



### **Message in a Bottle - Notes from Colleen's Desk, July 27, 2023**

The last two months have been a bit of a whirlwind for me, having moved from my childhood home to new digs. I did not change zip codes but did change jurisdictions; I crossed the border.

When you know it's time to make a move, change, cut ties, or cut your hair, you get it done.

There was no message in a bottle that swept up on the beach during my recent coastal getaway and nothing was found lodged in a creek during one of my wilderness walks. My closest friends and associates understand me when I say that it was as if God had written on the ceiling – “Depart Colleen! Your assignment here is complete.” Good enough for me!

And thus, in the span of about 40 days I went from not thinking about a move to being fully moved! I like the fact that it was about 40 days, as I felt like I was in the wilderness for most of that time, half packed, sorting through my parents' remaining treasures, sentimental about leaving my homeland, and preparing to pass the torch of home ownership to my son.

And not coincidentally it has been about 40 months of traversing the wilderness in SOREDI's role as the regional economic development agency for Southern Oregon. Navigating pandemic, retirements, new staff, wildfires, remote work, and new technologies had its challenges.

There is still economic, political, and social uncertainty, of course, today. However, we are confident in our marching orders and purpose as the regional business development agency. We are pulling various initiatives out of the closet, throwing some things out, and revisiting how we can refine our collective messaging to promote our region as an engaging, proactive, and cohesive community for businesses to prosper.

### **Specifically, how do we refine and consistently implement our One Rogue Valley messaging to attract and retain companies, workforce, and visitors?**

More certain is that we know it should not and cannot be a note tucked in a bottle, obscure and waiting to be discovered. Our Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG) for many years now has been to become the most business friendly region on the west coast. In fact, all 15 jurisdictions signed a business-friendly proclamation. This proclamation is matted and hung prominently in ours and some other offices, not as a message in a bottle – obscure, waiting to be discovered - but visible to all.

So, let's dust off that BHAG and get to work with consistent, unifying, collaborative coordination throughout our region. SOREDI is privileged to lead this effort, as our founding fathers imagined, but surely, it is not just *our* message. We all have a role to play as ambassadors

in regional economic development – you as a business, you as a citizen, you as a business service provider, and you as a community leader.

This is your community! How friendly are you when you are out and about?

In particular, how engaged are you when in the airport baggage claim area or at one of many regional venues when a visitor is asking what to do or see in Southern Oregon, or what it is like to live or do business here? What are your message points?

### **Business Recruitment and Retention (BRR) Committee**

This SOREDI Committee, originally called a marketing committee, has been on hold since January 2020. A monthly gathering of various partners and SOREDI members, we meet to talk about strategies to recruit, retain and help companies prosper in our region. We ensure that One Rogue Valley strategy tactics, with help from various coalition groups, are prioritized and on point to create measurable outcomes.

[\*Southern Oregon Edge business profiles\*](#), site consultant familiarization tours, lead generation firm contracts, and even the region’s Business Friendly Proclamation were all staff-generated ideas vetted, approved, and moved forward by the BRR Committee.

[\*Jaymes Tadlock\*](#), Business Development Manager, will be leading the return of our BRR. Timeline for its return, 4th quarter 2023.

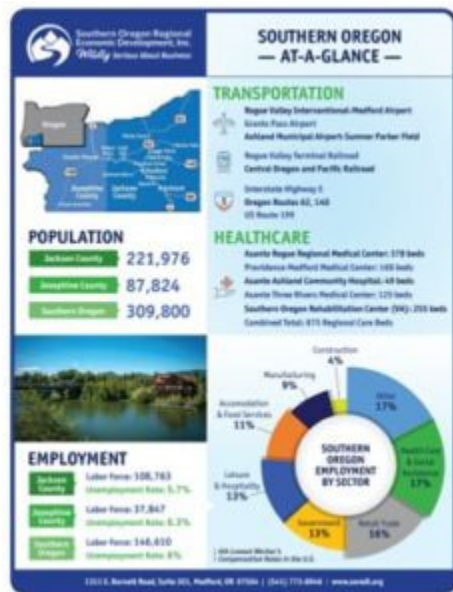
### **“One Rogue Valley” Business Conference**

For 17 consecutive years SOREDI held a regional business conference, with pertinent subject matter, keynote speakers and on occasion, breakout sessions for 200-300 guests. A significant change-up is in motion now to enhance regional messaging and the partnerships we already enjoy with all our Chambers of Commerce to convey that we are complementary partners serving various niches in our regional business services ecosystem. We are now passionately determined to create one jointly owned and facilitated business conference.

We meet regularly for Regional Economic Vitality (REV) Chats and help one another promote events and initiatives and push projects over the finish line. In addition, a chamber executive leader holds a position on our board.

What can you expect? An updated and unifying collaborative event, named appropriately the One Rogue Valley Business Conference. Watch for “save the date” details for April 2024 at the Rogue X Aquatics and Event Center in Medford for its inaugural, unifying comeback.

## “Southern Oregon at a Glance” Profile



We receive frequent requests for demographics, largest employer lists, and cost of doing business information, respective to the entire region. You guessed it – updates are needed, and we have the capacity again to work on this in earnest, assuring we all consistently have the same talking points when we talk to businesses, entrepreneurs, and visitors.

This two-page flyer is available upon request

[carrie@soredi.org](mailto:carrie@soredi.org)

Early on in my life, my first real job was at a local restaurant as the hostess. We were trained to make a great first impression, because it is the only one you get! And statistics at that time indicated that a person who receives bad customer service is 10 times more likely to tell others about their bad experience than their good experience!

*Yikes!*

So, what is our hope for you following this writing?

Choose to be a positive influencer for economic development in the region and share broadly the benefits of doing business in Southern Oregon. Choose to opt out of the “message in a bottle” approach.

Let’s cut to the chase. Cut ties with outdated ideas and old lingering competitions that do not unify and leave our old dusty dwellings behind.

We invite you to engage in being one of the many ambassadors for regional economic development and spark fresh new conversations about all that our region has to offer. Not sure about your talking points? Call us. You are part of our team!

Sincerely,

Colleen Padilla, Executive Director

*Trail Name: Spark*