

## Vancouver Island DMO shifts focus to social responsibility

Vancouver Island's 60-year-old tourism organization, previously known as Tourism Vancouver Island, is making a major shift.

After operating for its first 50 years focused on promotions and marketing – with success measured in visitor numbers and spending – and then shifting about 10 years ago to prioritize destination management and planning, now the organization is operating as a social enterprise.

The change brings a new name – 4VI – and a new mindset and strategy rooted in using its revenue to support four pillars of social responsibility: communities, businesses, culture and environment.

"Travel is still a force for good, but we need to strike a balance between the profitability and the business side with what is best for the environment and the communities and the residents that live here. It's about mitigating impacts but also enhancing the things that need attention," said Anthony Everett, president and CEO of 4VI.

One of the top priorities – the one he says "keeps him up at night" – is finding money. 4VI is funded by contracts it has with local communities and government agencies – for example to provide consulting, marketing, research and other services. For this year Everett says the organization has a budget of CAN\$6.5 million, including several multi-year contracts that give it a good foundation on which to build.

– *phocuswire.com*



Photo: Sandra J. Milburn / The Hutchinson News

## Destinations work with local artists to create murals that help spur visitation

Hutchinson, Kansas, has more than 40 murals that bring pride to the city. These murals boast of Kansas wildlife, the street art movement, the beauty of Kansas and its state symbols, Hutchinson landmarks and community stories.

Mural tourism has become a fascination for many, and interest has increased in part because influencers have posted their photographs on popular social media.

"It's becoming a big deal," said Jordan Roerman, marketing manager for Kansas Tourism, "a movement that began outside the state, but Kansas has picked up on it and run with it."

She said, for example, music artist Taylor Swift had a butterfly mural painted in Nashville and now people will line up and wait their turn to have their photo taken by the mural.

Selfies with murals are also popular, as is posting them online. This act

lets others know about the murals and where they are located.

"It's something that has become extremely popular," Roerman said. "At [travelks.com](http://travelks.com) we've had so many online requests from people in our contact forms asking where they can travel to go see murals that we created an entire section on the site dedicated to murals in Kansas."

LeAnn Cox, vice president of operations and tourism at the Greater Hutchinson Convention/Visitors Bureau, said "more and more, we are seeing a greater interest in visitation due to murals in Hutchinson. Murals certainly enhance community pride, and we want to continue to support our local artists as they increase the overall attractiveness in our community."

Visit Hutch has a section on the [visithutch.com](http://visithutch.com) site dedicated to the more than 40 murals in Hutchinson.

– *hutchnews.com*



## New Illinois campaign plays off its location

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) has kicked off the state's new tourism campaign, "Middle of Everything," starring Illinois native and actress Jane Lynch.

The campaign aims to highlight Illinois as the center of culture, food, history, architecture, nightlife and natural wonders. In the "Middle of Everything," Lynch stars as Illinois' official tour guide showcasing iconic attractions in Chicago, Springfield, Historic Route 66, and the Garden of the

Gods in Shawnee National Forest in southern Illinois.

The \$30.3 million campaign is a critical next step in the state's efforts to accelerate the recovery of Illinois' tourism and hospitality industry—a major contributor to the state's economy, employing more than 600,000 people statewide prior to the pandemic.

"I loved every minute of working on this project promoting tourism in my home state and I'm so proud to finally see it come to life," said Lynch.

— *wsilv.com*

## Florida city responds to controversial law

One of South Florida's biggest cities is using some welcoming words for visitors after Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed the controversial "Don't Say Gay" law.

The legislation forbids the discussion of sexual orientation in some classrooms.

"We don't care who you love, who you marry. We don't care who or what you worship. We just want you to have a great experience," said Stacy Ritter, CEO of Visit Fort Lauderdale.

"We lost some conferences because of what is going on in the state capitol," said Ritter. "We realized we needed to do what we have been doing for 30 years, which is market ourselves as a welcoming and inclusive destination."

Businesses have pulled their conferences and events out of South Florida in the wake of the state's "Stop Woke Act," which would censor discussion in school and workplaces surrounding systematic racism and gender discrimination.

— *wsvn.com*

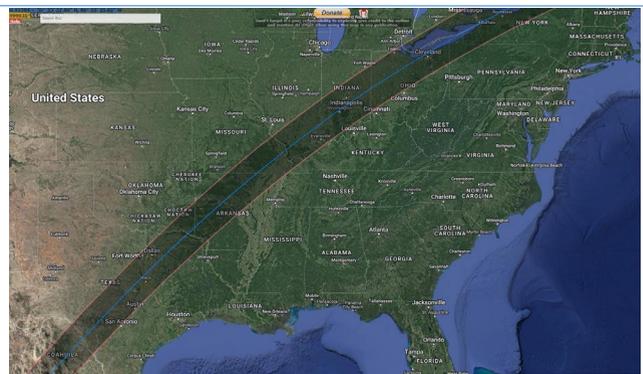
## Arkansas prepares for 2024 eclipse

Tourism leaders in Arkansas have begun preparing for what they believe will be the largest influx of tourists in the state's history.

On April 8, 2024, a total solar eclipse will be visible to a large portion of the Northern Hemisphere.

Kim Williams with the Arkansas Eclipse Project met with a group of Texarkana leaders to encourage businesses and citizens to prepare for an event she says will bring hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Natural State.

The last total solar eclipse was in 2017, and Williams says it proved to be a great economic boost for cities and states in the direct path.



The duration of totality will be up to 4 minutes and 27 seconds. In the U.S., totality will begin in Texas at 1:27 pm CDT and end in Maine at 3:35 pm ET.

— *ksla.com*