



Discover Long Island president and CEO Kristin Jarnagin presents their new tourism ad campaign, juxtaposing Long Island images with lyrics from the National Anthem.

Arly/Smith

Long Island gets a new brand

Story By: **TARA SMITH**

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Tourists. They crowd our roadways, pile into our favorite restaurants and mispronounce the names of our towns. In loving frustration, we forget why they choose to vacation where we live and how their money fuels an ever-growing hospitality and tourism industry on the Island.

"If we start thinking about visitors as dollar signs, maybe that's not such a bad thing," said Cooper Lawrence of the WBLI Morning Show, welcoming hundreds to a sold-out brand reveal and annual meeting of the Long Island Convention & Visitors Bureau at the Patchogue Theatre on Nov. 2.

According to the bureau, 234 million travelers visited New York State in 2015, bringing \$102 billion in total economic impact — a nearly 26 percent increase from 2010. The Long Island tourism region has seen a 3 percent increase in traveler spending in one year, up to nearly \$5.5 billion last year. That number is expected to continue to grow, which is why the LICVB is revving up an international ad campaign to encourage travel to our island.

Last November, the LICVB welcomed Kristen Jarnagin as their new president and CEO. She relocated from Scottsdale, Ariz. and began to view Long Island from a true visitor's perspective. "I had no idea how vast and diverse this Island was and how welcoming the community would be," contrary to the rough-around-the-edges stereotypes she was used to hearing.

So Jarnagin worked from scratch with her team at the LICVB to create a campaign that would not only attract visitors to Long Island in the peak season, but year-round as well. "I wanted to make the brand reveal a show," Jarnagin said, explaining why they chose to host the event at the Patchogue Theatre instead of their usual banquet hall or hotel venue.

"Patchogue captures a successful downtown revitalization and it's the kind of place we want people to enjoy about Long Island, whether they are traveling locally or from far distances," added Jamie Claudio, LICVB's director of brand development.

Since moving here, Jarnagin has learned that Long Island has plenty more to offer than just stunning beaches and shorelines.

Jarnagin and her team thought the best way to capture that essence was to use lyrics from the National Anthem in a series of ads connecting the sense of Americana with what Long Island has to offer.

They took the first four lines and created four messages to go along with each. The first is a play on the opening line: "O say can you sea," paired with a beach theme. "By the dawn's early light" pays tribute to the many Long Island lighthouses that have guided ships to shore. "What so proudly we hail" references presidential history and the Belmont Stakes. Finally, "At the twilight's last gleaming" salutes the eastern agritourism industry — vineyards and agriculture, as well as downtown nightlife and the Nikon Theater at Jones Beach.

They will also be promoting Long Island's Beverage Trail — a challenge to Jarnagin after hearing concerns from local residents. "Promoting liquor is a sensitive issue that we must be aware of," she said. "We want to attract the right kind of visitor who wants to enjoy these products — safely and responsibly."

Looking ahead to 2017, they hope to focus peak season promotion to the international visitor. According to Jarnagin, these visitors come from further away and therefore stay longer and spend more money. This is key to ensuring that our hospitality industry can stay afloat even in the off-season, since many rely on these tourism jobs to get them through the year. In the off-season, they will gear promotion toward local and regional visitors.

As part of their campaign, they are ditching the name LICVB for a more modern and less-of-a-mouthful name, Discover Long Island. Just last month, the NYS Tourism Industry Association recognized the campaign with the Cultural Tourism Award. It was the first time the Long Island region has ever received recognition during the annual ceremony.

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Their new logo features a crashing wave as the 'O' in 'Discover.' For Jarnagin, the new logo, branding and ads work together to highlight more of what Long Island has to offer.

"Long Island is a place of living legends. We are both beauty and brains," she said.

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