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Tourism Cares Celebrates Twenty Years in 2023

The US-based non-profit celebrates two decades of impact in sustainable tourism

Norwood, MA, USA – February 6, 2023 – Leading travel industry non-profit Tourism Cares will celebrate its 20th anniversary this year, marking two decades of impact programming in the sustainable tourism space.

Tourism Cares, begun by the merging of USTOA's Travelers Conservation Foundation and NTA's National Tour Foundation, became an independent non-profit in 2003. Marked by the launch of the *Tourism Cares for America* give back project on Ellis Island in New York City, the event was the first of its kind, drawing more than 300 travel and tourism professionals from all sectors and segments of the industry to join together in volunteerism, uniting competitors and collaborators alike.

"In the beginning, Tourism Cares was unlike any organization that existed in travel," said Bruce Beckham, founding Executive Director of Tourism Cares. "For the first time, we met on an even playing field where giving back was our great equalizer. The goal for all was to leave a positive impact on the local community or historic site and at the same time create real and genuine business connections through the collaborative effort. That was the icing on the cake for attendees. We started a movement that day on Ellis Island in 2003 that has propelled us around the world and continues to be the inspiration for Tourism Cares - being a force where the entire industry can gather, united in purpose."

Since that historic day on Ellis Island, Tourism Cares has become an organization committed to addressing some of the world's greatest challenges. Through events and programs focused on the social, environmental, and economic well-being of tourism communities, Tourism Cares has been moving the needle in the sustainable tourism space. In the U.S., Peru, Jordan, Colombia, and Canada, Tourism Cares has brought together tourism and travel companies, inspiring them to use their businesses to better serve the destinations to which they send their customers. Other major achievements of Tourism Cares include absorbing the scholarship programs of IATAN, the International Air Transport Association Network, and ASTA, the American Society of Travel Agents, in 2006; launching the Destination Disaster Recovery Grant Program in 2016; and launching the Diversity in Tourism Grant Fund in 2021.

“To have been at Ellis Island and involved with this organization for twenty years is a highlight of my career. Tourism Cares represents the people and places of travel, dedicated to the people and places of travel. It has always been that way and will continue to be. We were born from volunteerism and now, we set the course for our industry’s sustainability journey through convening, education, and training,” said Greg Takehara, CEO of Tourism Cares. “We will never stop rolling up our sleeves to do the work necessary. Our experiences are collaborative, meaningful, and inspiring, and most importantly demonstrate the need for all sectors of our industry to come together. We will forge ahead in the next twenty years and continue to protect the assets that are at the center of the travel experience. It is critical for us to do so, together.”

To celebrate such a milestone, Tourism Cares will launch special programming this year in the spirit of industry collaboration with new partners. For the first time in Europe, Tourism Cares will host its *Tourism Cares with Norway* Meaningful Travel Summit in partnership with Innovation Norway and USTOA’s Sustainability is Responsibility (SIR) event. In October, Tourism Cares will launch a new event, The Power of Partnership Stewardship Summit, with three partners: The Cultural Heritage Economic Alliance, The Travel Foundation, and the US Cultural and Heritage Marketing Council. To learn more about what is planned, visit www.tourismcares.org/meaningful-travel-summit.

The anniversary year will also see additions to the Tourism Cares Board of Directors, with Malia Asfour, long-time friend, supporter, and driving force behind Tourism Cares’ global program, taking the reins as the new Chair. As the Director of the Jordan Tourism Board North America, Malia has been foundational in launching Tourism Cares’ programmatic work to a global scale, hosting the Tourism Cares with Jordan Meaningful Travel Summit in 2018.

“I have been a supporter of Tourism Cares since its inception and believe in the mission to foster sustainable tourism development through meaningful travel around the world,” said Malia Asfour, Director, Jordan Tourism Board North America. “The growth of this organization globally, primarily through the development of the Meaningful Travel Map, has helped local communities benefit from tourism dollars, leaving a direct economic impact in these destinations. I worked with Tourism Cares on the development of the Meaningful Travel Map of Jordan and Colombia and the impact left behind on the people we met proves that tourism can be a force for good. I

am thrilled to sit as Chair of Tourism Cares, where those programs will continue to grow with the help of an experienced and passionate Board of Directors.”

Tourism Cares is happy to announce its Executive Committee:

- Shayna Zand, Head of Partnerships, We Travel, Vice Chair I
- Bryan Kinkade, Publisher, AFAR, Vice Chair II
- Reagan Stulbaum, VP, Membership Borough Relations & Tourism Ready, NYC and Company, Secretary
- Martha Troncoza, PhD Candidate, Kennesaw State University
Coles College of Business, Treasurer

Additionally, new board members Matt Berna, Managing Director, North America, Intrepid Travel; Ken Shapiro, VP and Publisher/Editor-in-Chief, TravelAge West; Carylann Assante, CEO, SYTA; and Julian Guerrero Orozco, Former Vice Minister of Tourism of Colombia/Regenerative Nature Tourism Expert; have joined to support Tourism Cares in its vision moving forward.

The theme of Tourism Cares’ anniversary year is one of unity, collaboration, and a shared vision for the future. Tourism Cares would like to thank its founding partners for supporting that vision from the start, the United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA), the National Tour Association (NTA), and the more than 19 travel and tourism association partners, including strategic Association partners, the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA/IATAN),

Tourism Cares Across Time

1998 - The Travelers Conservation Foundation (TCF) was established as a “supporting foundation” for the United States Tour Operators Association for the purpose of awarding tourism-related grants.

2000 - Bruce Beckham became the Executive Director of the Travelers Conservation Foundation.

2003 - The first “Tourism Cares for America” program (what is now the Meaningful Travel Summit) brought together 300 travel professionals on Ellis Island.

2005 - Travelers Conservation Foundation merged with NTA’s National Tourism Foundation, which awarded merit-based scholarships to students studying hospitality and tourism. Under Bruce’s continued leadership, the organization changed its name to “Tourism Cares”.

2006 - Tourism Cares absorbed the scholarship programs of IATAN, the International Air Transport Association Network, and ASTA, the American Society of Travel Agents.

2008 - Tourism Cares expands its relationships with associations across the industry, becoming “the official philanthropy” of cross-sector entities.

2012 - The first global program, GO Peru, is launched in partnership with Lima Tours, bringing 30 industry leaders to Peru for education and volunteering at the Mercado Central de San Pedro in Cuzco. Tourism Cares attendees joined local industry professionals in painting and repairing infrastructure and planting trees in the surrounding plaza.

2016 - The Destination Disaster Recovery grant program launches, providing tourism recovery grants to destinations impacted by natural disasters worldwide.

That same year, Tourism Cares supported the National Parks, providing volunteer and grant support during their Centennial year in five major, and lesser-known, parks.

2017 - Tourism Cares for America expands to become Tourism Cares Meaningful Travel Summits – combining social impact, education, and volunteerism.

2018 - Tourism Cares with Jordan is held and launches the Tourism Cares Meaningful Map. The program in Jordan brings nearly 70 industry leaders to social enterprise experiences throughout the country.

2019 - Tourism Cares became the first tourism-related Clinton Global Initiative Commitment to Action by bringing together 50 micro, small, and social enterprises together in Puerto Rico with the tourism industry to facilitate post-natural disaster long-term support and resiliency.

2020 - Industry-wide training and education resource, the Meaningful Travel Platform, is launched and Tourism Cares, with 5 other NGOs, create the Future of Tourism Coalition.

In the fall, the first “Virtual Meaningful Travel Summit” is launched, highlighting the country of Colombia. Nearly 1,000 industry professionals were introduced to 20 social enterprises and non-profit community organizations throughout the country. These global introductions are far-reaching, ensuring that local community tourism stays the priority for tourism to Colombia in the coming years.

2021 - The Diversity in Tourism Grant Fund is launched to directly support programs and activities that increase diversity, equity, and inclusion within travel, build capacity for underrepresented markets and amplify voices representative of the entire travel and tourism industry.

2022 - Tourism Cares receives Destination International’s Spirit of Hospitality Award, the highest recognition presented annually by the Destinations International Foundation to individuals and organizations that show exceptional dedication and commitment to the travel and tourism industry.

Tourism Cares encourages all travel industry professionals, and lovers of travel, to reach out to join them in celebrating what’s ahead. To learn more, visit www.tourismcares.org

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About Tourism Cares

Tourism Cares, Inc., a US 501(c)(3) nonprofit that advances the travel industry's positive impact to help people and places thrive. We believe it's in all our best interest to support the destinations our industry depends on so that communities, travelers, and businesses can prosper. We mobilize the entire industry to use its business as a force for good by uniting, activating, and inspiring all sectors to make a positive impact through travel. Learn more at TourismCares.org and [@TourismCares](https://twitter.com/TourismCares).