



Shoppers browse the offerings on May 30 at the Ilwaco Saturday Market.

had in 2019 and combine it with the least bad impact that we had in 2020, over those two years combined that would actually put us as the top county in the state," Day said. "That is a phenomenal accomplishment that we should all celebrate and feel really good about."

She added she knows it's been a tough year and businesses are struggling, but they also need to give themselves a lot of credit.

Pacific County's lodging tax collections were at \$1,322,159 in 2020, just about 2% less than in 2019.

For the first quarter of 2021, lodging tax collections have been 65% above the same quarter in 2019 and 50% above the same quarter in 2020.

"As we well know, anything could happen but if we stay on this track we're going to come in well beyond any year we've ever had," Day said.

"It was amazing what everyone did working together and maybe that's the key," Day said. "Businesses, government and residents all came together and worked toward our common successes."

The visitors bureau and the Pacific

County Tourism Bureau created a direct booking portal online to help people reserve lodging through a central place. The organizations also plan to launch a job posting portal to help address the workforce shortages seen across multiple industries.

David Blandford, the executive director of the Washington Tourism Alliance, was the guest speaker at the State of the Industry meeting.

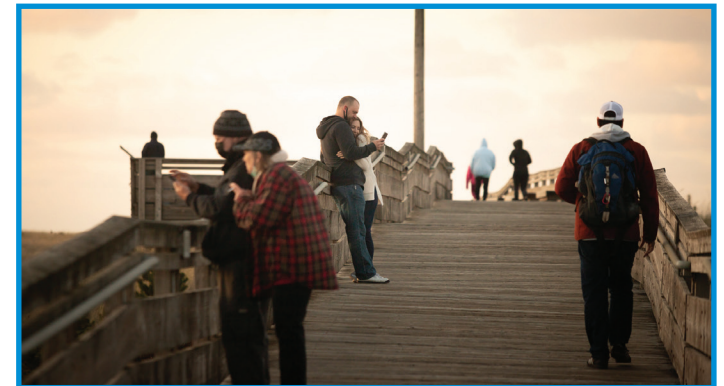
While Pacific County's data was relatively positive, Washington state's was another story. Tourism-related employment in the state dropped by 27% in 2020.

"Prior to COVID, the travel and tourism industry led job growth in Washington state, but now through the pandemic it's dropped the farthest," Blandford said. "That shows it's incredibly powerful. Our industry is the fourth largest in the state and if we can generate jobs we can regenerate the overall state economy."

However, through grant programs, partnerships and workshops, the state is working on a destination development program to support rural and underserved communities and small businesses.



The sun sets while two visitors walk next to North Head Lighthouse in April.



The Long Beach boardwalk is a popular spot to watch sunsets.

PHOTOS BY LUKE WHITTAKER



Beachgoers watch a sunset near Bolstad Beach Approach in Long Beach.