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Oregon's Official Sesquicentennial Commemoration Ends

– 83% Awareness Generated of State's 150th Birthday –

PORTLAND, OR (September 24, 2009) – One year ago most Oregonians couldn't pronounce "sesquicentennial." Now, as the official sesquicentennial celebration comes to a close, 83 percent of Oregonians know 2009 is the year we commemorate our 150th year of statehood.

An independent survey conducted throughout the month of August 2009 found that 83 percent of Oregonians are aware of the state's 2009 sesquicentennial, compared to 34 percent in 2008, with nearly one-quarter of Oregonians having participated in an activity to celebrate Oregon's 150th year of statehood this year.

In a letter included in a new sesquicentennial viewbook available at www.oregon150.org, Governor Theodore R. Kulongoski, Honorary Chair of Oregon 150, the non-profit organization that planned the official celebration, and First Lady Mary Oberst, Chair of Oregon 150 write:

"Our sesquicentennial is coming to a close. The celebration started on February 14, 2009, has been extraordinary for many reasons. We have learned together, remembered together, had fun together, and most of all – pulled together. In a year that was difficult for many Oregon families, our celebration of 150 years of statehood reminded all of us who we are as a people, why we love Oregon, and how blessed we are to live here."

Oregon 150 set out to inspire people across the state to "remember, experience, and celebrate Oregon and, together, create a robust and sustainable future." The organization began its work on July 1, 2006. The organization will conclude the state's official seven-month commemoration on September 30, 2009, with many

independent community celebrations still planned through the end of the year. Oregon 150's final board meeting is Friday, September 25, 2009 in Portland.

Unlike Oregon's 1959 centennial in which the Legislative Assemblies committed \$2.6 million (nearly \$17 million in today's dollars) to the celebration, Oregon 150 received no General Fund dollars and has been dependent on private fundraising for its signature programs and activities after receiving support from the Governor and Legislature in the 2005 and 2007 biennium in the form of Lottery dollars. The Lottery funds (\$838,000) were used to help build the organization and cover early operating expenses. Of approximately \$3.3 million in funding, more than half came through in-kind donations, which totaled over \$1.4 million. Grants, corporate support, individual donations and the sale of promotional merchandise totaled just under \$1.0 million.

Among the sponsors of Oregon's official sesquicentennial celebration were PGE, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, Spirit Mountain Community Fund, Hotel Lucia & Hotel Deluxe, Columbia Sportswear Company, NW Natural, CH2MHill, Harry & David, The Kinsman Foundation, PGE Foundation, The Standard, The Wessinger Foundation, Port of Portland, Qwest, United Finance Co., Stoel Rives, Hoffman Construction Company, Regence, Maybelle Clark MacDonald Fund, and many others. See <http://www.oregon150.org/donate/sponsors>. Oregon 150 relied on a volunteer board of directors and had a talented small staff that executed its six signature projects.

Oregon 150 relied heavily on volunteers, in-kind donations like its website and logo, which were designed pro bono by Wieden+Kennedy; public service advertising, media coverage and community efforts. It was also the first state commemoration to actively utilize social media through blogs, Facebook and Twitter updates, including posts by Seski Sasquatch.

The official sesquicentennial planning group focused on executing six signature projects: Oregon Stories, Take Care of Oregon, Travel Oregon 150, Imagine Oregon Blog, Youth Legacy Projects, and *Oregon! Oregon! 2009*. The projects were created to reconnect Oregonians with our state and engender an appreciation of what it means to be an Oregonian. The viewbook showcases the ways in which Oregonians traveled the state, cleaned up communities, shared family histories, and envisioned the future is available today on www.oregon150.org.

Included are project highlights such as:

- **Take Care of Oregon Days:** More than 24,000 volunteers rolled up their sleeves and gave back to our state through community service in the largest volunteer project in the state's history. More than 600 community

service projects were part of Take Care of Oregon Days held throughout each of Oregon's 36 counties.

- **Oregon Stories:** Over 700 spoken and written stories were submitted from almost every county in the state as well as photographs, poems, videos, and songs. This was a statewide educational project designed to engage Oregonians in a dialogue about what being an Oregonian means to them, using their own words. The youngest authors were elementary school students the oldest was more than 100 years old. A selection of Oregon Stories will be published by Ooligan Press in early 2010.
- **The Youth Legacy Projects:** The Oregon Youth Legacy Projects involved youth statewide in efforts to build five Youth Legacy Parks and to share their vision for the state's next 50 years. The Youth Legacy Parks were a joint project by Oregon 150 and the Oregon Parks & Recreation Department, which created a special allocation of \$202,450 in OPRD Lottery-funded grants for five park projects including Broadway Park in Seaside, Waterfront Park in Hood River, Garden Lake Park in Creswell, Cheadle Lake Park in Lebanon, and City Park in Grass Valley.

Project 2059 inspired students from around the state to gather at Willamette University in August to participate in a youth leadership summit called Activate Oregon. Here students discussed, debated and dreamed about Oregon's future and their visions for the Oregon's next 50 years.

- **Oregon! Oregon! 2009:** "A territory's great but you gotta have a state..." Pink Martini and the 234th Army Band – Oregon National Guard debuted *Oregon! Oregon!: A Sesquicentennial Fable* in IV Acts at the State Fair on August 28, 2009. The 1959 musical classic by Stan Freberg was remade with an additional act and starred notable Oregonians who toured the state and performed to sold out shows. A video of the final performance at the Oregon Zoo is in production for airing on Oregon television stations and a DVD may be sold to benefit an Oregon charity.
- **Travel OR 150:** In partnership with Travel Oregon, the "I Am Oregonian" campaign was created to inspire Oregonians to rediscover the beauty, heritage and culture of our state through travel. Oregonians could prove their love for Oregon by taking "The Oregon 150 Challenge" online for a chance to win a Grand Oregon Tour filled with special lodging, dining and adventures. The campaign was chosen by *Forbes* magazine as one of the Top Ten Travel Campaigns currently running in the world. Others in the top 10 included (India, Jamaica, Australia, Alaska, Michigan, Virginia and Las Vegas).
- **Imagine Oregon Blog:** Throughout the sesquicentennial year, the Imagine Oregon Blog encouraged people of all ages to share their dreams for the next 50 years. Imagine. Dream big dreams. Be an Oregonian.

More than 280 official Oregon 150 partners across the state created special projects to recognize Oregon's sesquicentennial. Oregon 150's partners included non-profit organizations, cities, counties, tribes, chambers, and state agencies whose generous support contributed greatly to the success of this celebration.

Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes sponsored events and developed programming to commemorate the sesquicentennial, ranging from western Oregon's *Gathering of Oregon's First Nations* to the *Tribal Flags Monument* in Salem to the eastern tribes' *Gathering of the Tribes* in Celilo Village. Partner events were planned as early as January 2008 and many partners, such as the Plein Air Painters of Oregon and the High Desert Gallery in Bend, will continue to celebrate through October 2009.

"The Tillamook County Pioneer Museum was honored to be an Oregon 150 partner and we had tremendous success. We feel the partnership with Oregon 150 was a great one and we benefited from being able to advertise our exhibits, speakers and programs as being part of the 150 project," said Carla Albright, Tillamook County Pioneer Museum.

After December 31, 2009, the sesquicentennial website, www.oregon150.org, will be permanently housed through the Oregon State Archives, a division of the Secretary of State's Office. Additionally, as of September 27th, 2009 any questions or further information needed regarding Oregon 150 can be directed to Kyle Janssen of the Oregon Heritage Commission at kyle.janssen@state.or.us or (503) 986-0673.

"While the official sesquicentennial celebration is over, the spirit, enthusiasm, hope and joy we found together this year will continue. Because that's what it means to be an Oregonian," wrote Kulongoski and Oberst in their letter.

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