

September 28, 2016

To: BCTDA

From: Stephanie Pace Brown, Executive Director

Subject: Recap of August 2016 Staff Activities

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We have completed hiring for the new positions identified in this year's budget, and have filled the position opened by Brenda Taylor's retirement.

## **MONTH AT A GLANCE**

- The fall campaign started in 15 broadcast markets and will run through September.
- A new promotion with Uber will launch October 3.
- The PR team worked with 83 media touchpoints including 10 media site visits. They coordinated a Bon Appetit magazine takeover of ACVB's Instagram channel.
- The PR team coordinated a Facebook Live Series on the CVB This Morning Facebook page sponsored by National Geographic. The piece focused on the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation's "Find Your Pint" program. The broadcast was viewed 40,000 times and received more than 200 shares.
- Group Sales reported 50 bookings, up 52%.
- The CVB exhibited at ASAE in Salt Lake City and sponsored the HeadShot Lounge.
- The ACVB Sales Team received a Gold Prevue Visionary Award.
- A special edition Partner Forum was held on September 6 to overview the city's bond referendum and RAD construction. Mayor Esther Manheimer, Kit Cramer and Steph Monson-Dahl addressed a full room.
- The Festival and Cultural Events Fund received 15 applications. The committee met in September to review applications and will make a recommendation for funding to the TDA.

## **JULY CVB METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS**

- During August, the sales team posted 985 personal contacts (up 34%). August sales activities generated 61 sales leads (down 12%) and 50 convention bookings (up 52%), representing 8,520 rooms (up 73%). Two months into the new fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are up 12 percent and room nights represented are up 12 percent.
- CVB leads generated 37 group events in August (up 28%), with revenue of \$1,046,389 (down 14%). The services team assisted 36 groups (flat).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 22,912 visitors (down 4%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion welcomed 979 visitors (up 3%).

- The PR team landed 50 significant placements in August (up 14%), with 83 media touchpoints (up 60%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$360,357 with reach of nearly 14.6 million. Online placements added \$287,742 in value and reach of nearly 277 million.
- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 358,919 visits (down 14%), including 226,869 to the mobile site (down 2%). Our Facebook fan base grew by 6,818 (up 33%) and video views totaled 593,623 (up 1,069%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 83 room nights (down 31%) with total room revenue of \$11,944 (down 38%).

## **HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS**

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$36,739,960 in July, up 17.3 percent. With one month in the fiscal year, YTD 2016-17 sales are also up 17.3 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 84.6 percent during July (up 1.3%). The average daily room rate was \$161.97 (up 9%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$137.05 (up 10.4%). Room demand increased 7.8 percent with 186,102 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 4.8 percent to total 90,461 in July.

## **MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS UPDATE**

**Advertising:** Recent optimizations of the digital campaign are helping the harvest campaign (which launched in August) run at a strong pace, delivering 47,282,349 impressions through early September. Click-throughs averaged a cost-per-click of \$1.69. Due to some seasonal challenges with the planned out-of-home extensions in the D.C. Capital region, the team pivoted and planned three bus wraps to complement the fifteen bike share posters in high traffic areas surrounding Union Station. The Capital Region OOH launches September 12 and runs for four weeks. The National Geographic Traveler partnership continues to develop. NGT influencers plan to travel to Asheville the third week of September.

Work continued in the development of the holiday campaign and, in preparation for the Spring Campaign, Brooke Ptaszek traveled to the Capital Region on Allegiant's direct flight to discuss takeover partnerships at Union Station. Brooke and Marla Tambellini worked with Uber to develop an UberVIP partnership which launches October 3. The program (targeted primarily to North Carolina millennials) uses Uber's In-App channels to feature curated Asheville experiences, dedicated content and an opportunity to win vacation packages to Asheville. Uber will promote with a co-branded IN-APP mobile message, targeted email blast and dedicated Uber Asheville VIP microsite. Brooke is also working with Uber to develop an in market partnership with the Uber discount being provided to the CVB and ultimately being used to benefit a local charity as part of the *Tourism Builds Community* initiative.

### **Paid search efforts**

Total clicks on Asheville search ads were the highest in August that they've been all year and are up year over year. The cost per click (CPC) has come down 19 percent year over year (\$.58 vs. \$.72) while Bing CPC has come down 3 percent year over year (\$.68 vs. \$.70). Click-through-rate increased 91 percent year over year (5.29% vs. 2.77%). Average ad position is 1.9 vs. 3.1 a year ago.

**General Media Relations:** The PR team had a very active month on the proactive side with 83 touchpoints including ten media site visits. Landis worked with the Asheville Wine & Food Festival in support of their out-of-market media efforts which included:

- Natalie Migliarini and James Stevenson | Beautiful Booze (AWFF)
- Chris Hassiotis | Zagat Atlanta (AWFF)
- Alex Delany | Bon Appetit (AWFF)
- Ashlie Stevens | freelance
- Emily Hutto | Craft Beer & Beverage Magazine and T+L
- Two cable television productions | A new Food Network travel series with Hannah Hart and House Hunters International
- Elizabeth Hudson, Claudia Royston, Jason Chenier | Our State (Montford photo essay)
- Lisa Singh | Gonomad.com
- Katie Coleman | Lake Norman Magazine & Charlotte Observer Road Trips

Visiting media immersion activities included brewery tours and a group brunch at Sovereign Remedies. A highlight from those activities includes a Bon Appetit magazine takeover of ACVB's Instagram channel. The Asheville CVB was also contacted with an excellent—but tight turn-around—opportunity with CBS This Morning. National Geographic is sponsoring a National Parks Centennial Facebook Live Series on the CBS This Morning Facebook page. The team worked to find a Wi-Fi accessible idea that connected to the Blue Ridge Parkway which ended up being the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation's "Find Your Pint" program, celebrating Blue Ridge Parkway features through tribute beers made by Asheville breweries. Nat Geo sent new editor in chief, George Stone, in to host the live remote at the new Highland Brewing Rooftop venue after the ACVB crew did the scouting and legwork. The live broadcast was viewed 40K times and received more than 200 shares.

Sarah Lowery attended her first solo media event in her new role, the Visit North Carolina Raleigh Media Mission. Twenty-six journalists attended the media mission. Alex Mitchiner worked with Dodie on a media networking event at Addison Farms conducted by ABBA and connected with six regional media contacts.

#### Science Writers Measure Locally, Respond Globally Conference

With three business days' notice, the PR team pulled together a press kit, display and pitches for the Measure Locally, Respond Globally Conference at the Collider. Landis and Dodie attended the event, networked with the 27 science writers and provided details on Asheville's status as Bee City USA and the Science Behind Fall Color website.

#### **SIGNIFICANT PLACEMENTS IN AUGUST**

One unexpected rush of national publicity for Asheville hit national news last month via Tim Kaine. After an Asheville rally, democratic VP nominee Tim Kaine got major publicity for letting down his hair in Asheville and playing his harmonica with a live band at Catawba Brewing. Asheville culture was mentioned favorably in 14 articles from CNN to Washington Post to NY Daily News. Other placements included:

- *Food Network* – "Best Burgers From Coast to Coast"
- *Newsweek Magazine (Elite Reports)* – "North Carolina, Transformation Through Innovation"
- *Bon Appétit* – "America's Best New Restaurants 2016" (Buxton Hall)
- *Bon Appétit* – "Regular Butter Is Fine, Chicken Butter Is Beautiful"
- *Bon Appétit* – "The 5 Best Fried Chicken Sandwiches in 2016" (Buxton Hall)
- *Bon Appétit* – "The Best Desserts We Ate in America in 2016" (Hole)

- *Condé Nast Traveler* – “The 2016 Friendliest Cities in the U.S.” (Readers' Choice Awards 2015)
- *Southern Living* – “The South's Best New Restaurants 2016” (Buxton Hall, Local Provisions)
- *The Daily South (Southern Living Blog)* – “Asheville’s Buxton Hall Blends Old & New”
- *Every Day With Rachael Ray* – “Way Beyond Buttermilk”
- *PasteMagazine.com* – “Weekend Layover, Asheville, North Carolina”
- *Travel + Leisure* – “The Perfect Three-Day Weekend in Asheville”
- *Travel + Leisure* – “How to Enjoy the Biltmore Estate at Christmas”
- *USA TODAY* – “Beat the Heat, Swimming Holes, Waterfalls and Lakes Around the USA”
- *USA TODAY* – “The South's Standout Food and Beverage Festivals”
- *Our State Magazine* – “Bee Charmed”
- *Our State Magazine* – “Sweet Success”
- *Sunseeker Magazine* – “Asheville Outdoors”
- *Charlotte Observer* – “As Summer Comes to a Close, Whitewater Rafting Is Among the Most Popular Outdoor Activities”
- *Washington Post (Via AP)* – “Review, A Band With a Fresh Sound Emerges From Asheville”
- *The Local Palate* – “Expert Picks, North Carolina's Top Hops”
- *DIY Network's 'The Treehouse Guys'* – “Asheville Crash Pad in the Trees”
- *Rabbit Hole Magazine* – “A Day in Asheville”
- *Thrillist.com* – “Best Small U.S. Cities With World-Class Food Scenes”
- *Thrillist.com* – “Best Hippy Town in Every State in the United States of America”
- *Zagat.com* – “Moonshine, History, Heritage and Hooch in North Carolina”
- *CatchCarri.com* – “All About the Beat, Music in Asheville”
- *CatchCarri.com* – “Exploring the Outdoors in Asheville, North Carolina”
- *CatchCarri.com* – “Top Things to Do in Asheville, North Carolina”
- *TWC News Charlotte* – “Made in the Carolinas, Riverbend Malt House”
- *WRAL.com* – “3 Hungry Guys Check Out Asheville's Golden Fleece”
- *WRAL.com* – “3 Hungry Guys Check Out Chiesa in Asheville”
- *WRAL's 'Tar Heel Traveler'* – “French Broad Chocolate Lounge”
- *CharlotteFive.com* – “13 Off-the-Beaten Path Spots You Need to Visit on Your Next Trip to Asheville”
- *TravelPulse.com* – “Embrace Fall in the Mountains of Asheville”

**Fall Foliage Efforts:** The leadership team met this month to review needs for the upcoming fall season and outline plans for fall communications efforts, including review of existing fall content assets, editorial/PR timelines, and necessary tweaks to the form and function of the fall pages on ExploreAsheville.com. Additionally, it was determined that some of the savings from the Harvest/Late Summer campaign would be used to do a small paid media push on the front-end of fall. A post Labor Day press release is planned featuring color prognostications (gathered by Landis) and linking to two complementary fall content pieces, “Ten Ways to Experience Fall in Asheville” based on a social media story (written by Jason) and Nine Fall Travel Packages for an Amazing Autumn (written by Sarah). The team worked with partners to finalize packages. Landis also began I-40 media tour planning and outreach, schedule for the week of September 19. Updates to ExploreAsheville.com pages include bringing engaging imagery and content to the forefront, using a content switcher to more visually highlight top fall stories and updating the Fall Color Report pages with content relevant for the beginning of the season. The team also outlined a plan for fall content, which includes the annual fall foliage forecast and weekly fall color reports, but adds this year a Facebook Live element, some Facebook advertising tests

with the new Canvas platform, possibly themed content such as a Fall Photo Friday on social channels and a fall road trip playlist on ExploreAsheville Radio.

**Music Initiative:** The PR and content team met to discuss the music release and Backstage Asheville rollout. A decision was made to change the direction of the release and Dodie and Landis worked together on those significant changes. The ACVB team was contacted by a publicity company for the Bright Star Broadway recording in advance of their Grammy push. Unfortunately, timing issues with the company meant this didn't fully pan out, but Landis will be taking the album as gift and newsy note on her fall media tour. Dodie connected the rep to the Asheville Airport and ACME for music licensing on [ExploreAsheville.com/music](http://ExploreAsheville.com/music).

**Content Development Projects:** In late August, Jason and the PR and content teams worked closely with Bon Appetit web editor Alex Delaney on an Instagram takeover. Jason posted 13 of Alex's pictures on the Visit Asheville Instagram account, spaced out over Alex's three-day visit to Asheville for the Asheville Wine & Food Festival. The pictures allowed Instagram fans to follow him on his culinary adventures around Foodtopia. Those posts garnered 3,300 likes and more than 60 comments. In a separate effort, Cat and Jason created a promotional strategy to amplify the reach of the CBS Facebook Live broadcast coordinated via the PR team. This included creating an announcement graphic for Facebook and Twitter, and sharing links to the live broadcast in progress. Jason also conducted a live pre-interview to introduce George Stone and engaged the Visit Asheville Facebook audience just before the main broadcast went live on the CBS This Morning page. During the broadcast, Cat also monitored the comment thread and injected relevant destination messaging and links to content on [ExploreAsheville.com](http://ExploreAsheville.com). Planning is now underway for the fall season.

#### New Photography

Work continued in updated image assets. Shoots completed included a couple eating and drinking at OWL Bakery, a group of friends enjoying holiday gathering at Golden Fleece, a couple holiday shopping in RAD and groups gift shopping at Mast General Store.

#### Video & Facebook Live:

The CVB successfully launched a series of Facebook Live videos that are ongoing and complement the "Let the Magic Find You" concept used in the current advertising. Cat and Jason conducted the first live broadcast August 1, nine more followed for a total of 10 broadcasts in August. These include:

- Outdoors: Blue Ridge Parkway (Tanbark Ridge Tunnel), Mt. Mitchell, Craggy Gardens
- Adventure: Wai Mauna Stand Up Paddle Board sunrise tour
- Experiences: Lexington Glassworks demonstration, Friday night Drum Circle, sunset at Biltmore (from Statue of Diana), sunset at Grove Park Inn (from Sunset Terrace)
- Events: The Sourwood Festival (Black Mountain), Shindig on the Green

To date, those 10 broadcasts have been viewed nearly 250,000 times, receiving an average of almost 25,000 views each with an average reach of 75,000 users. As many as 6,000 people have watched a broadcast live.

### ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- Five new blog posts were added to ExploreAsheville.com during the month of August. Topics included events surrounding the National Parks Centennial, a new exhibit at the N.C. Arboretum, and a ticket giveaway promoting New Belgium's Birthday Bash event.
- The most popular story content this month was "50 Things to do in Asheville," which received 17,623 new views. The second most popular story was "Top 5 Breakfast Spots in Asheville," which received 5,130 new views. Story and blog content earned a total of 179,890 page views this month.
- Cat Kessler began outreach for a new series of "Meet the Foodtopians" profiles and partnerships to add to the website. Committed partners include Gan Shan Station and Medea's Real Food Café.

### **Social Media Stats:**

#### Facebook:

##### *Visit Asheville page*

- August saw 6,818 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 216,465.
- There were 80 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of August.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was a live broadcast video of the downtown drum circle. It reached 140,728 people organically, generating 4,495 total reactions, 668 comments and 753 shares. The video itself has been viewed 40,620 times.
- The most popular paid post this month was a link to Matador's "17 Images of Asheville We Can't Stop Looking At" story. It reached 103,688 users in total (61,073 of those organically), generating 2,565 reactions, 251 comments and 524 shares.
- The most engaging post this month was scenic photo featuring the Blue Ridge Mountains. It engaged 9 percent of the 29,645 users reached.
- August saw 806 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 21,739 likes.
- There were 24 new Facebook posts added to the Foodtopia page in the month of August.
- The most popular post—a link to a Thrillist story, "10 Small Cities With World-Class Food Scenes"—reached 10,999 people organically, generating 257 reactions and 14 comments.

#### Video:

- There were 44,666 new organic YouTube views in August. The most popular video by organic views this month was Asheville: Discover Arts & Culture, which received 12,553 non-paid views. The Return Again video came in second with 8,512 new views.
- Across all of our video platforms, there were 593,361 views, with more than 90 percent of those coming from Facebook.
- Asheville video content has received 615,889 views since July 1, 2016 (fiscal YTD).

Pinterest: The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 4,167. Foodtopia accounts for 1,339 of those. Visit Asheville – 2,828.

#### Instagram:

- Our VisitAsheville account has 18,274 followers
- There were 85 new posts in August. The most popular—a scenic shot of Looking Glass Rock—received 1,122 engagements (likes and comments).

Twitter: Across all of our accounts we have a total of 32,312 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia which has 13,134 followers. We continue to provide a mix of proactive response to travel inquiries and pushes of website and Instagram content.

Asheville Traveler Enewsletter:

- Subscribers: We have 116,420 active subscribers.
- Opens/Click-throughs: In August, we sent out our monthly e-newsletter to 115,815 subscribers. We had a unique open rate of 13.2 percent and a click-through rate of 2.5 percent.

**Online Reservations:**

There were 39 orders for 83 room nights in August with a total of \$11,944 in booking revenue and \$495 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in July were North Carolina (13), Indiana (3), Tennessee (3), Pennsylvania (2), and New York (2).

<b>August 2016</b>	Current Month	This Month Last Year	Variance Monthly	YTD Actual	YTD Last Year	Variance YTD
Booking Rev	\$11,944	\$19,235	-38%	\$27,642	\$44,471	-38%
Commission	\$495	\$730	-32%	\$1,168	\$1,750	-33%
Orders	39	66	-41%	83	162	-49%
Room Nights	83	121	-31%	169	306	-45%

**Travel Guide:** There were 2,838 requests for the Official Asheville Travel Guide in August, a six percent decrease from last August. Year to date, there are 5,165 travel guide requests, a nine percent decrease from last year. The top 5 DMAs requesting guides for the month and year are:

Top 5 DMAs for August 2016	# of Guides Requested	FY 2016-2017 Top 5 DMAs	# of Guides Requested
New York	115	New York	204
Orlando, Daytona	115	Atlanta	189
Washington, DC	107	Tampa, St. Pete	188
Atlanta	105	Orlando, Daytona	178
Tampa, St. Pete	105	Charlotte	173

Online Travel Guide Downloads:

There were 258 unique browsers for the online travel guide, a 62 percent decrease from last August. There were a total of 4,598 page views, a 63 percent decrease from last August. The average time spent viewing was 2.37 minutes, a 3 percent decrease from last August. There were 48 clicks on links, an 83 percent decrease from last August.

<b>August 2016</b>	Current Month	This Month Last Year	Variance Monthly	YTD Actual (Jan-Dec)	YTD Last Year (2015)	Variance YTD
Unique Browsers	258	671	-61.5%	1,981	8,571	-76.9%
Opens/Visits	283	739	-61.7%	2,181	9,230	-76.4%
Page Views	4,598	12,540	-63.3%	44,188	119,076	-62.9%
Avg. Time Spent (Minutes)	2.37	2.45	-3.3%	2.91	19	-84.8%
Avg. Page Views (Per Open)	16.25	19.97	-18.6%	20.39	123	-83.4%
Clicks on Links	48	288	-83.3%	338	2,585	-86.9%

**ExploreAsheville.com:** The Asheville CVB received the results of the SEO audit. A number of technical and content issues were uncovered during the audit. Elizabeth White began working on several mitigation efforts and is leading the marketing team to address and prioritize these issues. Unfortunately, there was no single large issue that can be quickly resolved, but rather a number of smaller issues that will need to be addressed in the coming months in order to improve search engine referral traffic to ExploreAsheville.com. The team also looked at complementary marketing efforts that could generate additional familiarization and visitation to Asheville through initiatives that could serve as traffic-generators to our Web site. Elizabeth and Pat Kappes also teamed up in August to launch a new Go Local feature on the Partner listings at ExploreAsheville.com. All partners who participate in the Go Local program now have a “Heart AVL” badge on their listing to signify that they honor the Go Local discount card.

## **GROUP SALES & SERVICES UPDATE**

Group sales reported 50 definite group bookings in August, a 52 percent increase over the prior year. Of the 50 group bookings, 34 were meetings & conventions, thirteen were weddings and three were group tour. The combined total of definite room nights was 8,520, a 73 percent increase over the prior August. Sixty-one sales leads (47 for meeting/conventions, seven for weddings, and seven for motorcoach) representing 19,183 room nights, were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in August. Leads distributed were down 12 percent and rooms represented were up 12 percent over the prior year.

Estimated revenue for leads turned definite was \$1,720,484, a 73 percent increase over the prior year. Actualized revenue was \$1,046,389, a 14 percent decrease over the prior year. Person-to-person outreach totaled 985 contacts, which is a 34 percent increase over the prior year. A total of 10,204 indirect contacts were made, which is a 172 percent increase over the prior year.

### **Staff Update:**

Senior Sales Manager Brenda Taylor retired after 30+ years in the hospitality industry. Her last day with the ACVB was August 31. Her depth of knowledge in the meetings industry will be greatly missed. Efforts to fill this position began immediately.

Ms. Carla McGlynn accepted the position of National Sales Manager for the Northeast region. Carla’s background includes corporate and leisure travel/event planning, resort and limited service property sales and most recently, Carla was the DC sales manager for the Greensboro CVB. Carla starts on September 7.

Mr. Joseph Weber started on August 8 as the Group Sales & Services Coordinator. Joseph recently relocated from Pennsylvania to Hendersonville to be near family. He has experience in the non-profit and arts fields, performing over 1,700 hours of service and professional development for Meadville Council on the Arts.

**Sales Calls/Missions:****American Society of Association Executives Activities:**

National Sales Manager Shawn Boone and Senior Sales Manager Tina Porter attended the American Society of Association Executives Annual Meeting & Expo (ASAE), held August 13-16 in Salt Lake City. Industry partners attending included Accents on Asheville and Renaissance Asheville Hotel. In the continuing initiative to place Asheville in a larger consideration set, the ACVB co-sponsored the Chuck Fazio HeadShot LOUNGE with the ASAE Foundation.

**Expo:** More than 70 attendees stopped by the booth to express interest in hosting a future meeting in Asheville. Three initial RFP's were received with more expected post event. An e-blast to 1,128 registered attendees was sent in advance of the show. Staff participated in industry networking events as well as the ASAE Foundation mixer.

**ASAE Foundation Leadership Lounge featuring Chuck Fazio's HeadShot LOUNGE:**

ACVB partnered with the ASAE Foundation and Chuck Fazio to host the Lounge, a popular stop for executives throughout the meeting. An advance mailer was sent by ASAE Foundation to approximately 2,200 past attendees to promote the 2017 event. A total of 400 unique visitors participated in Lounge activities. While there, planners were introduced to Asheville as a meetings destination through on-site marketing materials, video presentation, branded items, hosted receptions and more. Tina staffed the Lounge while Shawn and our partners manned the booth. A post e-blast was sent to clients who visited the Lounge.

Staff traveled to Grapevine, Texas, to attend Connect Marketplace. This is the first year the ACVB attended the corporate sector of the event. Tina conducted 31 one-on-one sales appointments in addition to attending scheduled networking events. Tina also attended the SportsNC client event during the show.

**Site Visits/Bookings/Leads:** The team hosted/participated in five area site visits, including 2017 Ceco Building Systems - 71 rooms; 2018 Ville to Ville Craft Brew Relay – 130 rooms; 2017 Business Conference – Premier Meetings – 1,400 rooms; NC Society of Enrolled Agents – 200 rooms; 2017 Odgers and Berndtson – 455 rooms.

Larger bookings included: 2017 Structural Integrity Conference – 205 rooms; 2018 Southern Forest Service Retiree Association – 830 rooms; 2017 Orvis Company Rendezvous – 255 rooms; 2016 Mixed Doubles State Championships – 300 rooms; 2018 National Guard – 300 rooms; 2016 ABYSA Region III Premier League Games – 900 rooms; 2019 Mastiff Club of America – 505 rooms; 2020 NCA CPAs – 728 rooms, among others.

A total of 52 wedding guide requests were fulfilled this month as compared to 43 in August 2015.

**Group Sales Communications:** Work on marketing pieces in August included: the design of a postcard for the Have More Fun on Us incentive program and the finalization of the pre-tradeshow e-blast template. The design of a client invitation for the CVB-sponsored Smart Monday Breakfast at IMEX in October was also completed in August and will be used by MPI to promote attendance to the special meeting planner breakfast on October 17 in Las Vegas. Several planning meetings with Market Connections occurred to discuss the fiscal year's media buy and work on the design of the new full-page print ad continued.

**The Asheville CVB was designated as a *Prevue Visionary Award Gold* winner in the *Destinations/CVBs, Best Planner Support from CVB* category in the *Southeast* region by the meeting planning publication. The Awards are given to the members of the meetings and incentives industry who are anchored in excellence and were selected by *Prevue's* readership and esteemed Advisory Board. [Winners of the 2016 Visionary Awards will be announced in the November/December issue of \*Prevue\*.](#)**

**Mass Communications included:**

- An e-blast was sent to 968 Texas-based planners promoting ACVB staff presence at the Connect and Smart Meeting (November) events. Open rate: 19 percent; Unique clicks: 34
- An e-blast prior to the ASAE annual tradeshow was sent to 1,128 registered attendees. Open rate: 23 percent; Unique clicks: 28
- An e-blast after the ASAE annual tradeshow was sent to 345 clients that stopped by the CVB-sponsored HeadShotLOUNGE. Open rate: 26 percent; Unique clicks: 11
- A Have More Fun on Us incentive postcard was mailed to 7,331 clients.
- The CVB assisted a contributing editor for Screen Pilot, a digital marketing agency that specializes in hospitality, working on a piece called "10 Ways Hotels Should Be Partnering with Their CVB."

**Convention Servicing:** There were 44 groups that met in August that were assisted or contacted by the convention service manager during planning. Services in the month included providing materials for the attendees of the Rolls Royce Owners Club Annual Meet. The service coordinator prepared travel guides and maps for pick-up for 11 meetings/weddings and 2 deliveries to hotel meeting sites in August.

Specific assistance for future meetings included various information for the planners of the NC SHRM conference and National Association of Home Builders.

**Departmental Activities:** Partner meetings initiated by the ACVB included: AAA 2016-2017 and IMEX America's tradeshow/hosted buyer breakfast. Staff trained on the new prospecting database titled empowerMINT, a DMAI product we start subscribing to on September 1. Meetings/sites attended by ACVB include: Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission, Civic Center Commission, and Leadership Asheville. Site visits were held at the Hilton Garden Inn Asheville Downtown and Hyatt Place Asheville Downtown's Montford Rooftop Bar.

**STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES**

**Workforce Development for the Hospitality Sector:** The Workforce Development Steering Committee met on August 9 with Tim Sinatra, Executive Director of Eliada Homes. Tim informed the committee of their workforce program for the hospitality sector. The committee began developing a budget and line items for the \$30,000 planning grant administered by the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board. Items include several short videos, and creating a hospitality industry booth and collateral pieces. Members of the committee met with Stephanie and Pat to discuss the marketing and outreach plan.

**Wayfinding Program:** Held first meeting with Dan Baechtold and Dana Frankel from the City of Asheville regarding changes to the Wayfinding system in the Asheville CBD.

**Festivals and Cultural Events Grant Program:** Chip Craig served as Chair for this committee. Other committee members are: Lauren Bradley, Van Winkle Law Firm; Jon Fillman, Special Events/City of Asheville; Stephanie Brown and Marla Tambellini. Extensive phone calls and emails were fielded from potential applicants before the August 31 application deadline. Fifteen applications were ultimately received.

**Tourism Readiness:** Staff developed a document outlining the steps to be taken for creating and implementing this program in FY 2017-18. A conceptual course outline and follow-up steps were drafted, as well.

**Job Postings:** Five replacement and new positions have been posted over the previous two months. In September, the following positions were filled: Marketing & PR Assistant, Sales and Services Coordinator and Operations Assistant. Applications were received and interviews begun on the following two positions: National Sales Manager Northeast, Sales Manager Southeast.

## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE**

### **Tourism Product Development Efforts:**

Phase II TPDF applications were due August 31. Nine applicants were received and are in review with the TPDF Committee. Project presentations are scheduled for September 19 and 20. Each applicant will have the opportunity to present their project to the committee and answer questions in a 30-minute presentation. Project presentations will be followed by site visits.

The City of Asheville staff will meet with CVB staff and destination development consultant, Mike Konzen of PGAV, on September 8, to kick-off discussions on the \$20 million Major Works request from the City of Asheville for South Slope Enhancements.

### **Partner Engagement:**

#### **Partner Forum/Community Update – September 6**

The Asheville CVB hosted a joint Community Update Partner Forum with our partners at the City of Asheville. Stephanie Monson Dahl, director of the Riverfront Redevelopment Office, provided a presentation on the improvements in the River Arts District. Monson Dahl explained construction is underway and will be ongoing for the next three years. Also, Kit Cramer and Mayor Manheimer talked about the bond referendums on the November 8, 2016 general election ballot. She explained there will be three bond-related questions on the ballot and asked for volunteers to help encourage community members to vote yes on all three items.

#### **BCTDA Annual Meeting – September 28**

Planning is underway for this year's Annual Meeting, which will be held at Lioncrest at Biltmore. The keynote speaker will be George Zimmermann, renowned tourism destination marketing and research expert. In addition to the Annual Meeting presentation, industry partners will have the opportunity to hear George at the BCTDA board meeting in the morning and at a VIP speaker's reception prior to the Annual Meeting.

The VIP Reception will be held at 2:00 p.m. in the Chestnut Room at Lioncrest. Commission Chair David Gantt will be recognized for his public service at the reception. The Annual Meeting will start at 3:00 p.m. at Lioncrest, followed by a networking reception at 4:30 p.m. The William A.V. Cecil Award and the BCTDA Annual Report will also be presented at the meeting.

Approximately 200 attendees are expected and the BCTDA 2015-16 Annual Report will be distributed.

#### October Partner Forum – October 20

The October forum will provide an opportunity for partners to learn about CVB offerings, see a preview of the new Extranet 4.0, and hear an update on ExploreAsheville.com advertising opportunities by DTN ad sales representative, Lia Wik.

#### **Outreach:**

CVB 101 orientations were provided to new tourism industry partners or additional information for existing partners, including The Block Off Biltmore, Blackbird Restaurant, the Asheville Area Arts Council, Smith-McDowell House, AC Marriott, and aSHEeville Museum.

Brit and Pat continue to reach out to qualified partners to submit information for a listing as well as create and service the partners who request listings. Fourteen new partner accounts were created, nine of which are related to the Music Initiative project. Accounts and listings for the Music Initiative are being created and turned live as directed by ACME through Cat as the CVB point-person. Brit continued work on 2017 Travel Guide listings assisting with proof reviews.

#### **Projects**

Brit is heading up the SimpleView CRM extranet 4.0 roll-out, and developing a plan to inform and train partners. The roll-out is expected to take place in November, and will include a series of partner training sessions.

Pat is working on the redesign of the AshevilleCVB.com website, which is expected to launch in late September. The BCTDA.org website content will be incorporated into the new AshevilleCVB.com website.

#### **VISITOR SERVICES UPDATE**

The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 22,912 guests during the month of August 2016. The Pack Square Park Pavilion welcomed 979.

The volunteers attended a performance of “Crimes of the Heart” at Asheville Community Theatre, “Red Pill Diaries” at NC Stage, and “Off the Rails” at Magnetic Theatre. Future events include NC Stage, Asheville Community Theatre, Magnetic Theatre, Asheville Aerial Arts, Highland Brewing, and Homewood Suites.

Training for the volunteers continued with email updates along with “on the job” daily briefings from staff members.