

# *Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance*

## 2014 Annual Report



NEW YORK'S  
*Finger Lakes*<sup>®</sup>

**Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance**

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# 2014 Staff and Board of Directors

## 2014 FLTA Staff

President - Cynthia Kimble - CindyK@FingerLakes.com  
Director of Marketing - Jessica Robideau - JessicaR@FingerLakes.com  
Director of Sales - Barb Kolonoski - BarbK@FingerLakes.com  
Office Manager - Karen Colizzi Noonan - KarenN@FingerLakes.com  
IT/eMarketing Administration - Jack Carlson

## 2014 FLTA Board of Directors

Joe Gober – Chair – Americana Vineyards Winery – Seneca County  
Ken McConnell – Vice-Chair – Barrister’s Bed & Breakfast – At Large Representative  
Sarah Wiles – Secretary – Mid-Lakes Navigation – At Large Representative  
Dennis Fagan – Treasurer – Schuyler County  
Susan Dove – Past Chair – At Large Representative  
Heather Davidson – Inns of Aurora – Cayuga County  
Sheila Thomas – Holiday Inn Elmira – Chemung County  
Jim Dempsey – Cortland County CVB – Cortland County  
Mary Alice May – Beachcomber of Conesus Lake – Livingston County  
Peter Arnold – Genesee Country Village & Museum – Monroe County  
Coleen Fabrizi – Corning’s Gaffer District – Steuben County  
Eva Mae Musgrave – The Edge of Thyme Inn – Tioga County  
Laura Winter Falk – Experience! the Finger Lakes – Tompkins County  
Bonnie Hays – Historic Palmyra – Wayne County  
John Socha – Showboat Motel – Yates County  
Dave Bunnell – Annie Walker’s, LLC – At Large Representative  
Jay Dinga – Tioga Downs – At Large Representative  
Laury Ellen Poland – Finger Lakes Wine Country – Ex Officio

**FLTA Mission:**  
Lead economic growth and development through exemplary promotion of the Finger Lakes region as a world class tourism destination.

**Vision:**  
Be the recognized leader for destination marketing strategies and resources in the Finger Lakes region.

## FLTA History

Founded in 1919, the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance (FLTA) is an association of private sector attractions, tourism related businesses and participating county tourism offices working together to enhance and promote visitor businesses for the 9,000 square mile, state designated tourism region. FLTA represents partners in all 14 counties of the region which include Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Livingston, Monroe, Onondaga, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne and Yates.

At 95 years of age, the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance is one of the oldest destination marketing organizations in the nation.

# A Message from Our President and 2014 Chairman of the Board

In 2014, the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance (FLTA) successfully executed its Marketing Plan and provided programming to our partners that allowed them to customize their own marketing efforts through FLTA. FLTA was successful in obtaining a second line item in the New York State budget! FLTA was also awarded **three Certified Funding Application grants**, one for **\$35K** for front line customer service training, another for augmenting the efforts of our international cooperative with the Corning Museum of Glass, Visit Rochester and the Niagara Tourism and Convention Center, called Wine, Water and Wonders for **\$210K** and a third award will add **\$357K** to FLTA's domestic marketing efforts. All funds will be used to augment FLTA's already existing marketing efforts.

The FLTA's website posted a record number of visitors for the year, up **6.95%** from the prior record breaking year! As FLTA focused on its Alexa score and worked to improve this score it resulted in **742,826 visits to FingerLakes.org**. In looking at other regional, tourism websites, FingerLakes.org was scoring better through Alexa rankings than any of the other regional websites and was close to the Alexa score for the I Love NY website. The FLTA website continues to be a strong choice among the visiting public for gathering travel planning information.

FLTA thoughtfully invested marketing dollars to avoid duplication of efforts with other entities promoting the region. Investment in public relations was an example of this deliberate decision. Although FLTA invested little by way of funds into public relations due to the investment by others, FLTA did have multiple inquiries by writers for assistance with FAMS, photos and facts. Within the content of this Year in Review publication you will find additional public relations results from FLTA.

The 2013 Tourism Economic reports from the State indicate that visitor spending grew by **1.5%** making **tourism a \$2.8 billion dollar business** for the Finger Lakes region.

The State as a whole posted a growth rate of 3.5% for the same period and as we execute our 2015 plans we will work to gain more of the state's market share. The results for 2014 should be made available by April of 2015 and can be found in the research section on FingerLakes.org.

In addition, the Board's investment in the Book a Room Now (aka: JackRabbit) system again is posting results. With this accommodation booking widget, housed on the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance's website, a visitor can locate available partner accommodations from across the region. No fees are charged to partners or visitors and as of year-end, over **132,500 referrals** were made to participating accommodation partners, resulting in an estimated **10,500 room nights** that were booked in the Finger Lakes tourism region during 2014 as a direct result of this booking engine.

As we look forward to 2015, we are planning to deliver cooperative marketing programs that focus on electronic marketing media while still providing collateral materials, trade and travel show participation, the AAA program, manning the Thruway Information Centers, continued investment in the Book a Room Now reservation system and the addition of a Ticketing widget on the highly visited fingerlakes.org website. Utilizing the marketing grant funds will also provide FLTA with the ability to offer cooperative marketing platforms with TV, radio, paid search, print and internet advertising to our partners. It will be through the efforts of New York State, FLTA's Board of Directors and private/public partners' investment and cooperation that we will continue to promote the region as a desired destination.



*Cynthia Kimble*  
**Cynthia Kimble**  
FLTA President



*Joe Gober*  
**Joe Gober**  
FLTA Chairman of the Board

# Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance is Happy to Welcome the Following Organizations as New Partners in 2014

1899 Lady of the Lake	Elmira College Ctr for Mark Twain Studies
1st National Gifts	Embassy Suites/Syracuse
Above the Glen Limo	Eremita Winery
Ageless Spa at Radisson Hotel Corning	Experience Schuyler Group
Amber Waves Farm Bed & Breakfast	Fairfield Inn & Suites/Ithaca
Apple Ridge Bed & Breakfast	Finger Lakes Boating Museum
Arts Center of Yates County	Finger Lakes Photography
Barnstormer Winery	Finger Lakes Tea Company
Best Western Plus - Cortland	Firelight Camps
Birdland Brewing Company	Geneva Events Factory
Black Button Distilling	Great Escape Ice Cream Parlor, The
Blackberry Inn Bed & Breakfast, The	Hampton Inn - Penn Yan
Bobby K Entertainment	Handwork-Ithaca's Cooperative Craft Store
Bostwick House Bed & Breakfast	Hayward House Bed & Breakfast, The
Brick Tavern Museum	Heritage Park Vacation Rentals
Bristol Valley Theater	Hill Cumorah Visitors Center
Cayuga Morning Star Bed & Breakfast	Historic Naples Hotel, The
Charles Limousine Service	Historic Near Westside
Citizen, The	Hobbit Hollow Bed & Breakfast
Climbing Bines Craft Ale Co.	Holiday Inn Express - Geneva
Colonial Inn & Motel	Horseheads, Village of
Connors Mercantile	Idol Ridge Winery
Corning Community College	Imagine
Country Inn & Suites/Big Flats	Imagine That!
Cracker Barrell	Jana Channel, The
Crystal City Olive Oil	Jerlando's Ristorante
Dewitt Park Inn	Joyful Adornments Glass Studio
Eagle's Rest at White Church	Knights Inn Liverpool - Syracuse
Effin Texas Bar & Grill	Lacey Magruder Winery & Brew Barn
EFP Rotenberg	

Lake House, The  
 Lake Street Station Winery  
 Life's So Sweet Chocolates - Ithaca  
 Life's So Sweet Chocolates - Trumans-  
 burg  
 Lime Berry Winery  
 Live Well Upstate  
 Lively Run Goat Dairy LLC  
 Lodgings at the Henry Fish Homestead  
 Luna Mezza Grille  
 Marich Music  
 Mark Twain Golf Course  
 Meadow Court Inn  
 MuraBella's Italian Steakhouse  
 Myer Farm Distillers  
 Naples Open Studio Trail  
 National Soaring Museum  
 Nedloh Brewing  
 Old Havana Courthouse Theatre  
 Painted Bar Stables  
 Pip's Boutique  
 Ports of New York  
 Proforma Infinity  
 Quad Graphics  
 Rochester Broadway Theatre League  
 Rolling Hills Produce  
 Rosamond Gifford Zoo  
 Sell My Timeshare Now  
 Seneca Wine Boat Tours  
 Shtayburne Farms  
 Silver Strand at Sheldrake  
 Site Cyber Bar & Grill, The  
 Skaneateles Inn on 20  
 Soulshine Studio Bead Shop  
 Source, The



Spa at LaBella  
 Splitrock Brew Pub  
 Steamboat Castle Bed & Breakfast  
 Stella's Barn Country Comfort Restau-  
 rant  
 Sunset View Creamery  
 Sweet Mother Nature  
 Tag's  
 TrinityTherapeutics  
 Trip Hotel  
 Turtlestone Ridge Bed & Breakfast  
 Unique Country Boutique  
 Upstairs Inn at O'Susannah's, The  
 Victory Highway Galleria of Shops  
 Villa Bellangelo Winery  
 Vineyard View Winery  
 Water to Wine  
 Weaver-View Farms  
 Wegmans  
 Wilmot Casino & Resort  
 Wine & Design  
 Wine Symposium of the Finger Lakes  
 Wineglass Marathon  
 Woodruff Manor Bed & Breakfast  
 YMCA of Ithaca & Tompkins County  
 YWCA of Elmira & the Twin Tiers



## 2014 Consumer Shows

FLTA continued to attend consumer shows in 2014. FLTA attends these shows in key markets throughout the Northeast to showcase the many attractions, accommodations, venues and more the Finger Lakes has to offer. FLTA attended the following consumer shows in 2014:

**January** – AAA Great Vacation Expo in Ohio – 7,248 estimated attendance and 775 Travel Guides were distributed.

**February** – AAA Travel Odyssey and Vacation Show in Wyomissing, PA – 1,200 estimated attendance and 300 Travel Guides were distributed.

**March** – AAA Southern New England Marketplace in Foxboro, MA – 17,320 estimated attendance and 875 Travel Guides were distributed.

**April** – Travel & Vacation Show in Ottawa, Ontario – 17,500 estimated attendance and 875 Travel Guides were distributed.

**May** – Daytrips and Destinations in Southington, CT – 5,000 estimated attendance and 375 Travel Guides were distributed.

**September** – Connecticut Women's Show – 22,000 estimated attendance and 750 Travel Guides were distributed.

**November** – Toronto Women's Show – 31,800 estimated attendance and 750 Travel Guides were distributed.

Overall, FLTA established a presence in front of over 100,000 potential visitors and handed out 4,700 travel guides. Interest from potential visitors was measured through email marketing efforts; statistics from these efforts were tracked for each show and used to make decisions on which consumer shows to attend in the future.

## By the Numbers

### In 2014...

- Attendants at the Thruway Information Centers at Warners and Pembroke greeted **60,062** visitors to the Finger Lakes and distributed **149,948** pieces of partner literature.
- A combined **17,297** Finger Lakes Travel Guides and **5,653** Finger Lakes Map and Mini Guides were handed out at the Thruway Information Centers.
- A total of **125,000** Finger Lakes Travel Guides were distributed.
- Through [issuu.com](http://issuu.com), the 2014 Travel Guide was viewed **13,773** times, the Finger Lakes Group Tour Planner was viewed **1,370** times and the New York's Finger Lakes Fishing & Hunting Guide was viewed **1,685** times.
- FingerLakes.org received **742,826** visits, a **6.95%** increase over last year. These visits led to **3,367,692** total page views on FingerLakes.org, a **10.61%** increase over 2013.
- In 2014, FLTA trained **202** AAA/CAA offices in **10** states and provinces. **721** AAA/CAA agents were trained on the assets of the Finger Lakes, a **5.8%** increase over 2013. FLTA also offered webinars to train AAA/CAA agents on the Finger Lakes region.
- A total of **118** organizations joined FLTA as partners. This is a **274%** increase over 2013.
- FLTA referred **132,507** FingerLakes.org visitors to FLTA accommodation partner websites through Book a Room Now.



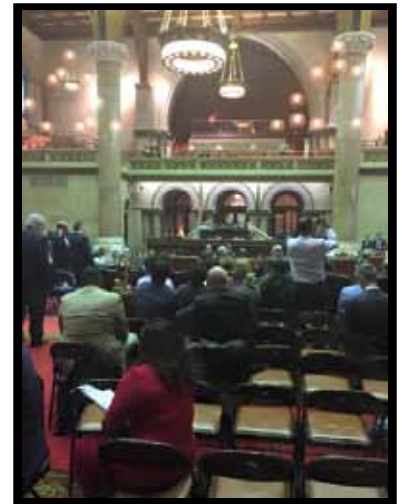
# Featured New Programs in 2014

## Line-Item in the NYS Budget Awarded to FLTA

In 2014, the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance was able to utilize the \$75,000 line item in the New York State Budget that was awarded in 2013. FLTA used this money to increase exposure of the Finger Lakes to travelers on the I-19 PA Corridor. Working with Tipping Point Media, FLTA launched a Finger Lakes marketing campaign, distributing creative ads across a number of media channels.

Partners had the opportunity to participate in “donut ads” that would run on television and radio in Pennsylvania. These donut ads featured partner organizations within an FLTA advertisement.

Tipping Point Media’s campaign resulted in 2.3 million impressions, 7,392 clicks with a .19% click through rate (industry average of .05%) on FingerLakes.org. 914 Travel Guides were distributed as a direct result of this campaign.



## FLTA Teams up with U.S. Outdoorsman Central

The Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance offered partners the opportunity to advertise with U.S. Outdoorsman Central (USOC). In addition to their website, USOC has a television show called “USOC Adventures TV” on the Pursuit Channel featured on Dish Network and DIRECTV; these networks have a combined viewing audience of 40 million.

Participating partners are featured on the USOC website, [www.myusoc.com](http://www.myusoc.com), and are given the opportunity to have special deals presented on [myusoc.com](http://myusoc.com). During Adventures TV, viewers are referred to [myusoc.com](http://myusoc.com) where they will see FLTA partners and learn what the Finger Lakes has to offer. A number of Adventures TV episodes feature fishing trips to New York.



## FLTA works with Olive Bone Studios

The Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance worked with Olive Bone Studios to film & produce high quality video footage and video strategy development for participating partners. Olive Bone Studios visited the Finger Lakes in the spring of 2014, offering affordable rates for FLTA partners to secure video footage and B-roll.

Olive Bone Studios provided partners with produced video footage as well as B-roll and still shots; Olive Bone also helped participating partners develop a marketing strategy built around the video they would receive. Olive Bone founder Erik Hastings and Executive Producer Shadley Grei gave an overview presentation and provided one-on-one consultations for interested partners.



# Winemaker for a Week

The Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance, Cayuga Lake Wine Trail and Greek Peak Mountain Resort came together for the fifth straight year for the Winemaker for a Week contest. 597 people entered for the chance to win a week-long stay at Greek Peak Mountain Resort. During their week at the resort, from September 29th through October 3rd, the winner would work with premier winemakers from Long Point Winery, King Ferry Winery, Knapp Winery and Six Mile Creek Vineyard. Winemakers from each perspective location took the winner through the wine making process, from working with the grapevines all the way to making the sale.

To qualify, entrants had to submit a form with their contact information at WinemakerforaWeek.com. Once all of the entry forms were collected, five semi-finalists were chosen; these five semi-finalists had to submit a 150-word essay explaining why they were an ideal candidate to become the winemaker for a week. The Winemaker for a Week Committee deliberated and discussed each submission and Bob Collom from Philadelphia was selected as the winner.

This program led to great exposure for the Cayuga Lake Wine trail and led to 597 interested participants/leads for the Winemaker for a Week Committee.



## Email Marketing

FLTA releases six public newsletters every year, reaching over 38,000 recipients interested in the Finger Lakes with each issue. FLTA uses these newsletters to keep recipients up-to-date on what is happening within the Finger Lakes region, FLTA partners, share upcoming deals and potential travel ideas. FLTA also releases a monthly partner newsletter. FLTA keeps partners informed of regional happenings and lets them know what is new at FLTA. The open rate for the public newsletter was 21.55% and the open rate for the partner newsletter was 30.15%, both exceeded the industry standard of 20%. Click rates also exceeded the industry standard; the public newsletter had a click rate of 15.4 and the partner newsletter had a click rate of 17.32%. The industry standard for click rate is 2.7%

### Public Newsletter

Time Frame	Bounce Rate	Open Rate	Click Rate
Q1	3.78%	19.58%	17.55%
Q2	5.77%	21.52%	17.5%
Q3	1.4%	21.1%	17.7%
Q4	2.06%	23.0%	9.0%
2014 Average	3.25%	21.55%	15.4%

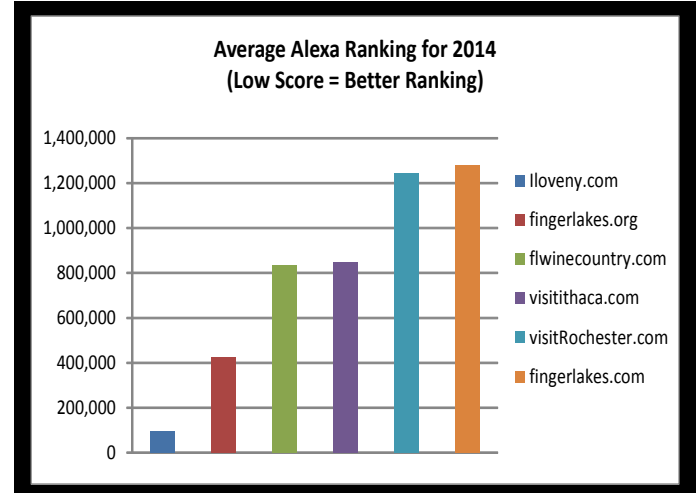
### Partner Newsletter

Time Frame	Bounce Rate	Open Rate	Click Rate
Q1	.82%	27.1%	13.3%
Q2	2.4%	30.0%	21.0%
Q3	1.83%	31.5%	26.0%
Q4	1.8%	32.0%	9.0%
2014 Average	1.71%	30.15%	17.32%



FingerLakes.org is a comprehensive collection of organizations located in the Finger Lakes region and is the premier source of Finger Lakes travel information on the internet. In 2014, there were 742,826 visits to FingerLakes.org, compared to 694,566 last year, representing an almost 7% increase. There were also 3,367,692 page views, a 10.61% increase over 2013.

In 2014, FingerLakes.org continued to lead other area travel websites in website effectiveness and web traffic. According to Alexa rankings, a website ranking system that grades the performance of all websites, FingerLakes.org is beaten only by ILoveNY.com when compared to other tourism websites in this region in website effectiveness. The Alexa ranking system is counter intuitive by appearance, but the lower the number for ranking, the better a website's overall score.



## Social Media

The Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance continued to utilize a number of social media channels in 2014. Social media allows FLTA to interact with partners and the public to increase awareness of FLTA and its partners as well as disseminate news to those who follow or like our pages. All of FLTA's followers are all engaged, organic followers; FLTA does not purchase followers.

### Facebook

The FLTA Facebook page saw a tremendous increase in followership in 2014. At the start of 2014, FLTA had 5,422 followers on Facebook that number increased to 8,547 by the end of 2014, a 57% increase. Facebook was used to distribute FLTA and partner news to the masses, appearing on our fans' newsfeed.

### Twitter

The FLTA Twitter account, @TourFingerLakes, also showed a significant increase in followers, going from 4,416 to 5,969 followers in 2014. This 35% increase came from the use of hashtags to attach to larger movements. Key hashtags for FLTA and other Finger Lakes organizations in 2014 were #Flx and #Flxwine; these hashtags will continue to be important and will be expanded upon in future years.

### Pinterest

Using Pinterest, FLTA hosts digital corkboards organized by topic. Linking to a full article or more information on the image, the pictures give viewers information about the Finger Lakes region or a partner organization. Pinterest followership went from roughly 750 at the end of 2013 to 915 at the end of 2014, a 22% increase.

# 2014 Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance Achievements

## January

FLTA's Jessica Robideau met with 50 operators, and group tour planners, up 10 from 2013, at the ABA Marketplace in Nashville, Tennessee to discuss group travel opportunities in the Finger Lakes.

Travel blog "Adventures of Muma Dean" linked to FingerLakes.org to highlight recent travels to several regions including the Finger Lakes.

## February

Canadian media writer Rania Walker informed FLTA her previous article about the Finger Lakes that had been released in the fall of 2013, would be rerun in the Huffington post for huge exposure and continued readership. The rerun of Walker's article resulted in a big spike in website visits for FingerLakes.org.

FLTA and representatives from partner organizations attended the Receptive Services of America Summit to meet one on one with receptive operators. FLTA received 10 scheduled appointments, a number lower than expected due to a snow storm the day of the show.

## March

FLTA met with 9 legislators to discuss the economic importance of tourism and discuss several key tourism issues, including regional funding.

Jessica Robideau met one on one with 33 operators at the Heartland Travel Showcase. The average number of one-on-one appointment was 15-20 during this showcase; this shows strong interest in the Finger Lakes region.

## April

FLTA hosted Brazilian operator, Caius Marcelo Costa and his family on a familiarization tour as part of the Wine, Water and Wonders program.

FLTA's Cindy Kimble and several members from the Board of Directors attended the Empire State Tourism Conference in Syracuse.

FLTA received a \$100,000 line item in the NYS budget to use for regional marketing and advertising efforts for the Finger Lakes.

## May

Jessica Robideau attended the North American Journey's Summit thanks to an invitation from Greg Marshall of Visit Rochester. Jessica was able to have one-on-one appointments with receptive operators at this show.

FLTA hosted the annual Literature Exchange at Waterloo Premium Outlets. Roughly 125 partners attended and exchanged brochures and took part in networking opportunities.



## June

FLTA supported the Finger Lakes Wine Symposium as they celebrated the success of the Finger Lakes wineries and educated consumers on how far Finger Lakes wines have come in recent history.



## July

FLTA hosted Jim Winnerman, a travel writer and radio personality from St. Louis, Missouri. Winnerman highlighted several partner business in an on air interview that aired in August.

FLTA hosted Alexandre Quilghini and Holly Leibowits, who were visiting the Finger Lakes to promote their international focused website, VoyagerLoin.com. VoyagerLoin.com has a large presence in the French market and has a high social media following.

FLTA connected satellite radio personality Phil Silverstone with a number of FLTA partners for interviews. The interviews aired in August on his radio show “Time Out with Phil Silversonte & Cliff’s Notes” and accompanying write ups were posted on TickettoEntertainment.com.

## August

Jessica Robideau was put in touch with Roberto Lucenti from Switzerland. Jessica worked with Lucenti to connect individuals from the region for a Swiss television show that connects a Swiss and US town with the same name. The show visited the Finger Lakes to film in August that will ultimately air in the Switzerland marketplace.

Cindy Kimble attended the Governor’s Cup Finger Lakes Wine and Craft Beverage Tour. Cindy met with key members of the Governor’s team, including Lieutenant Governor, Bob Duffy.

## September

FLTA held an informational meeting for partners at La Tourelle.

## October

Jessica Robideau met with regional county and private sector representatives to discuss major Finger Lakes happenings to speak to at in the January, ABA Marketplace, promoting group travel.



## November

FLTA was awarded the Love New York award at the New York Wine and Culinary Center’s New York State of Mind Awards.

## December

FLTA Recieved award notice for three CFA grants.

FLTA held their annual holiday party with roughly 125 partner businesses in attendance alongside key assemblymen & legislators.

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