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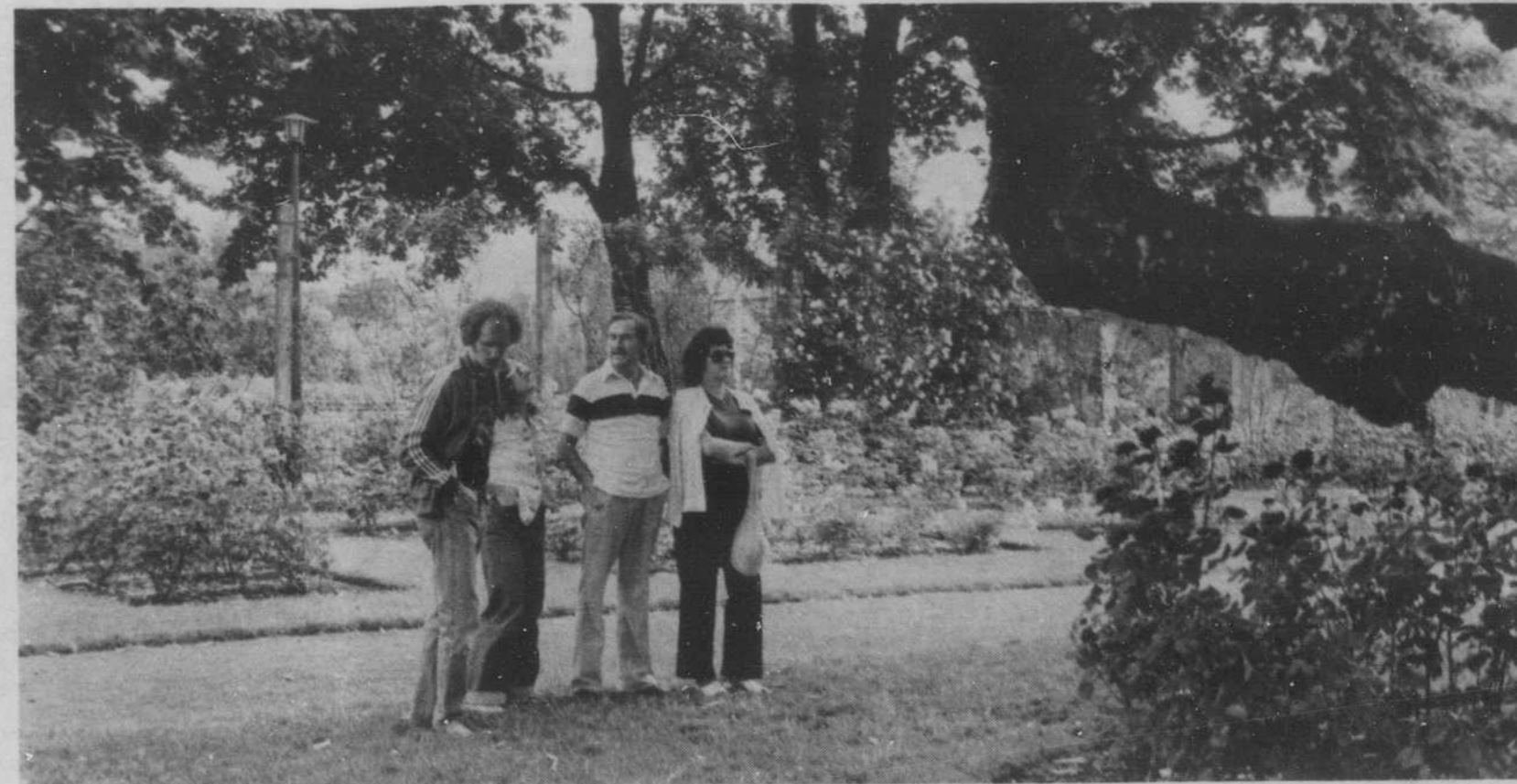


Photo by Jay Jollon

The Performing Arts Center and the Hilton Complex perform a key role in attracting tourism.

Bringing them in

Arts, recreation offer best tourism hope

By John Hart
Of the Emerald

Editor's Note: This is the second in a two-part series on tourism in Lane County. The first part looked at the potential positive and negative effects. Today's article will explore what's being done to promote tourist attractions and what some of those attractions are.

Lane County has an abundance of talent and recreation opportunities but not enough people to take advantage of it all.

Consequently, the Eugene-Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau, along with area government and business representatives, are gearing up to promote the business and recreation activities here to a wider range of potential visitors, according to convention coordinator Jamie Brothers.

Dick Reynolds, executive director of the Performing Arts Center, one of the participants in these efforts, says the idea is to promote Lane County as a "total enjoyment and business community" to outsiders so they will spend their recreation and

conference dollars here.

In order to reach their objectives, promoters will have to target a larger audience.

Planning and lots of hard work have resulted in an attractive package filled with an array of interesting things for would-be business or pleasure travelers to do while they are here.

The next step is finding an audience. Visitors to the Eugene-Springfield area, as well as associations and businesses that consider the area for conferences or conventions, receive information covering everything from the wildest white-water rides in a kayak to a schedule of cultural events at the Performing Arts Center, which is expected to open in September.

In addition to a packet prepared by the visitor's bureau listing services and accommodations available in the area, the Eugene Parks and Recreation Department provides a list of facilities and activity assistance available to persons planning a trip to the area.

Marilyn Steele, supervisor of the Petersen Barn Community Center, says the department stands ready

to provide information and facilitate program activities, entertainment, social events, and area tours.

One of the vehicles used for this purpose is a quarterly publication compiled by the center that lists all the activities and services they offer. This is also available to local residents for their recreation planning.

Steele says efforts are being made to make this information part of the package offered by the visitor's bureau.

Brothers says one of her present goals is to furnish this information to airlines along the West Coast to present travelers another alternative when planning their vacation.

Reynolds says he considers people traveling the I-5 corridor as a potential market by offering entertainment and accommodations for persons taking overnight journeys throughout the coastal states.

In addition, the visitor's bureau has started an advertising campaign that, when fully implemented, will include advertisements in major newspapers and magazines. Nationally-based trade associations are also being contacted, with a personal visit by the bureau's sales representative when they are located near Lane County.

Reynolds says his efforts have been directed through mailing lists, radio and TV stations, and a speaker's bureau like one utilized by Brothers' group.

Bothers says that 46,000 delegates are scheduled to come into the community through conferences and conventions this year, and they are expected to spend more than \$9 million.

In 1981, 56,000 delegates spent \$15 million in Lane County.

Reynolds adds that some of these conferences have already bought blocks of tickets for performances scheduled during their other activities here.

One of the major events scheduled by the Performing Arts Center is a summer 1983 performance by the New York Philharmonic, Reynolds says. The Eugene performance will be their only West Coast appearance.

Although Reynolds says he feels Lane County's park system will be one of the major drawing cards to the area, cultural events, such as the philharmonic's appearance, will make the attractiveness of the area appeal to a wider range of visitors.

"There are three very broad components that cause people to come here — business, special activities and relatives living in the area," Reynolds says.

An increase in the number of people drawn to the area by promotions and the completion of the Performing Arts Center will result in a demand for more and varied events for them to attend, according to Reynolds.

He says that will provide additional opportunities for local artists, since the Eugene Symphony Orchestra and four other "major" performing groups in Eugene cannot finance the center alone.

Area art and entertainment groups will be expected to contribute, he adds.

Eugene councilor Cynthia Wooten agrees that the center's need for additional revenue is an opportunity for local groups to increase their revenue and gain additional exposure.

The area can become a "breeding ground" for

aspiring artists and performers, she says.

While emphasizing their desire to maintain the quality of life currently enjoyed by area residents, promotion supporters admit their efforts also include attracting people here to live.

They insist, however, they don't expect their efforts to interfere with the existing quality of life in Lane County.

Wooten goes one step further. She says we can't just rely on the opportunities that are currently available.

She suggests using what we currently have to initiate promotion efforts and then work on further development of the downtown area and the parks system. She also says, to be truly competitive, the area needs to develop events that will be popular on a national basis, suggesting an activity comparable to the Rose Festival Parade in Portland.

She says attracting them here is very important, but "it is more important for business representatives to want to stay, in terms of investments."

"We need to dress up the downtown and encourage city center activities, to supplement such activities as the 100 free concerts now available through the parks system," she says.

She suggests creating additional taxes on tourist activities, similar to the current "room tax" added to hotel bills in Eugene.

Part of the revenue from these taxes would be used to fund promotion efforts.

The remainder could be used in conjunction with matching federal funds to develop parts of town where people can work and live cheaply, she suggests.

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