

ANNUAL REPORT

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2019 FINGER LAKES REGIONAL TRAVEL GUIDE



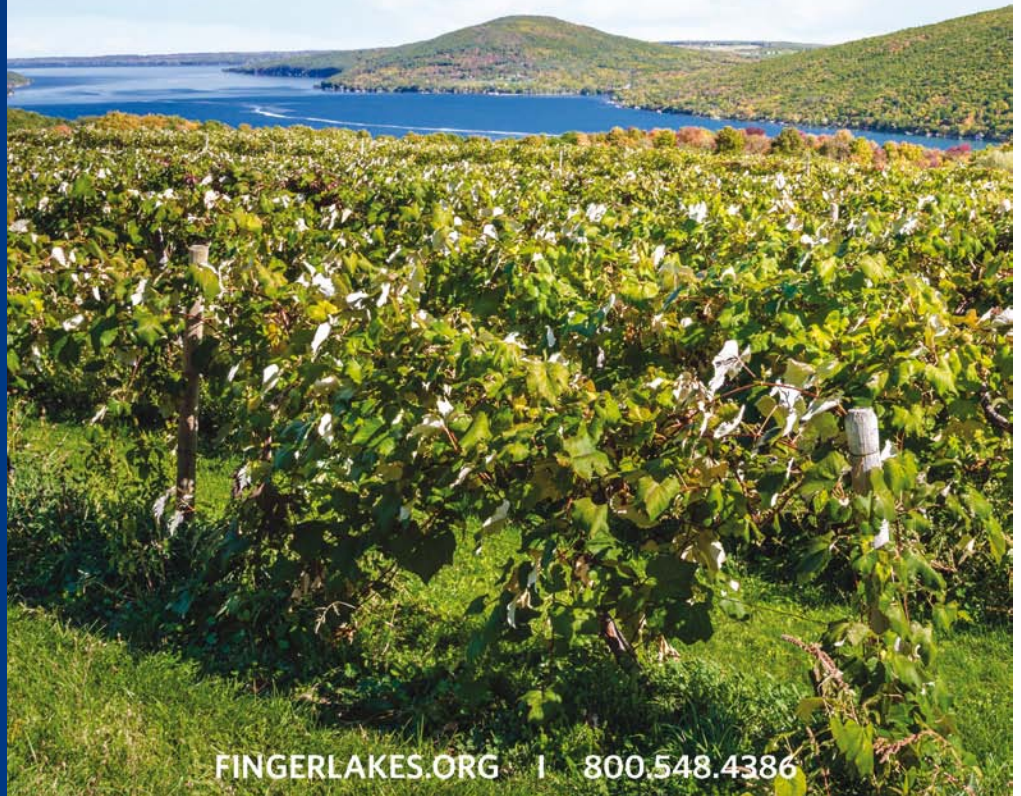
NEW YORK'S

FINGER LAKES

TOURISM ALLIANCE ★ 1919-2019



Our 100th Anniversary Year is made possible thanks to the gracious support of CK Cellars



FINGERLAKES.ORG | 800.548.4386

FINGER LAKES TOURISM ALLIANCE

OUR MISSION

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

OUR VISSION

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

OUR 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.

Celebrating 100 years in 2019, the FLTA is recognized as the oldest regional destination marketing organization in the nation and is also one of the longest-standing, continuously operating destination marketing organizations in the United States.



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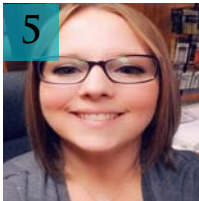
2019 STAFF MEMBERS



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- 1 **PRESIDENT**
Cynthia Kimble - CindyK@FingerLakes.org
 - 2 **DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & SALES**
Jessica Robideau - JessicaR@FingerLakes.org



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- 3 **MARKETING & SALES ASSISTANT**
Amanda Markessinis - AmandaM@fingerlakes.org
 - 4 **OFFICE MANAGER**
Karen Colizzi Noonan - KarenN@FingerLakes.org



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- PRIOR 2019 STAFF MEMBERS**
- 5 Office Assistant - Jennifer Lovejoy
 - 6 Marketing & Sales Assistant - William Simile

2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joe Gober– Chair – Americana Vineyards – At Large Representative
Neil Morris– Vice-Chair – Indus Group – Monroe County
Michelle Hyde – Secretary – Clute Park/Village of Watkins Glen – Schuyler County
Gene Pierce – Treasurer – Knapp Winery – Seneca County

Mandy Webster– Hilton Garden Inn– Cayuga County
Matt Hufnagel – Subway Restaurants – Chemung County
John Pointek – Greek Peak/Hope Lake Lodge – Cortland County
Tom May – Beachcomber of Conesus Lake – Livingston County
Danielle Neuser – Embassy Suites at Destiny USA - Onondaga County
Ethan Fogg - Canandaigua Chamber of Commerce - Ontario County
Coleen Fabrizi - Corning’s Gaffer District - Steuben County
Todd Chandler – Tioga Downs Casino & Resort – Tioga County
Inez Vermaas – Enfield Manor Bed & Breakfast – Tompkins County
Bonnie Hays – Historic Palmyra – Wayne County
Paul Curcillo – CK Cellars – Yates County

Sue Poelvoorde – Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway – At Large Representative
Ex-Officio – Laury Ward
Ex-Officio – Fred Bonn

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND 2019 CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

In 2019, the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance (FLTA) successfully executed its Marketing Plan and provided opportunities to our partners that allowed them to purchase additional advertising options through FLTA, all while celebrating our 100th anniversary. Grant funds were used to augment FLTA's already existing marketing efforts.

Our 100th Anniversary Celebration, in May 2019, was an event that the tourism community of the Finger Lakes won't soon forget. The event, sponsored by CK Cellars was a huge success! With 264 attendees the efforts past, present and future for FLTA had all feeling a sense of pride to belong to an organization that is considered the oldest regional destination marketing organization in the nation. As this is typed we both still feel that overwhelming sense of pride and excitement! The air was palpable that night with a sense pride, and a sense of belonging to something greater than one's self. FLTA, from the net proceeds of this event, was able to establish a scholarship program. The first award winner was Claire Rejman, a Cornell University student of hospitality, and she was presented with a \$2,500.00 check at the December Holiday event.

The FLTA's website saw 547,705 visitor sessions! To monitor the overall effectiveness of the fingerlakes.org site, FLTA benchmarks against other regional websites. FLTA organic sessions and overall session time were above all others; page view counts also exceeded industry standards. The FLTA website continues to be a strong choice among the visiting public for gathering travel planning information, and this was confirmed in our regional research project conducted by Travel Marketing Insights. Research results were released in January 2019 and can be found on the research page of our website. It should be noted that significant changes to the Google landscape continue to occur and FLTA, working with our vendor Corporate Communications, has implemented an aggressive search engine optimization/search engine marketing (SEO/SEM) effort. This effort has lead contributed, in part to the 21% of growth year over year for the website.

FLTA thoughtfully invested marketing dollars to avoid duplication of efforts with other entities promoting the region. An example of this deliberate decision was providing a limited investment in public relations. Due to the investment by others, FLTA allocated little by way of funds into public relations. However, 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 2018 Tourism Economic reports from the State indicate that visitor spending increased by 4% over the prior year, making tourism a \$3.2 billion dollar business for the Finger Lakes region. The State as a whole posted a growth rate of 6.2% for the same period. As we execute our 2020 plans we will work to gain more of the state's market share. The results for the 2019 Tourism Economic report should be made available by June of 2020 and once provided can be found in the research section at FingerLakes.org.

In addition, the Board's continued investment in the Book a Room Now (aka: JackRabbit) system 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 43,391 referrals were made to participating accommodation partners, resulting in estimated booking revenue of \$1.3 million in visitor spending for the region during 2019 as a direct result of this booking engine alone.

As we look forward to 2020, we are planning to deliver cooperative marketing programs that focus on electronic marketing media, both SEO and SEM 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, as well as brochure distribution at consumer show and efforts that will continue to direct traffic to the highly visited fingerlakes.org. All efforts will utilize the data from the research project delivered in 2019. All efforts will tie to the key strategic objectives outlined by our Board as they delivered the Strategic Plan for the next three years (2020-2022). It will be through the efforts of New York State, FLTA's Board of Directors and our private/public partners' investment and cooperation that we will continue to promote the region as a desired destination, grow visitation, and nurture that sense of regional pride!

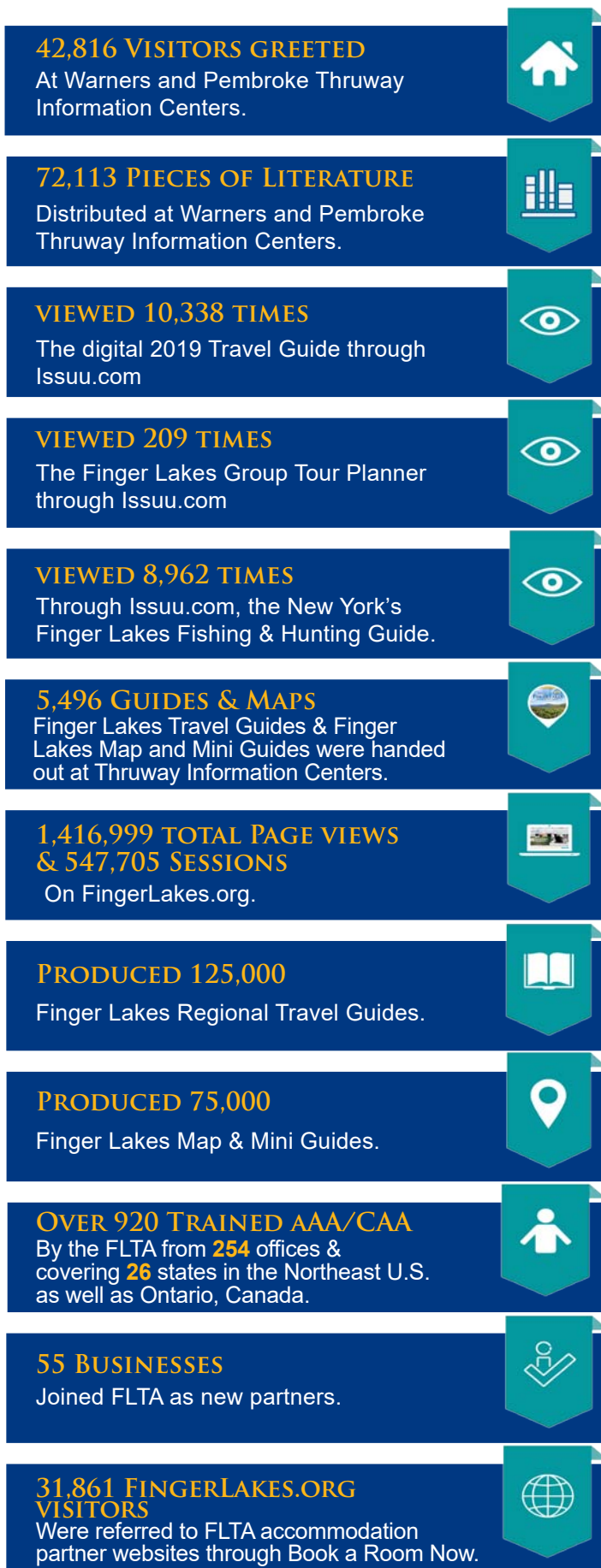


CYNTHIA KIMBLE
FLTA PRESIDENT



JOE GOBER
2019 FLTA CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

BY THE NUMBERS IN 2019...



CONSUMER SHOW REPORT

In 2019, FLTA was represented at a number of consumer shows through Anderson Brochure Distribution. The Consumer Show report from Anderson Brochure Distribution recapped the 26 shows they attended across the US for 2019. Anderson Brochure Distribution attended the following shows on FLTA's behalf:

- **PA Farm Show**
- **Pittsburgh RV show**
- **Ohio's Indoor Recreational Vehicle Show**
- **Lehigh Valley**
- **Washington**
- **Florida (Tampa RV Supershow)**
- **Toronto**
- **New Jersey**
- **Atlanta**
- **Fort Myers**
- **Cincinnati**
- **Erie RV Show**
- **Ottawa RV**
- **Springfield – The Big E**
- **Atlantic City**
- **Maryland - The Timonium RV show**
- **Harrisburg**
- **Montreal**
- **Philadelphia**
- **Syracuse - CNY Camping**
- **York RV show**
- **Quebec**
- **Mid Atlantic**
- **The Great Allentown Fair**
- **Hershey - America's Largest RV show**

Attendance at all of these shows combined reached over 1.6 million people & potential impressions for the Finger Lakes region. Roughly 3,000 2019 Finger Lakes Regional Travel Guides were distributed throughout the year through Anderson's Brochure Distribution at these shows.

2019 HIGHLIGHTS



GROUP TRAVEL PLANNER

Group friendly FLTA partners were offered the option to be included in the 2019-2020 edition of the Group Travel Planner. As always, a text listing is part of the basic partnership structure and comes at no additional cost. This bi-yearly publication showcases group travel locations throughout the Finger Lakes region and allows key decision makers in the group travel market to receive more detailed information about group accessibility, capacity, pricing, and more at partner business locations as well as itineraries on how to traverse the region. This is a full printed publication and was created in the fall of 2018.

Partners interested in targeting the group market who are new businesses to FLTA since fall of 2018 or weren't included in the bi-annual publication as a result of limited group capabilities at the time the piece was published, were encouraged to monitor their email for a survey which will allow them inclusion in an insert into the printed magazine style piece sent out on years the full publication is not printed. This insert was created, and placed inside the group travel planner and mailed out to roughly 700 decision makers in the group travel market in the fall of 2019 when they start planning their 2020 trips.

EMAIL MARKETING



Using two separate newsletters, FLTA informs the general public and over 850 partners on what is happening in the region and what is going on at the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance. The FLTA public newsletter is received by over 58,000 people who have shown interest in learning more about the Finger Lakes and the FLTA partner newsletter goes out to our roughly 1,000 business points of contact. FLTA is

hitting a steady average of 1% bounce rate and open rates hovering around the 20% mark or higher. As reported by Constant Contact, Travel and Tourism email benchmarks rate at 16% open rates and 11% bounce rates. Released every other month, the FLTA public newsletter keeps the interested public informed of what's going on in the Finger Lakes, including important news from the FLTA offices, FLTA partners, as well as seasonal, informational articles about the region.

The FLTA partner newsletter, released every month keeps our partners informed of upcoming and new opportunities and programs offered by FLTA. This newsletter also includes any important news from FLTA or FLTA partners that could be relevant to partners.

PARTNER NEWSLETTER '19				
Year End Summary	Recipients	Bounce Rate	Open Rate	Click Rate
Q1 Totals	803	0.60%	27.00%	4.00%
Q2 Totals	815	0.30%	23.30%	4.00%
Q3 Totals	824	0.27%	30%	10.60%
Q4 Totals	762	0.27%	22.00%	4.50%
Year End Totals	3,204	0.36%	25.58%	5.78%

PUBLIC NEWSLETTER '19				
Year End Summary	Recipients	Bounce Rate	Open Rate	Click Rate
Q1 Totals	53,936	2.00%	16.00%	1.50%
Q2 Totals	53,490	1.15%	18.00%	5.50%
Q3 Totals	109,859	3%	14%	2%
Q4 Totals	59,217	2.00%	16.70%	1.30%
Year End Totals	276,502	2.04%	16.18%	2.67%

RANKING FOR FINGERLAKES.ORG

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 2019, there were 547,705 visits to FingerLakes.org, 547,705 sessions, and 1,416,999 page views.

FingerLakes.org was redeveloped two years ago and designed to a responsive format, which allows views on all screens and devices in order to meet the ever changing needs of the digital and consumer landscape. Google Analytics throughout the duration of 2019 proved that mobile viewing was increasing dramatically to validate the investment of restructuring the website. In 2019 we dedicated effort towards strengthening SEO results to ensure highest organic rankings for those searching for Finger Lakes content. FLTA has invested with companies like Corporate Communications and Media Impressions to focus on search engine optimization (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM) efforts, such as paid social media awareness campaigns and search engine ad words campaigns to keep FingerLakes.org top of mind throughout the year. FLTA continued to use Facebook and expanded social outreach through Instagram to promote itself, be relevant on trending platforms, and promote partner organizations.

FLTA continued to use giveaways to drive traffic to both the FLTA social media sites and those of our partner businesses. In working with our media partners at Media Impressions, utilization of marketing funds awarded as a part of the line item in the NYS budget were allocated to create interest in the region and visitation to partner businesses.

SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK



INSTAGRAM



PINTEREST

Facebook continued to be the top performing social media outlet for FLTA in both followers and growth. At the end of 2019 the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance Facebook fan followership reached 36,751 people.

Expanding our social media reach on Instagram, we were able to showcase the beauty of the Finger Lakes, as well as partner's special events and packages through imagery. At the end of 2019 the FLTA had 3,580 followers.

Tying visually interesting photos to a website that provides more information on a topic has become increasingly popular. FLTA continued its efforts on Pinterest, creating engaging content to draw web traffic & social interest. At the end of 2019 FLTA had reached 1,144 Pinterest followers.

2019 FINGER LAKES TOURISM ALLIANCE ACHIEVEMENTS

JANUARY

- Jessica Robideau met with 43 operators representing well more than the average number of appointments for a destination marketing organization seller at the American Bus Association Marketing show that took place in Louisville, KY.
- Media representatives and producers from WXXI worked with FLTA with plans to film a documentary on the history of the Finger Lakes as a part of the 100th anniversary year celebration. The documentary is scheduled to hit the screens in May of 2020.



- FLTA received official word that the legislation to designate the Finger Lakes region as National Heritage Area was awarded a bill number with the House of Representatives continuing the positive trend towards designation.

FEBRUARY

- FLTA's Jessica Robideau met with 28 operators for 1:1 meetings and group tour planners at the Heartland Travel Showcase in Detroit, MI to discuss group travel opportunities and group friendly businesses in the Finger Lakes.
- Jessica Robideau attended the Pennsylvania Bus Association Annual Meeting in Atlantic City to meet and network with motorcoach operators in the PA bus market. The Annual Meeting allows for connections with motorcoach operators who make the buying decisions.



MARCH

- Coverage of the National Heritage Corridor legislation continuing down the path towards finalization to designate the Finger Lakes region as a National Heritage Corridor was picked up by several news outlets including WXXI, Rochester Business Journal, and Life in the Finger Lakes.
- FLTA's President, Cindy Kimble and representatives from the Finger Lakes region met with legislators in Albany, NY to discuss the economic importance of tourism and presented our views on several key tourism issues; including regional funding.
 - Representatives from the Finger Lakes region included FLTA Board member John Socha of The Showboat Motel, and Neil Morris of Indus Hospitality Group.
- Support continues for the National Heritage Area distinction for the Finger Lakes region and meeting opportunities with legislators helped to support this effort and foster good relationships to ensure this designation will be supported from a legislative perspective to come to fruition.

APRIL

- William Simiele and Jessica Robideau attended the New York State Tourism Industry Association Conference in Buffalo to learn about marketing and tourism trends and network with industry peers.

2019 FINGER LAKES TOURISM ALLIANCE ACHIEVEMENTS CONTINUED

MAY

- FLTA celebrated its 100th year anniversary by hosting a Gala sponsored by CK Cellars. This event was attended by dignitaries, legislators, partner and non-partner businesses and donations from the event went to creating a Finger Lakes Regional Scholarship, awarded out in the winter of 2019.

- FLTA held its Annual Literature & Brochure Exchange in the parking lot of Waterloo Premium Outlets with its greatest turn out in years with 158 partner businesses attending.



- FLTA distributed over a pallet and a half of 2019 Finger Lakes Regional Travel Guides, premiered the 2019 Map & Mini Guide and gave partner businesses a chance to network and exchange collateral material.

JUNE

- FLTA finalized the 2020 marketing plan with the feedback from the marketing committee.
- Travel guide distribution continued with outreach and delivery to partner business locations and high volume areas for visitors looking for trip planning materials.
 - Media Impressions continued marketing and advertising to promote partner businesses and the region as a whole with social media campaigns targeted to travelers and those looking for inspiration for new trip destinations. This effort was doable based on the FLTA receiving the award of a line item in the NYS budget.

JULY

- FLTA reached out to partner businesses for their inclusion in the 2019-2020 Group Travel Planner that would be printed later that month and sent out to operators looking to book business in the Finger Lakes.
- The 2020 Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance marketing plan for partner businesses and visitors was approved and accepted by the Board of Directors and shared with partner businesses to leverage their marketing efforts for a cohesive regional message.

AUGUST

- The FLTA welcomed Marketing and Sales Assistant Amanda Markessinis to the team. Jessica and Amanda started meeting with partners to review 2019-2020 partnership opportunities.
- Finalization and printing of the Group Travel Planner insert took place representing those businesses that were not included in the full print publication and new businesses that FLTA welcomed to its partner business community.
- FLTA received receipt of a clean audit.

SEPTEMBER

- Cindy Kimble and Board members met in district with Legislators at the federal and state level, holding 25 meetings in the 3rd quarter, and 2 more are scheduled for the 4th quarter.



OCTOBER

- FLTA worked with Wine Waters and Wonders and I Love NY to bring several FAM tour groups to the Finger Lakes in the 4th quarter. This included a German Fam group with 5 German operators. They spent a day and a half in the Finger Lakes; starting in Elmira, going to Glenora, Watkins Glen, The Windmill, and then concluding the tour in Rochester.

- In mid-October FLTA's Cindy Kimble met a UK travel writer, Mary Mason Moore who was in town for two and a half days, writing about the anniversary of the women's right to vote. During her time she visited Syracuse, the National Women's Hall of Fame, Fox Run Vineyards, Lakewood, Watkins Glen International, Ithaca Downtown, and more. An article on her time in the Finger Lakes will be published in early January of 2020 by Moore.

NOVEMBER

- FLTA received word that there would be feet on the ground to make the Finger Lakes a National Heritage area in May of 2020.

DECEMBER

- FLTA held their annual Holiday Party December 10th from 3-6pm at Lakeside Country Club, in Penn Yan. At this event attendance was roughly 174 partner business representatives as well as key Legislative representatives & guests.



Pictured left to right:
FLTA President, Cindy Kimble, Alison Hunt, representing Congressman Tom Reed's office and James Merritt, Wedding & Events Manager of Glenora Wine Cellars.



Pictured left to right:
Alison Hunt, representing Congressman Tom Reed's office and Claire Rejman, sophomore at Cornell University

- At the Holiday Party, FLTA recognized 2019 Excellence in Customer Service award winner James Merritt, Wedding & Events Manager of Glenora Wine Cellars. This award is selected by prior years' winners. James was recognized with a plaque commending him for his service by Alison Hunt, the representative from Congressman Tom Reed's office.

- The FLTA announced the first ever Finger Lakes Region Scholarship recipient, Claire Rejman, sophomore at Cornell University. She was also recognized with a plaque commending her for her dedication and service to the region by Alison Hunt, the representative from Congressman Tom Reed's office.



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