



Let's "Spring Ahead" for the Arts, Culture & Tourism Roadmap and Advocate for an increase in Tourism Fund-

Welcome to Spring Tourism Coalition Constituents. As the legislative session is well underway, it's more important than ever to make our voices heard. Please reach out to your legislators and tell them the importance of funding the Arts, Culture and Tourism Roadmap. With so many legislators supporting the Bill, it's critical to build on that momentum and hope our collective voices can make a difference and help fund this important initiative so that all of state tourism is funded at an appropriate level to realize the full economic return on investment. We are also hoping that funding for America's 250th is funded at an appropriate level to be competitive with other State's that realize the great marketing and PR opportunity the celebration will bring.

I was grateful to attend the Connecticut Conference on Tourism at the Bushnell last week in Hartford. It was a great program and it was wonderful to see such a great turnout showing the unity and passion on display for state tourism. DECD and state tourism leaders gave great presentations and it was a great way to kick-off the Spring/Summer season!

With the unveiling of Connecticut's new state brand and accompanying tagline, "Make it Here", the State Office of Tourism orchestrated a launch of its Spring and Summer campaign with a clear vision: To harmonize efforts and present a unified voice for the live/work/play strategy.

The "make it Here" campaign celebrates the unique essence of each traveler, empowering them to craft their own bespoke Connecticut experience. Through showcasing the diverse offerings of the tourism landscape, the advertising campaign illuminates the countless destinations to explore and activities to enjoy.

The series of advertisements will feature 15 and 30 second videos that are inspiring, uplifting and spirited. Examples include: "make a move", "make up for lost time", "make an entrance", "make it mouth water". The campaign launches in April 2024 and we look forward to its success.

As always, I am forever grateful to our officers, board and membership for their commitment and support as we move through the busy Spring/Summer tourism season. Our exemplary Executive Director Frank Burns, with support from Christine Dagata, continue to work tirelessly to keep this organization focused and on track for success. We will continue to meet and talk to industry and state leaders from all regions on a weekly basis and our reach, membership and industry engagement will continue to grow! I look forward to working with all of you as we continue to provide statewide leadership in tourism advocacy. Please stay safe, healthy and enjoy Spring in Connecticut!

Paul Mayer



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:



When Bob Zemmel opened Alforno in June 1992, his original singular goal was to bring the brick oven pizza made famous on New Haven's Wooster Street to the shoreline. Those sizzling, thin-crust pies, their chewy crusts slightly charred from the 600-plus degree temperature of a custom-built brick oven, along with crisp salads tossed in signature dressings and exceptional, fresh-baked artisan bread quickly drew a loyal following.

Favorable reviews in The New York Times (three stars), The Hartford Courant, Connecticut Magazine and numerous other publications have recognized Alforno's commitment to quality. The Zagat Survey awarded Alforno 23 points for food and featured the restaurant in its "Guide to the 1,000 Best Italian Restaurants in America." Connecticut Magazine's Readers' Choice issue has singled out Alforno numerous times over the years in its best restaurants poll.

Alforno pizza and artisan bread, baked fresh daily, have consistently made "best of" lists, including the Daily Meal's "101 Best Pizzas in America." Writing in the New York Times, Mark Bittman called Bob "a yeasted dough fanatic. His huge peasant loaves of white Tuscan bread belie the notion that good bread can be produced only in Europe or New York, and his pizza crust vies with the best from New Haven – which many people regard as the pizza capital of the world."

Alforno is a family-friendly restaurant that is friendly-family run. When Bob married into an Italian-American family, he learned to share their passion not only for eating but also for cooking. He and his wife, Linda Giuca, the former long-time food editor of The Courant, were mentored by Giuliano Bugialli, the great Florentine cooking teacher, and cookbook author.

After celebrating twenty-five years in business, Alforno recently underwent a major renovation to create a sleek, contemporary bar, a more spacious dining room and a gleaming new kitchen.

The bar was the brainchild of Bob's son, Ben. At a time when many of his twenty- and thirty-something contemporaries are leaving the state for jobs elsewhere, Ben traded his successful restaurant career in Boston to return to Connecticut and join the family business. Both Ben and his wife, Michelle, who has 10 years of bartending experience, bring a "big city" sensibility to Alforno, evident in the modern vibe of the new bar.



TOURISM CHAMPION:

Connecticut Tourism Director

RACHEL LENDA



Governor Ned Lamont announced that Rachel Lenda will serve as the new director of the Connecticut Office of Tourism. Lenda brings a wealth of tourism and hospitality experience to the team and holds the distinction of being the first Connecticut born and raised resident to occupy this position in a generation. Her background includes leadership roles at Hard Rock Café International and the Eastern Regional Tourism District. In her most recent position, Lenda played a pivotal role in leading the organization towards a new brand identity.

"With Rachel's extensive background in the tourism industry and her forward-thinking approach, she is well equipped to lead CT tourism toward sustained growth," Governor Lamont said. "Given the record-breaking numbers of the past two years, my optimism for the future of Connecticut's tourism industry has never been stronger."

"What a privilege it is to have the opportunity to contribute to a team that has transformed Connecticut from a drive-through state into a must-visit destination," Lenda said. "I grew up here and made my home in Connecticut, so to now be in a position to champion the state as a destination to visit fills me with excitement. I am really looking forward to collaborating with my colleagues and partners throughout the state to build upon this impressive momentum and further enhance Connecticut's vibrant tourism landscape."

"Rachel is the embodiment of a true Connecticut ambassador," Anthony Anthony, chief marketing officer for the CT Department of Economic and Community Development, said. "Her love and enthusiasm for the state combined with her extensive tourism experience makes her a wonderful asset to the team, and I am confident that under Rachel's leadership, our tourism office will continue to grow and thrive." Lenda's arrival coincides with an exciting period for the CT Office of Tourism, marked by record-breaking visitation to the state and to its tourism website, CTvisit.com.



FOR MORE INFO ABOUT THE CT TOURISM COALITION OR TO BECOME A MEMBER, PLEASE VISIT TOURISMCT.COM