



## **Wenatchee Valley Sports Council 2009 Annual Report**

Prepared and Presented by Marketing Director Eric Granstrom

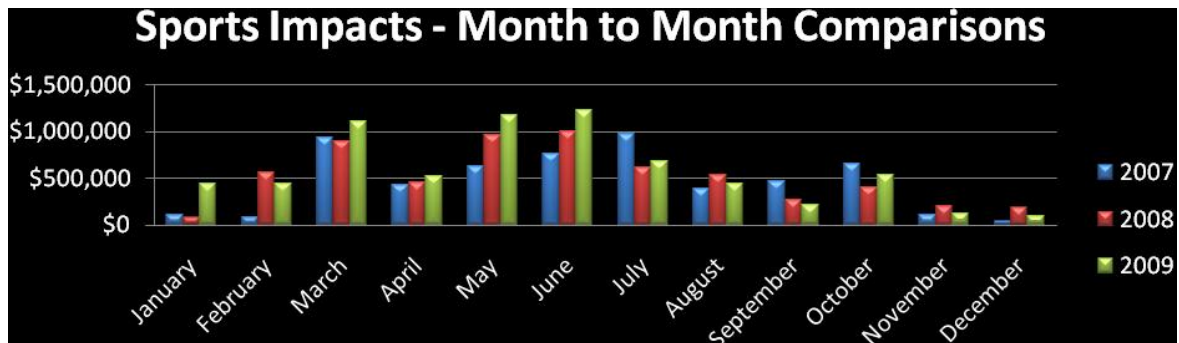
***“Sports is the only consistent performer in the tourism market today...Susie is only 11 once and she has a tournament and we’re going!”*** -- NASC Executive Director Don Schumacher

The words of National Association of Sports Commission Executive Director Don Schumacher rang true for much of 2009. As the world’s economy took a direct hit and aftershocks were felt through Washington State including the Wenatchee Valley, the sports tourism market seemed insulated from it all. That’s not to say we didn’t see sports events impacted in 2009. Overall, the Wenatchee Valley lost three cycling events and three softball tournaments. Thankfully, great seasons for the Wenatchee Wild and Wenatchee AppleSox as well as sports events taking place at the new Town Toyota Center, helped buoy the storm. The sports tourism market in the Wenatchee Valley saw a 14.1% increase in economic impact in 2009 over 2008. Extensive effort to market the Wenatchee Valley and reach new audiences via electronic media helped the success of the Sports Council in 2009.

### **Bottom Line Improvements**

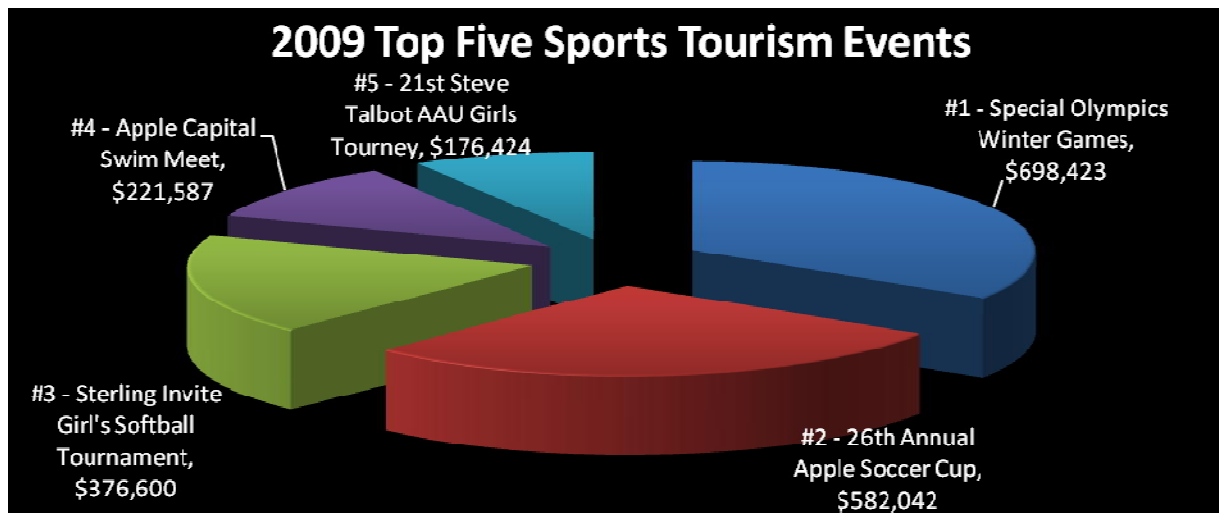
Over 48-thousand sports tourists ventured to the Wenatchee Valley for 165 events in 2009. With a sports “event” being defined as a multi-day activity that results in an overnight stay, the number was up 17-percent thanks in large part to tournaments and games at Town Toyota Center. Overall, the Economic Impact of sports tourism on the Wenatchee Valley economy in 2009 is estimated at \$7,026,922, a 14-percent increase over 2008. The 165 sports events brought equaled 22,597 rooms nights for estimated hotel revenues of \$1.7-million. And it was the first half of the year that made the biggest difference (see Figure 1).

First quarter EI (Economic Impact) for 2009 was nearly \$2-million and nearly \$3-million for the second quarter. That was almost 25% higher than in the first half of 2008. It's a good thing, because the second half of 2009 was down by 5-percent under 2008 figures. But again, compared with hotel revenues being down 11% and the overall tax receipts for the City of Wenatchee being down nearly 18-percent, the sports tourism market comes out smelling like a rose!



(Figure 1)

The largest single sports tourism event in the Wenatchee Valley is the Special Olympic Winter Games. With 1,400 athletes, 500 coaches and the friends and family that flock to the Wenatchee Valley from all over the state, the Special Olympics Winter Games equals nearly \$700,000 to the area's economy (see Figure 2).



(Figure 2)

The 2010 forecast is looking great with the addition of the Western Region Ski Championships, the Triple Crown Baseball Spring Kickoff Tournament and NAHL Robertson Cup Championships.

## Bang for the Buck

As the commercial says, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” Impressions are what we in the promotion world call a blip or advertising landing in a media outlet for someone to see. A full-page, four-color advertisement in a trade magazine with circulation of 100,000 can make a large “impression” in more ways than one. The Sports Council marketing budget for 2009 was \$37,190. That’s for media buys, event promotion, brochure printing and distribution, trade shows and promotion merchandise. If you add in the number of articles written about the Wenatchee Valley sports and outdoor recreation scene in 2009, over 1-million impressions can be accounted for.

Wenatchee Valley Sports Council advertising and promotion appeared in 29 newspapers and magazines in 2009, reaching an estimated audience of 1,094,322 people. This included trade publications such as Sports Destination Management Magazine and Sports Events Magazine to publications for the sports lover like Adventures Northwest and Racecenter Northwest. The goal of the Sports Council in 2009 was to actively promote the events already on the schedule, but also reach out for new events for 2010. I believe we were successful in both attempts. In addition, our campaign continued to market the area as an outdoor recreation Mecca with the theme of “Make the Wenatchee Valley Your Base Camp.”



I’m extremely happy to report that our marketing efforts paid off in 2009 with the landing of two, large sports events for the Wenatchee Valley in 2010. First, working alongside the Wenatchee Wild hockey team, we landed the 2010 NAHL Robertson Cup Championship tournament for May 2<sup>nd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>. Second, we landed the Triple Crown Baseball “Wenatchee Valley Spring Kickoff” tournament April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. These two events alone are expected to have an economic impact of approximately \$434,000!

## Pushing the Electronic Envelope

*"I think I'll wait this whole thing out...I believe it's just a fad."* -- Eric Granstrom in 1989 while purchasing a new stereo system and deciding AGAINST adding a CD component

Never again will I be caught on the outside, looking in when it comes to new technology. And when it comes to marketing your organization today, electronic media HAS to play a huge part. Whether it's via website, electronic newsletter and email or social media outlets, the Wenatchee Valley Sports Council continues to play a role in each with attempts at improvement all the time.



According to Google Analytics™, the Wenatchee Valley Sports Council website saw an increase in visits by 13% in 2009 over 2008 with 11,580. Page views were also up slightly at 4% to 21,805. Plans for 2010 include a redesign of the SC's website to hopefully attract more attention.

The monthly electronic newsletter saw amazing growth in distribution in 2009, up 49-percent over the previous year to 20,103. In addition, a weekly reminder began going out at the start of the year with a total of 47,306 recipients. Videos on the Sports Council's You Tube site captured 3,780 views and we now have 123 friends on Facebook.

## **Bids, Proposals and RFP's**

Despite a dour start to 2009 with a bid to host the WIAA State Volleyball Championships being turned down, the year provided exciting opportunities that will yield benefits into the future. Two of which were direct results for work by the Sports Council on the Valley's behalf.

As the Wenatchee Wild headed off for Mason City, Iowa for the NAHL championship tournament, ownership had in their hand a proposal to host the 2009 tournament in Wenatchee, thanks to work through the Wenatchee Valley Sports Council. Wild President Bill Stewart returned with a tentative agreement and over the next several months, the Sports Council was able to work with the club to secure the tournament for May of 2010.

While attending the National Association of Sports Commission meeting in Omaha, Nebraska in 2008, I began a relationship with Triple Crown Sports, based out of Fort Collins, Colorado. It was at the 2009 NASC conference in Denver that I was able to convince Triple Crown to do a site tour of the Wenatchee Valley for a possible tournament. In August of 2009, Triple Crown West Coast Baseball Coordinator Drew Reiner came to town and was given a tour of all the baseball facilities in Wenatchee and East Wenatchee and was introduced to facility owners and managers as well as baseball enthusiasts in the Valley. Drew was so impressed that by the end of September, Triple Crown had picked the Wenatchee Valley for a tournament in April 2010. Called the "Wenatchee Valley Spring Baseball Kickoff Tournament", Reiner had hoped for 25-teams the first year out. As of this report, 68-teams had already paid to play in the tournament April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. Tournament teams completely filled the new Springhill Suites by Marriott at a tune of \$169 per night!

Sixteen Requests for Proposals were issued from the Sports Council over 2009 asking for 5,073 rooms. Out of the RFP's, Red Lion was able to secure itself as the host hotel for a series of ski events in 2010 at Mission Ridge Ski and Board Resort. With RFP rooms being completely exhausted by the Triple Crown tournament in April, the Sports Council had to go out to Leavenworth and Chelan for additional room nights.

## **Events & Activities**

Standing in water, two inches deep, volunteers from the Wenatchee Sunrise Rotary and the Sports Council began our outreach campaign in 2009 at the Seattle International **Bike Expo**.



Our booth location left a lot to be desired, as we were in a tent, outside with driving wind and rain and water pooling everywhere. It made for a long, cold weekend, but attendees of the Expo appreciated the free apples and warm smiles.

I was selected President of the Washington Association of Sports Commissions in 2009 and was asked by WASC to provide a speech at the **NASC conference** in Denver during Opening Ceremonies in April. Crunch Pack provided boxes of product to supply the Washington booth during the trade show at NASC. The effort certainly helped the ongoing promotion of the Wenatchee Valley to a market well-beyond Washington State.

Upon my return from NASC, the Sports Council quickly became involved in a **negotiation** for **field use** between the Chelan County PUD and user groups, specifically the softball community. Budgetary cuts forced the PUD to adopt a policy of charging for field maintenance for the first time in history, which put a crunch on softball leagues and tournaments for the coming year. The Sports Council was able to bring the two sides together and hammer out an agreement.

The Sports Council welcomed author **Craig Romano** with a **reception** at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center in May as he promoted his new book, "Day Hiking, the Central Cascades." Following his visit, Romano wrote many articles that were published in the Seattle Times, Everett Herald and in Outdoors Northwest and Adventures Northwest magazines that helped promote the Wenatchee area.

Lessons learned at the NASC conference in Denver led the Wenatchee Valley to begin a partnership with the USA Olympic Committee. As a result, the Sports Council organized an **Olympic Day Fun Run** on June 23<sup>rd</sup> that included a presentation to kids from Olympic Gold Medalist Phil Maher and future Olympic hopeful Andi Jo Stump. This also kicked off a marketing effort involving the Sports Council with E3NCW, "Escape, Explore, Enjoy North Central Washington" toward the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, B.C.

Outreach continued in July with a visit by travel-writer **Crai Bower**. The Sports Council arranged for Bower to go **fishing with Dave Graybill**, "The Fishin' Magician" on the Columbia River. While the fishing was slow, the conversation varied between outdoor recreational opportunities and developing stories in the Wenatchee Valley, including the Town Toyota Center and two new hotels begin constructed. The net result was two great articles in Northwest Meetings and Events Magazine about coming to the Wenatchee Valley for business and pleasure.

August saw the Sports Council heavily involved in the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual **O'Terry's** Lads and Lasses co-ed softball tournament. The event has become an annual fundraiser for the Wenatchee Valley Sports Foundation. Over \$4,000 was raised as 31-teams played softball on seven fields in Wenatchee and East Wenatchee over the weekend. The Apple Valley Slowpitch Softball

Association chipped in monies to help pay for field maintenance charged by the PUD for use of the fields to ensure a successful fundraising event for the Sports Foundation.

The Sports Council again had a booth alongside Mission Ridge and the Leavenworth Chamber at the **Ski Fever** show in Seattle in November. Local hotels donated room nights and Mission Ridge lift tickets for a giveaway that saw a total of 449 entries. The Sports Council also took photos of ski show attendees on an actual retired chairlift chair from Mission Ridge and printed free of charge:



Events concluded in December with the Sports Council helping to put on the US Bank North Central Washington High School **Basketball Showcase** at Town Toyota Center. The Sports Foundation again kicked in \$2,000 in scholarships for participating schools in the NCW Scholarship Shootout. This year, Chelan won 1<sup>st</sup> (\$1,000), Entiat 2<sup>nd</sup> (\$600) and Waterville 3<sup>rd</sup> (\$400).

## In the End

When 2009 was all said and done, we in the sports community in the Wenatchee Valley were incredibly thankful for the Town Toyota Center. It really helped us weather the storm of a souring economy and turn a year that was down for everyone else into a 14% increase in sports tourism. With high hopes and new events slated for 2010, we can only hope to continue the trend.