

QUARTER 1: JANUARY-MARCH FY2026

A photograph of three people skiing on a snowy mountain. On the left, a woman in a red and teal jacket and black helmet looks towards the center. In the middle, a man in a blue jacket and patterned helmet looks down. On the right, a woman in a camouflage jacket and black helmet is laughing with her mouth open. They are all holding ski poles and standing on skis. The background shows a vast, snow-covered mountain range under a clear sky.

Cortland County Convention & Visitors Bureau

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FY 2026 Quarter 1

The first quarter focused on keeping Cortland County visible during the winter months while also setting the stage for the busier travel season ahead. A major piece of that work was the winter campaign with Visit Ithaca, which drove strong engagement and traffic to trip-planning content. Cortland Curiosities also played an important role, keeping local stories, history, and unique places in front of potential visitors as spring and summer travel planning began.

The first few months of the year also brought a lot of activity around events and programming. The 3rd Annual She Shines drew a solid crowd, including first-time visitors from outside the county, while Roots & Rhythm moved forward with vendor commitments, sponsorship support, and event development. The Tourism Marketing Grant program also moved through review and approval, with funding recommendations finalized and contracts distributed to awardees. These efforts support local activity while creating more reasons for people to visit Cortland County.

A lot of work also went into the visitor-facing tools and partnerships that help keep our county in front of potential travelers year-round. That included the 2026 Travel Guide, website updates and distribution, social media, media outreach, and regional partnerships like America250, Brave Women FLX, Brew Central NY, and the NYS Haunted History Trail.

At the same time, a good deal of important behind-the-scenes work was happening as well. That included an ongoing website audit, planning for the travel guide and summer campaign, refreshing existing programs like the Ice Cream Trail, and starting to shape new programming and event opportunities for late 2026 and 2027 as grant opportunities begin to emerge.

Overall, the first quarter was about keeping things moving forward, supporting our partners and local activity, and getting ready for the busier travel months ahead.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Enright". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and larger than the rest of the letters.

Michelle Enright
Executive Director

Tourism Insights & Trends

Q1 Visitor Profile

January 1 - March 28, 2026 (Rove Marketing)

Visitor data from the first quarter shows a strong regional drive market, with travelers coming from within a few hours of Cortland County and engaging with a mix of outdoor recreation, dining, and local attractions.

Visitor Snapshot

- 53.2% overnight visitors
- ~40 hours average length of stay (overnight visitors)
- 192 miles average travel distance
- 40.2% repeat visitors

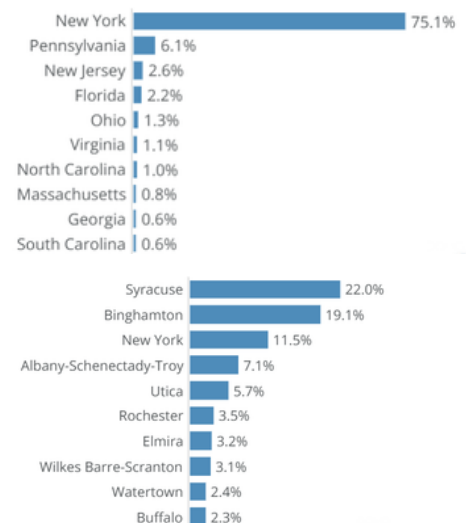
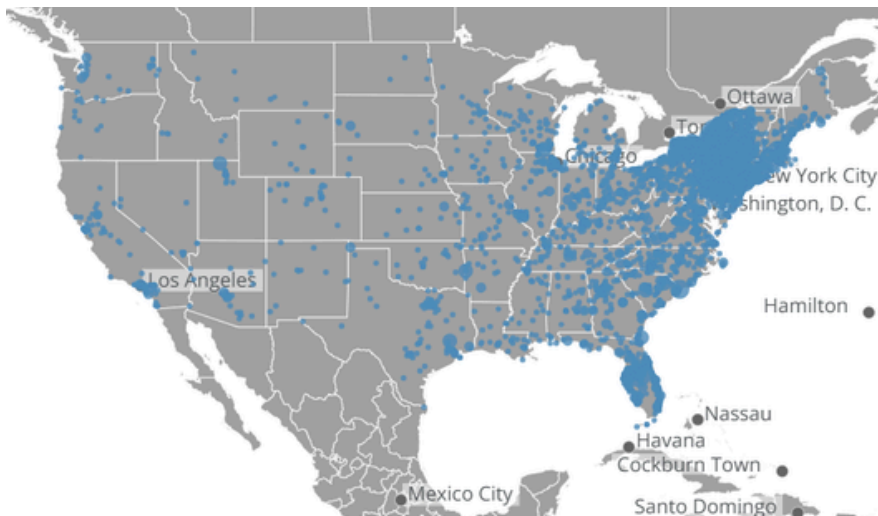
Who is Visiting

Average visitor age: 43

Average household income: \$83,552

Origin Markets

- Majority of visitors from New York State (75.1%)
- Additional visitation from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and surrounding states
- Travel patterns continue to reflect a regional drive market, with most visitors traveling between 26–200 miles



Top Visitor Attractions/Locations



Greek Peak



SUNY Cortland



Labrador Mountain



Song Mountain

Tourism Insights & Trends

Lodging Performance Snapshot

January - February 2026 (CoStar Data)

Recent CoStar data shows that Cortland County’s lodging market is holding steady, with performance continuing to be shaped by seasonal travel, sports tourism, and special events. While some longer-term trends point to softer periods, the data reinforces what we already know: when there is a strong reason to visit, people are coming and staying overnight.

Performance Trend			
Occupancy Rate	38.2% ↑	3 Mo Occupancy Rate	33.5% ↑
Average Daily Rate	\$138.43 ↑	3 Mo Average Daily Rate	\$130.68 ↑
Revenue Per Available Room	\$52.94 ↑	3 Mo RevPAR	\$43.79 ↑
YTD Occupancy Rate	34.8% ↑	12 Mo Occupancy Rate	42.7% ↓
YTD Average Daily Rate	\$134.09 ↑	12 Mo Average Daily Rate	\$139.84 ↓
YTD RevPAR	\$46.71 ↑	12 Mo RevPAR	\$59.76 ↓

Looking at the first quarter, data from January and February lines up with those broader trends. Winter is naturally a slower season, but overnight activity continues to be supported by weekend travel, events, and sports-related visitation. Performance is tracking as expected for this time of year, while helping position the county for increased demand heading into spring.

What We’re Seeing

Demand follows activity.

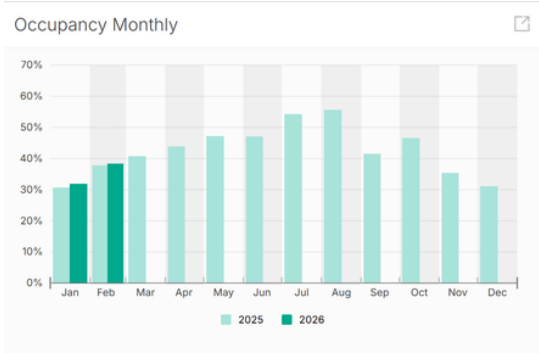
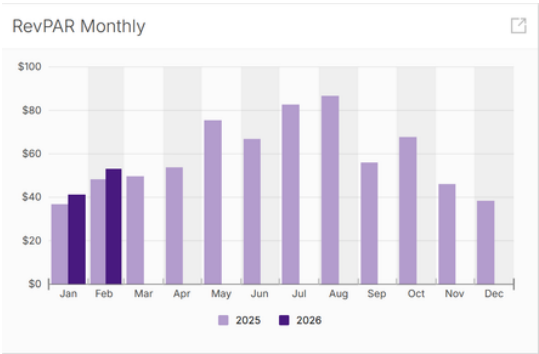
Hotel performance aligns with tournaments, events, and busy weekends, reinforcing the role these play in generating overnight stays during the winter months.

Visitors are still spending when they come.

Room rates and overall revenue remain steady, showing that travelers continue to see value in staying in Cortland.

Winter patterns are holding, with opportunity ahead.

January and February show typical seasonal softness, with stronger pockets of demand helping to balance slower periods. This highlights both the stability of the market and the opportunity to grow visitation during midweek and shoulder seasons.



MARKETING & PROMOTION

Winter Campaign (in partnership with Visit Ithaca)

Our regional winter PR campaign with Visit Ithaca and McCue Communications helped keep Cortland County top of mind for winter travelers. The campaign included digital advertising, media pitching, press release development and distribution, and design of a winter postcard to encourage travel to the region. We partnered with two travel-focused influencers who visited the area and shared their experiences with their audiences. In addition to helping us reach new potential visitors, this gave us a strong library of seasonal content that can continue to be used in future marketing efforts.

Campaign Highlights

- Reached 120.2K accounts
- Generated 185.2K impressions
- Drove 13.6K landing page views from 11.9K users
- Produced 31.3K post engagements
- Achieved a 14.12% click-through rate
- Saw the strongest interest from the 55–65+ age group
- Audience was 67% men and 32% women

Winter Postcard Challenge

- Distributed 250 postcards from the Cortland Corset Building, Center for the Arts, and Lime Hollow
- Received 103 completed postcards
- Postcards were mailed to 20 states and 4 international locations including Germany, Paraguay, Portugal and France.

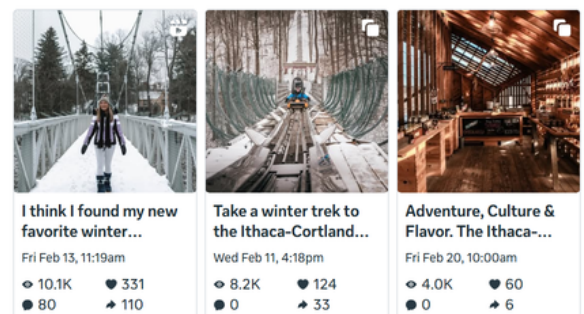
Influencer Partnerships*

- Hosted two influencers: [@brown.eyed.flower.child](#) (NYC) and [@carlymarie_travelwithme](#) (Buffalo)
- Visited Cortland County locations across outdoor recreation, arts & culture, food and beverage and lodging (sample itinerary attached).
- Created content viewed over 59.7K times (over 90% non-followers) and resulted in over 2.1K interactions, including 744 shares and 266 saves.

*Full report from PR agency not yet available.



Top content by views



MARKETING & PROMOTION

Cortland Curiosities

Used the Cortland Curiosities platform to keep our county's history and unique places top of mind while travel planning for the warmer seasons begins. Through reel series like **Backroads & Bunkum**, **Tales & Trails**, and **Follow Me**, we kept people engaged with the destination in a way that felt fun, story-driven, and uniquely Cortland. This is a strong tool for off-season visibility, helping remind potential visitors that Cortland offers experiences they are not likely to find anywhere else.

Facebook Reels drove the strongest performance, especially content focused on unusual stories and lesser-known places. That interest carried over to the website, where Curiosities content drove a strong increase in traffic and user engagement this quarter. While average time on page and views per user dipped slightly, overall growth in users and sessions shows the content is reaching a wider audience and continuing to bring new visitors into the trip-planning process.

Performance Highlights

Facebook

- 359.5K organic views (↑ **1.6K%**); 352K reel views
- 129.7K viewers
- 7.6K interactions (↑ **931.1%**)
- 5.3K visits (↑ **851.4%**)
- 1.5K follows (↑ **3.3K%**)
- Strongest audience: Women, ages 35–55
- Top markets: Cortland County, Syracuse, and Ithaca

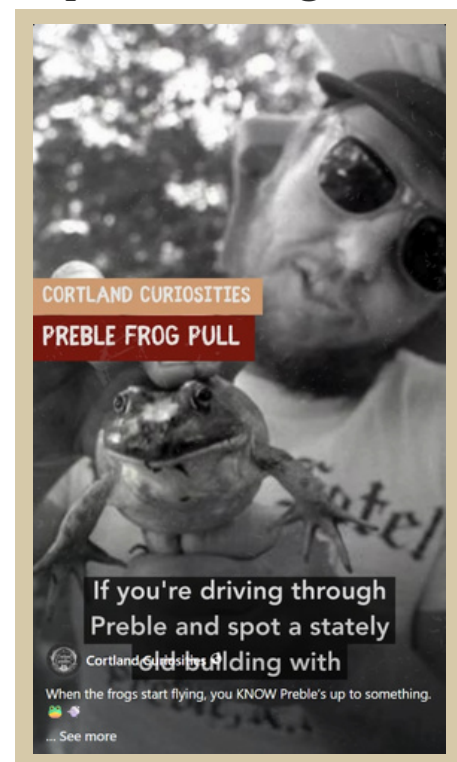
Instagram

- 9.9K views (↑ **100%**)
- 4.6K reach (↑ **47.2%**)
- 498 content interactions (↑ **100%**)
- Strongest audience: Women, ages 25–45

Cortland Curiosities Website Traffic

- 3.4K views (↑ **200.5%**)
- 1.4K active users (↑ **343.9%**)
- 1K engaged sessions (↑ **931.1%**)
- 2.44 views per active user (↓ **32.4%**)
- Average engagement time: 1m40s (↓ **40.8%**; **52 seconds is industry average**)
- Top audience markets: New York, New Jersey, Oregon, and California

Top Performing Post



43.3K Views, 90% Non-Followers
582 Interactions
211 Shares

MARKETING & PROMOTION

ExperienceCortland.com

ExperienceCortland.com is the main call to action for the CVB's marketing efforts and as a central trip-planning tool for potential visitors. The website saw steady growth in both overall traffic and active users, even during the slower travel season. Traffic continued to move people toward trip-planning content, especially event listings, lodging, dining, and things to do.

The Events Calendar was the most visited page on the site, which reinforces how important it is to keep local events visible and up to date. Partner listings for attractions, lodging, and recreation also performed well, showing that users are exploring places to stay and things to do while planning their visit. Most website traffic continued to come from New York State, though out-of-state activity aligned with markets tied to Prep Baseball Report tournaments. Outside of search engines, social media (859) remained the strongest source of referral traffic, followed by SUNY Cortland (422).

Quarter Highlights

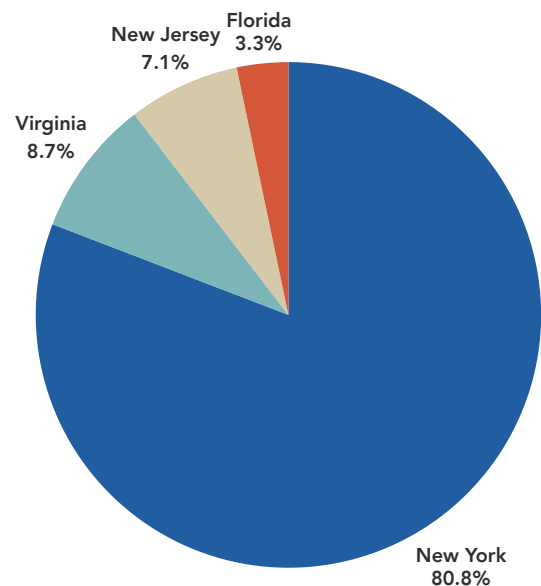
- 36,624 total views (↑ 7.47%)
- 14,565 active users (↑ 14.9%); 14,217 new users
- 4,354 Events Calendar views (↑ 14.52%)
- 250 Travel Guide requests

Most Visited Pages

- Events Calendar (4,354; ↑ 14.5%)
- Things To Do
- Restaurants
- Hotels + Motels

Top Performing Partner Listings

- Cascades Indoor Waterpark
- Cort-Lanes
- Greek Peak Mountain Resort
- Best Western FLX Plus
- Lime Hollow Nordic Center



New & Upcoming Website Updates

- Launched America250 landing page
- In development:
 - Private Events landing page and listings
 - Live in Cortland to support relocation interest



CELEBRATING 250 YEARS OF AMERICA'S STORY

In 2026, the United States marks its 250th anniversary, and Cortland County is celebrating in a way that feels true to our roots, through stories, landscapes, and the places where early American life took shape.

Tucked between the hills of the Finger Lakes region of New York, Cortland County offers visitors a chance to explore the quieter corners of history. From Revolutionary War connections to early settlement sites, this is a place where the American story continued long after independence was declared.

Whether you're a history buff, a curious traveler, or simply looking for things to do in Cortland County, our America250 Cortland County experiences invite you to walk where early settlers built their lives, gather around stories that shaped communities, and discover how local history fits into the larger American narrative.



MARKETING & PROMOTION

Social Media (Experience Cortland)

Social media is the CVB's strongest tool for keeping Cortland County visible, driving traffic to the website, and reaching both locals and potential visitors as they begin planning future trips or looking what to do in their own backyard. Performance was strongest in February during the winter campaign, when paid social efforts and content creator partnerships helped expand reach beyond our usual audience.

Facebook Performance

- 521.7K views (↓ 24.7%)
- 126.6K users reached
- 5.3K interactions (↓ 9%)
- 15.8K link clicks (↑ 877%)

Facebook engages both local and regional audiences, including residents, SUNY Cortland visitors, and those in town for sporting events. The primary audience remains women ages 35–55, with top-performing content often tied to local businesses and familiar places.

The drop in overall Facebook views and interactions compared to last year is likely tied to campaign differences, including the fact that last year's winter efforts included an additional content creator, which helped boost organic reach. Even with that decrease, link clicks increased significantly, which is a great sign that content is still driving people to take the next step and explore trip-planning information on the website.

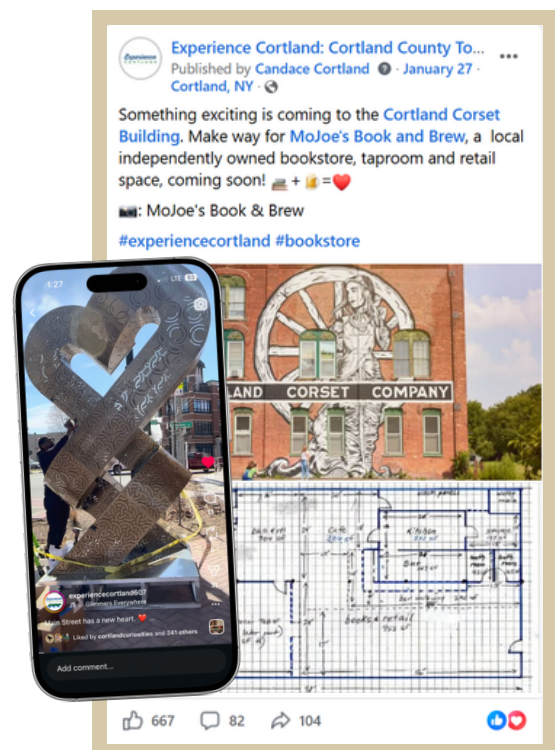
Instagram Highlights

- 14.8K users reached (↑ 45%)
- 6K interactions (↑ 45%)
- 144 link clicks (↑ 311.4%)

Instagram is the best social platform for reaching new audiences outside the county.

- January: 16K views, 64% from non-followers
- February: 79K views, 89% from non-followers
- March: 16K views, 65% from non-followers

Top Performing Posts



Facebook: Mojo's Book & Brew
65.9K Views, 35.9K Viewers, 855 Interactions
Instagram: Main St Art Installation
2.6K Views, 1.8K Reach, 295 Interactions

PUBLIC RELATIONS & PAID MEDIA

Media Mentions & Placements

The CVB uses media coverage to expand awareness of Cortland County beyond our own channels. Through ongoing outreach and collaboration with local, regional, and national media, we work to place our county in stories that highlight the area's experiences, seasonal travel appeal, and destination assets.

This quarter, coverage helped position Cortland County within wider conversations around winter travel, accessibility, family travel, and sustainable tourism. These placements help introduce the area to new audiences and add credibility to the work being done to promote the destination.

Notable Placements

AARP, [Fabulous Road Trips for People with Mobility Issues](#)

Readership: 17.8M

Curated Travel Magazine, [Sustainable Paths Through the FLX](#)

Fodor's Travel, [The 10 Best Snowy Getaways in North America \(FLX\)](#)

Readership: 864K

Snowbrains, [New York's Adaptive Snowsports Programs Open](#)

[Winter Adventure to All](#)

Readership: 490K

WhereverFamily, [Things To Do With the Family in New York's Ithaca-Cortland Region this Winter](#)

Readership: 14K

**result from winter campaign*

Brown Eyed Flower Child, [Cortland to Ithaca: Best Winter Getaway in Upstate New York](#)

**result from influencer visit*

Travel Pulse, [Top Events in the United States This April](#)

Unique Visitors Per Month: 217.4K



PUBLIC RELATIONS & PAID MEDIA

Print Advertising

Experience Cortland secured placements in several high-visibility print publications to promote the County throughout the spring and summer travel seasons. While many of these publications are distributed later in the year, placements were secured and developed during the first quarter to make sure Cortland County is included in key regional travel planning resources.

Print creative developed for these placements aligns with the CVB's current campaign messaging, **Leave Room for the Unexpected**, which highlights the variety of experiences visitors can discover throughout the county.

Confirmed placements include:

- Finger Lakes Travel Guide Magazine (100,000 copies distributed)
- Grassroots Music Festival Program (20,000 copies distribute)
- CNY Summer/Fall Guide (250,000+ readership)
- Dream Destinations Travel Show (distributed to 3-4K attendees from CT and MA)
- FLX Favorites Magazine (distributed throughout Finger Lakes region)
- Local: Cortland Repertory Theatre and Center for the Arts programs; Cortland Area Chamber Magazine

These publications are selected to reach visitors both within the Finger Lakes region and in key drive markets.



Leave room for the unexpected.

Your GPS might call it a reroute. We call it the good part. In Cortland County, one wrong turn becomes the right one - berry-stained fingers at a farm stand, a mural that asks for a camera-roll cameo, and small-town stages that convince you to stay "just five more minutes."

From ski slopes to campfire nights, craft brews to curtain calls, the moments you'll talk about later are rarely the ones you penciled in.

Experience CORTLAND

The unexpected starts here.
experiencecortland.com

PC: Allison Marie Photography, Matt Baldell



Oddly enough, you're going to love it here.



Follow the clues to Cortland County's weird, wonderful, and wonderfully true stories - strange landmarks, local legends, and the kind of history that makes you do a double take.



cortlandcuriosities.com



VISITOR EXPERIENCE & DISTRIBUTION

Travel Guide

Work is almost wrapped up on the 2026 Experience Cortland Travel Guide, with printing scheduled for late April and distribution beginning in May. The guide gets Cortland County in front of potential visitors, giving them ideas for what to do here, and helping them plan their trip.

New and Updated Features

- Kalash Kitchen, highlighting one of Cortland County's unique culinary experiences
- America250 content tying local history into the national story
- Updated itineraries to better support trip planning
- A feature on Forged from Ashe Studios
- A new health and wellness feature
- Updated business listings and refreshed photography

The 2026 guide also brought in \$22,750 in ad sales, showing strong partner interest in being part of one of the CVB's main visitor publications.

20,000 guides will be printed and distributed:

- Brochure networks and high-traffic visitor locations in WNY and North Central/Central PA
- Mailed to AAA offices in NY, NJ, Ohio, PA, VA, KY and New England
- Digital version on ExperienceCortland.com



Distribution (as of 3/31)

- Washington, D.C. Travel & Adventure Show
- Pittsburgh Travel Showcase
- New York City Travel & Adventure Show
- AAA Northeast Travel Marketplace (Boston)
- Chicago Travel Adventure Show
- Lehigh Valley Vacation Expo
- Upstate Sports Summer Expo + Montreal Outdoor Adventure Show

**Nine more travel shows scheduled for 2026*



TOURISM DEVELOPMENT & EVENTS

Experience Cortland Events

Experience Cortland developed and supported events that give people another reason to spend time in Cortland County, explore local businesses, and experience what the area has to offer. This quarter, that work included one successful signature event and one new event currently in development.

3rd Annual She Shines | March 22 | Homer Hops

She Shines is a community-focused event that highlights women-owned and women-run businesses, makers, and organizations while bringing people into Cortland County during the shoulder season. As part of the **Brave Women FLX** program, the event also benefits from added visibility across the Finger Lakes region, helping introduce both the event and Cortland County to a larger audience.

This year's event welcomed about 500 attendees, including a number of first-time visitors from outside the county, including Syracuse and Auburn. In addition to creating a strong showing for vendors, the event raised **\$800 for the Grace Brown House** through raffle donations. Paid promotion for the event also performed well, helping extend awareness beyond the local market.



Event Highlights

- Part of the Brave Women FLX program
- Celebrates women-owned and women-run businesses and organizations
- Approx. 500 attendees
- Included first-time visitors from Syracuse and Auburn
- \$800 raised for the Grace Brown House

Digital Campaign Highlights

- 15.9K reach
- 5.2K engagements
- 328 website views
- 5.29% click-through rate, above the typical 2–3% benchmark
- Target audience included women ages 25–55 in Ithaca, Auburn, Binghamton, and Syracuse within a 25-mile radius

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT & EVENTS

Experience Cortland Events

Roots & Rhythm | May 8 | Country Music Park

This quarter also included development of Roots & Rhythm, a new event designed to highlight Cortland County’s agricultural producers, local food, and live music.

A lot of groundwork took place this quarter to move the event forward, including vendor outreach, branding, and the development of a dedicated sponsorship packet to help support the event long term. Early response has been strong, with \$1,900 in sponsorship support raised to date and a solid group of participating vendors already committed.

The event will also act as a fundraiser for the Seven Valleys Health Coalition.

Participating vendors include Bronhom Farms, Cherry Knoll Farm, Cobblestone Valley Farm, Coop Scoop Homestead, Corl’s Cooking, Cortland Beer Company, Dragonfyre Distillery, Ensign Maple, Freetown Food Forest, Food & Ferments, Hollenbeck’s Cider Mill, Nex-Gen Farms, Nipotina Herb Farm, Sinfully Sweet Café and Trinity Valley Dairy.

Event Highlights

- New event focused on agriculture and local food.
- Created to support agritourism and highlight local producers
- Fundraiser for Seven Valleys Health Coalition
- \$1,900 raised in sponsorship support
- Planning efforts included:
 - Vendor outreach
 - Event branding
 - Sponsorship packet development



Hope to see you there!
Grab your tickets today!



Event Sponsorships

Homer WinterFest	Imagination Celebration*	St. Anthony’s Festival	Independence Day*	Cortland Pumpkinfest*
\$2,500	\$500	\$500	\$5,000	\$3,000

**Committed sponsorships, but not yet invoiced.*

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT & EVENTS

Experience Cortland Sports

Work on Experience Cortland Sports moved into its next phase, focused on supporting sports tourism across the county. The final report for the EDA Tourism Grant was submitted in January 2026, allowing us to shift from development to putting these assets to work, helping attract events and drive visitor spending.

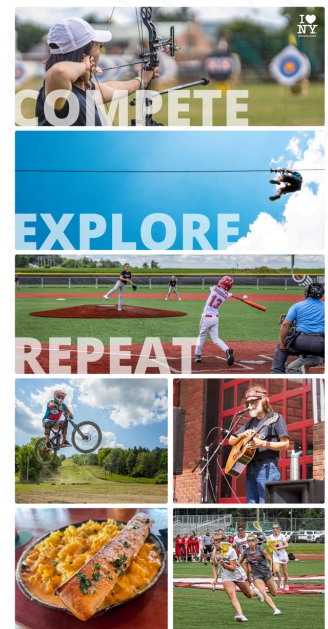
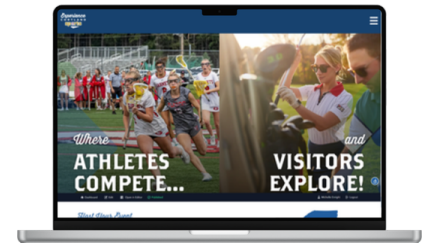
Attention has moved to building out the marketing campaign. The goal is to give the Cortland Regional Sports Council another useful tool for attracting events to Cortland, while also encouraging athletes and families already here to spend more time and money locally.

The ExperienceCortlandSports.com website is also being updated regularly with sports event listings and facility information. Even without promotion, the site has already begun generating traffic, with about 1.2K visits to date.

As the sports season ramps up, the next step is to start using these materials more actively during larger tournaments, including tabling when possible and serving as a resource for the CRSC, PBR, and other sports venues across Cortland County.

Discussions around the digital kiosk are still ongoing. as the town revisits Wi-Fi options at the park and we continue conversations with the state regarding promotion on park-alienated land. I want to make sure we fully explore options at the ballpark before deciding on a second location.

This quarter was about getting the foundation in place. Between the new collateral, website updates, and early visibility during NIRSA, Experience Cortland Sports is starting to come together as a stronger tool for both event recruitment and visitor engagement.



Your winning play doesn't end at the buzzer! Explore dining and activities between games.

CVB In Action: NIRSA Basketball Tournament

Worked with SUNY Cortland to distribute Travel Guides during the tournament, and welcomed athletes with a Main Street banner. It was a good opportunity to begin using Experience Cortland Sports materials on the ground and connect directly with visitors.



REGIONAL & STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

2026 Programming

Regional and statewide partnerships allows Experience Cortland to expand its reach and keeps Cortland County part of larger tourism conversations. These efforts help connect local assets to broader initiatives, extend marketing beyond what we can do on our own, and create added visibility for the county's businesses, events, and experiences.

America250

Launched a new landing page on ExperienceCortland.com to house local history content, events, and shared regional assets tied to the nation's upcoming 250th anniversary. Regional materials, including social graphics and branding assets, are now available for partners to use, and additional pieces like the coloring book and 1890 House poster are moving into production.

Participants: Historical sites and partners hosting America250-related events

FLX Outdoor Experience

Regional initiative focused on promoting outdoor recreation across the Finger Lakes. The dedicated website received 147.4K views this quarter and supporting rack card printed. A paid social campaign is also underway, with performance data expected later in the program.

Participants: Outdoor recreational and agritourism assets including Lime Hollow and Freetown Food Forest

NYS Haunted History Trail

A strong fit for promoting the area's unique stories, folklore, and historic sites. The program will include 30,000 printed guides, 33K+ newsletter subscribers, 116K social followers, and 149K active website users. The trail is also expanding beyond New York State, which is expected to bring additional visibility and new opportunities for participating destinations.

Participants: 1890 House Museum and The Glen Haven



*Pay-to-play initiatives through the Finger Lakes Region or CNY. Full data received at end of program/year.

REGIONAL & STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

2026 Programming

Brave Women FLX

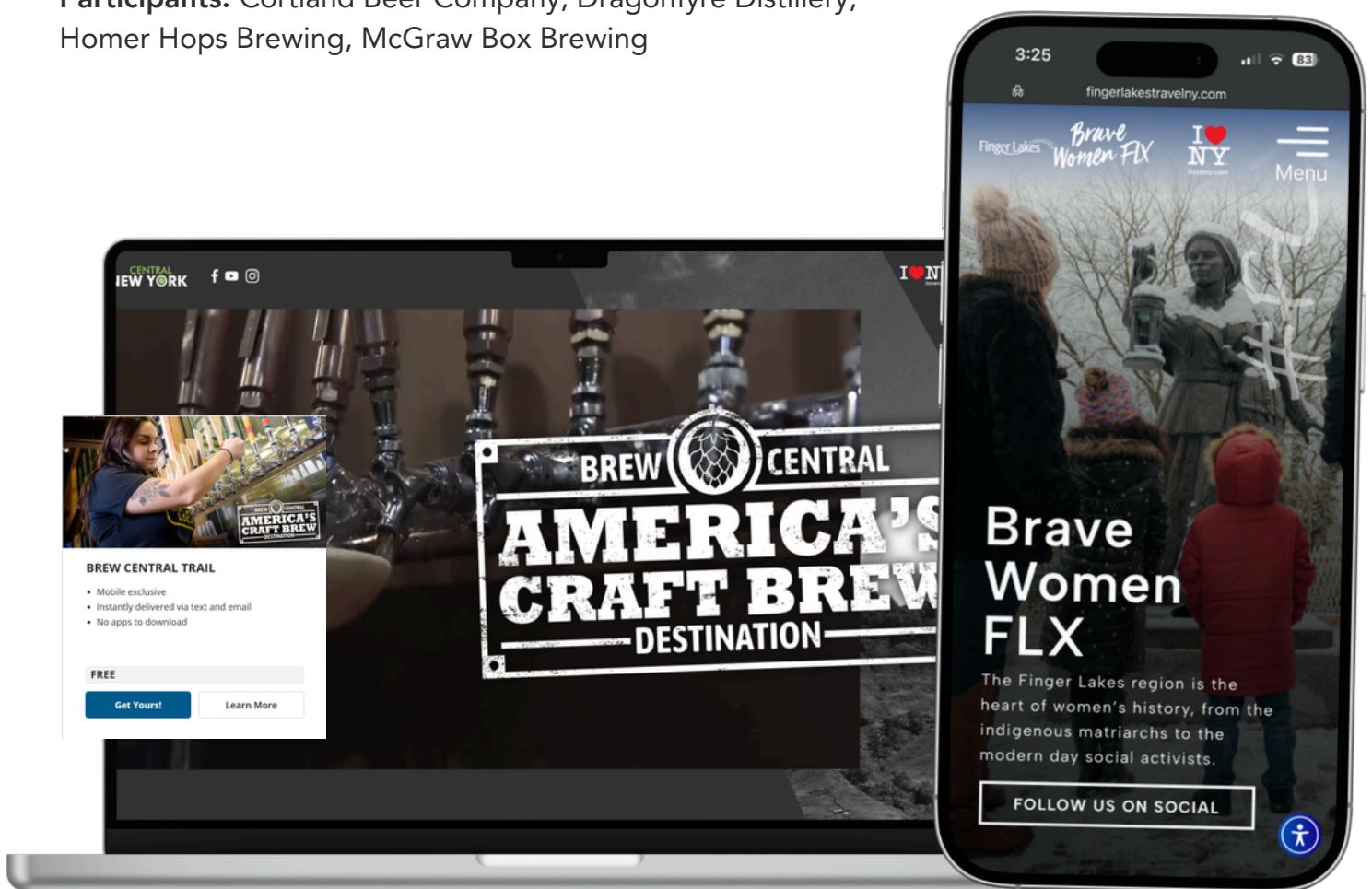
Focused on women-owned businesses and the stories of women trailblazers across the Finger Lakes. The program reached 23.7K website visitors and 3.9K social media followers this quarter. This quarter, She Shines was promoted as part of the initiative, helping expand its reach beyond Cortland County.

Participants: Women-owned businesses and historical assets

Brew Central

Included in a larger craft beverage and agritourism experience in Central New York. The program reaches 11.5K social media followers and includes a Brew Trail Digital Passport, which encourages visitors to move throughout the trail and explore participating locations across the region. This helps keep Cortland County's craft beverage businesses connected to regional travel planning and gives visitors another reason to include the county as part of a larger trip.

Participants: Cortland Beer Company, Dragonfyre Distillery, Homer Hops Brewing, McGraw Box Brewing



*Pay-to-play initiatives through the Finger Lakes Region or CNY. Full data received at end of program/year.

GRANTS

Tourism Marketing Grants

The Tourism Marketing Grant Committee met to review applications and put together funding recommendations for 11 organizations. Once those recommendations were approved by the Legislature, we met with awardees to walk through the process, answer questions, and distribute contracts.

Organizations can begin vouchering for eligible expenses as soon as their notarized contract has been returned.

AWARD INFORMATION

Organization	2026 Award	2026 Voucher*
1890 House Museum	\$11,000	\$0
Brockway Truck Association	\$13,000	\$0
Cortland County Historical Society	\$16,500	\$0
Center for the Arts	\$85,000	\$0
CNY Maple Festival	\$3,000	\$0
Cortland Arts Connect	\$8,000	\$0
Cortland Main Street Music Series	\$2,000	\$0
Cortland Repertory Theatre	\$55,000	\$0
Holiday in Homer	\$3,500	\$0
Homeville Museum	\$3,000	\$0
Lime Hollow Nature Center	\$30,000	\$0

**Organizations did not receive contracts until March 10, 2026.*