2014 was a good year for tourism

Destination Salem Releases 2015 Guide and provides an industry update at Annual Meeting

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Salem, MA. . . The City of Salem's local option hotel/motel tax receipts have increased 33% over the past eight years, since the Mayor and City Council reinvested in the destination marketing of Salem. That was the highlight of Destination Salem's Annual Meeting on February 19, which also featured the release of the 2015 Salem Guide, the installation of the organization's new board of directors, and a special recognition for Hawthorne Hotel General Manager Juli Lederhaus.

Destination Salem executive director Kate Fox presented the accomplishments of 2014, which included the creation of four 15-second commercials that will be used in 2015; advertising to leisure travelers in the US, Canada, UK, Germany, and Japan; promoting Salem at international and group travel trade shows; the investment in a new online calendar for all public Salem events; and the promotion and marketing of Salem Haunted Happenings in October.

In addition, Fox shared results of a visitor survey issued in 2014, which breaks down the type of visitor coming to Salem and their travel trends. Nearly 60% of the visitors surveyed indicated they are likely to return, and 80% are likely to recommend visiting Salem to a friend. 45% of the visitors surveyed stayed in Salem hotels or inns, and 54% spent more than $500 during their trip.

Salem's tourism industry supports more than 700 jobs, and has an economic impact of more than $100 million annually. In 2014, the city received just under $500,000 in hotel/motel local option tax, an increase of 36.7% over 2013.

"We are lucky to have tourism in Salem," said Mayor Kim Driscoll in her remarks, "it makes the city vibrant and exciting, and supports the businesses in a way that allows them to survive the winter months when they are buried in snow and people are not coming through the doors in droves."

Other highlights of 2014 included the maiden call of Seabourn QUEST in October, which was the first luxury cruise ship visit to Salem; the distribution of more than 300,000 copies of the Salem Guide, the e-book of which was accessed more than 125,000 times; public relations that generated press coverage internationally for Salem; and the implementation of a co-operative downtown street banner program.

An independent non-profit organization, Destination Salem is funded in part by the City of Salem, which allocates 50% of the local option hotel/motel tax to the organization. The City's investment is matched by advertising investments in Destination Salem publications and programs, including the annual Salem Guide and The Official Guide to Salem Haunted Happenings. Destination Salem also received a 2014 Mini-Grant from the North of Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau for production of the 2014 Salem Guide.

Destination Salem | 81 Washington Street, Suite 204 | P.O. Box 630 | Salem, Massachusetts 01970
978.741.3252 | FAX 978.741.7539 | salem.org

"Salem is an incredible, dynamic destination, and it is an honor to promote everything the City has to offer," said Kate Fox, adding, "Our achievements do not happen independently. They are evidence of the business community, the cultural destinations, the City, the Chamber of Commerce, and Salem Main Streets all working together to convey our myriad attributes to potential visitors from near and far."

Destination Salem confirmed its 2015 Board of Directors at the meeting, welcoming new directors Pamela Captain, Bewitched after Dark Tours; Vini Kurti, Adriatic Restaurant; and Denise Snape, Far from the Tree Cider; and promoting Jim Hurrell, B&H Enterprises to the organization's Executive Board.

Thomas Mac Donald, Director of Sales at the Hawthorne Hotel, has been re-elected for a second term as President of the organization. In his remarks, Mac Donald thanked businesses for their support of Destination Salem and their investment in the success of Salem's tourism industry, singling out the fifteen businesses that are participating for the first time in 2015.

"I implore you all to be ambassadors for Salem's tourism industry and for Destination Salem," Mac Donald said, "because our investment in the destination marketing of Salem will benefit our businesses and Salem as a whole."

Hawthorne Hotel General Manager Juli Lederhaus was recognized and awarded a gift of appreciation by the organization. After almost sixteen years at the Hawthorne Hotel, Lederhaus is stepping down in April. Among her many accomplishments in Salem, Juli was the first Board President when Destination Salem was reorganized in 2008. Juli made many recommendations and decisions to support the organization, including suggesting Destination Salem incorporate a blog into its social media strategy in 2008. The blog on Salem.org was visited nearly 30,000 times in 2014.

For more information on Destination Salem, visit Salem.org.

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Contact
Kate Fox, Destination Salem
(978) 741-3252 | kfox@salem.org

About Salem: Salem, Massachusetts, is a destination recognized around the world for its rich history, which includes the tragic Salem Witch Trials of 1692, the glorious maritime era that left its indelible mark on Salem through architecture, museums, and artifacts, and for its month-long celebration of Halloween. Today more than one million people visit Salem annually, generating more than $100 million in tourism spending and supporting more than 700 jobs.

About Destination Salem: As the destination marketing organization for the City of Salem, Destination Salem cooperatively markets Salem as one of Massachusetts' best destinations for families, couples, domestic, and international travelers who are seeking an authentic New England experience, cultural enrichment, American history, fine dining, unique shopping and fun. For more information, visit Salem.org.

Salem Office of Tourism & Cultural Affairs, Inc. /DBA/ Destination Salem

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