession hit in 2008, VMC looked intently at areas of destination marketing where the organization could be most effective. Looking at current research at the time, they came to understand that pet-friendly travel was the only travel segment with any growth. As a result, they partnered with Hairy Putter to develop him as their "Canine Ambassador" and, ultimately, our "Director of Barketing." This new role was successful in developing VMC's partnerships with many new businesses throughout the county— specifically wineries, attractions and restaurants. By showcasing how many businesses, as well as the different types of businesses, were pet friendly, Mendocino County became known as a premier destination for people traveling with pets. Dog Fancy Magazine voted Fort Bragg, California, as the fifth most-pet-friendly city in the U.S. VMC paid Hairy Putter a retainer of \$100/month for the rights of his blog, cooking show and overall brand. With VMC's overall goal of extending stays and, ultimately, spend by visitors throughout the county, more than 60,000 visitors used the pet-friendly brochure and/or Hairy's blog and potential visitors in helping them plan longer stays.

- **Yosemite Sierra (CA) Visitors Bureau**

- **Project Title: Majestic Mountain Loop**

- For the "Visit 3 of California's National Parks in 3 Days - Sequoia, Kings Canyon and Yosemite National Parks" project, the bureau staff is educating visitors about the proximity of these parks by creating suggested itineraries (top five stops) to guide the visitor through the three parks with added information on extending their stay to see hidden treasures in the regions. This is also the perfect trip for visitors with limited time to see everything. The project is a partnership between the Visalia Convention & Visitors Bureau, Yosemite Sierra Visitors Bureau and the Fresno Yosemite International Airport; additionally Delaware North Companies – Wuksachi Lodge has come in as a partner, and the National Park Service. The project launched in January 2013 with a press conference at the Fresno Yosemite International Airport, including follow-up stories with several news stations and news talk shows. The story was picked up by Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, National Parks Council, Visit California, the San Francisco Chronicle and others. Via Magazine is planning an upcoming feature as well. The hotels, tour companies, rental cars, airport and CVBs are working together to promote this unique product. A Passport Program was launched with bumper stickers available to visitors who complete the loop. The visitors center provides maps and information about the loop program. There is also a Majestic Mountain Loop (MML) Facebook page and campaign.

The Western Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus is a regional professional association serving more than 135 destination marketing organizations in the western United States and the western provinces of Canada.