



September 27, 2017

To: BCTDA  
From: Stephanie Pace Brown  
Subject: President's Report of August Activities

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In the month since our last board meeting, the Explore Asheville team hosted three events. A media preview on September 6 resulted in positive media coverage on WLOS and in the Mountain Xpress and Citizen-Times. The following Wednesday, the BCTDA Annual Meeting was presented to a standing-room audience of 200 at the Omni Grove Park Inn. A spectacular reception on the veranda followed, courtesy of the Omni. And, one week later, we opened the doors of the new office to welcome more than 200 industry partners for an Open House Party! Food was provided by Bouchon with Biltmore wine and a specialty cocktail from Sovereign Remedies. It was especially fun to share this event with our new co-tenants!

During August, we hosted the Woodstock Downtown Development Authority, Biltmore's leadership class, and the Blue Ridge Chamber of Commerce and had the opportunity to provide an overview of the BCTDA and Explore Asheville's sales and marketing program. I also participated in the Federal Reserve Roundtable and a discussion regarding the creation of a data analytics program at WCU. A highlight was the ribbon-cutting to open the AC Hotel.

I had the pleasure of representing Explore Asheville on a panel presentation for Leadership Asheville's Buzz Breakfast along with Mayor Manheimer, Commissioner Whitesides, and Darin Waters with UNC Asheville.

### **MONTH AT A GLANCE**

- The late summer/early fall advertising campaign launched August 11 and has driven more than 35 million impressions, 55,000 clicks and 2 million video views through September 8.
- Eclipse content on ExploreAsheville.com received 47,000 pageviews, in part driven by paid search efforts.
- The fall color forecast press release via the PR Newswire was picked up 258 times with a potential audience reach of 21.9 million. When combined with the CVB's other outreach efforts, pick up totaled 549.
- New collateral was developed for the 48-Hour Experiences and the home page of the meetings section of ExploreAsheville.com was redesigned to include strategic call to action elements, Twitter feed, testimonials, and industry recognition.
- The sales team exhibited/attended: Connect Corporate Marketplace in New Orleans, Smart Meetings Northeast in Brooklyn, and the American Society of Association Executives Annual Meeting & Expo in Toronto. A sales mission to Atlanta was executed.

- A presentation was made to 16 City of Asheville department heads to introduce them to CVB meeting services and encourage them to invite their professional associations to meet in Asheville.
- BCTDA's TPDF grant was celebrated by The Asheville Community Theater.
- Phase II TPDF applications were received from three organizations.
- Nine new partner accounts were created in August.
- 16 applications were received for the Festivals and Cultural Events

### **AUGUST EACVB METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS**

- During August, the sales team posted 990 personal contacts (up 1%). August sales activities generated 64 sales leads (up 5%) and 33 convention bookings (down 34%), representing 9,873 rooms (up 16%). Two months into the new fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are down 20 percent and room nights represented are up 1 percent.
- CVB leads generated 31 group events in August (down 16%), with revenue of \$1,457,309 (up 39%). The services team assisted 31 groups (down 14%).
- The PR team landed 50 significant placements in July (flat), with 72 media touchpoints (down 13%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$312,324 with reach of over 12.5 million. Online placements added \$324,659 in value and reach of nearly 420 million.
- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 416,063 visits (up 16%), including 273,479 to the mobile site (up 21%). Our Facebook fan base grew by 1,300 (down 81%) and video views totaled 111,371 (down 81%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 88 room nights (up 6%) with total room revenue of \$14,634 (up 23%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 24,260 visitors (up 6%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion welcomed 1,276 visitors (up 30%).

### **HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS**

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$38,571,490 in July, an increase of 5 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 83.6 percent during July (down 1.2%). The average daily room rate was \$162.91 (up 0.2%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$136.20 (down 1.0%). Room demand increased 3.2 percent with 190,399 rooms sold. August posted a .3 percent increase in occupancy with a 2 percent increase in ADR, a 4.5 percent increase in demand and a 6.6 percent increase in hotel revenue.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 11.6 percent to total 100,998 in July, marking the first month in the history of the airport with more than 100,000 passengers.

### **MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**Advertising:** The late summer/early fall campaign launched August 11 and runs through the beginning of October. As of September 8, the campaign has driven over 35 million impressions, 54,764 clicks, and over 2 million video views, per Sizmek. Not surprisingly, TripAdvisor is driving

the most goal conversions and highest pages per session (3.29). Compared to the campaign last year, the engagement rates have increased. Bounce rate has also improved 4 percent, page visits increased from 1.50 to 1.72 and time on site has increased by 5 seconds.

Paid search efforts: Overall user sessions are up year-over-year by 82 percent. The events campaign drove the most sessions to ExploreAsheville.com from both Bing and Google, primarily due to the eclipse keywords. Not surprisingly, the eclipse content on the site benefited with more than 47,000 pageviews. In August, paid search drove more than 7,000 views of the listing detail pages and, collectively, more than 5,000 views of the accommodations and the packages and deals pages.

**General Media Relations:** With the solar eclipse on August 21 and a Visit NC Charlotte Media Mission, the PR team facilitated a high volume of media inquiries, touchpoints, and site visits during the month of August. The team assisted with the Asheville eclipse site visits of media representing *McClatchy-Tribune Information Services*, *SmarterTravel.com*, *Sky & Telescope* and *Parents* (and all Meredith publications), as well as a freelancer who works with major outlets such as *Robb Report*, *NY Magazine*, *Tasting Table* and *Food & Wine*. Dodie, Landis and Stephanie represented Explore Asheville at the VIP Media Event during the eclipse at Pisgah Astronomical Research Institute. In total, the team logged 72 touchpoints, initiated 26 targeted pitches, and hosted nine media on the ground in Asheville. Asheville imagery and assistance was also provided to *Orbitz.com*, *Upscale Magazine*, *Mirror Magazine*, and *Oxford Magazine*. Additionally, training sessions on the new TrendKite PR analytics tool continue.

### Significant Placements

1. *AAA World* — “Asheville: Biltmore and Beyond”
2. *Angie Away* — “Nashville to Asheville: Planning the Perfect Southern Road Trip”
3. *Anna Everywhere* — “Mini-Guide to Asheville NC”
4. *Business North Carolina* — “How the River Arts District Accelerates Asheville’s Appeal”
5. *Buzzfeed* — “Plan Your Perfect Day and We’ll Tell You Where to Travel this Fall”
6. *Carrie on Travel* — “A Look Inside: Hampton Inn & Suites Asheville Biltmore Village”
7. *Endless Vacation* — “Weekenders: Artsy Asheville”
8. *Expert Vagabond* — “Why is Asheville, North Carolina So Cool?”
9. *Food & Wine* — “Katie Button is Bringing Spain’s Vermuterías to the U.S.” & “America’s Best Bed and Breakfasts”
10. *Frederick Magazine* — “Asheville Escape: Brews, Games and Family Time in the Blue Ridge Mountains”
11. *Garden & Gun* — “Liz Wright on Gardening, Good Neighbors, and Grace”
12. *Getaways for Grownups* — “Reynolds Mansion Bed & Breakfast Inn”
13. *I am Kenya Rae* — “Total Foodtopia Indulgence: Where to Eat in Asheville”
14. *Just Luxe* — “Experience the Gilded Age: Grand Getaways at the Biltmore Estate”
15. *LIVESTRONG* — “13 Outdoorsy Trips Even Non-Adrenaline Junkies Can Handle”
16. *Local Plate* — “Asheville’s New Flame”
17. *Mother Earth Living* — “The Omni Grove Park Inn: Preservation of a Destination”
18. *Our State* — “Best-Kept Secrets in Asheville: Hood Huggers International” & “Bee Charmer Hits Asheville’s Sweet Spot”
19. *Rolling Stone* — “How Gov’t Mule Became the Jam Scene’s Working-Class Heroes”
20. *Smarter Travel* — “How to Do a Weekend in Asheville, North Carolina,” “9 Best Destinations for Music Lovers” & “WOW: Champagne Bookstore in Asheville”

21. *Southern Living* — “15 Southern Cities All Food Lovers Should Visit Now,” “Best Parks and Gardens in the South” & “The Total Solar Eclipse is Coming! Let’s Party!”
22. *The Daily Meal* — “The 25 Best Cities for Beer Lovers”
23. *The Miami Herald* — “Tourism Spurs Growth in Asheville Breweries”
24. *Thrillist* — “Best Chain Restaurants with Great Beer Bars” & “10 Badass Natural Water Slides Across America”
25. *Town & Country* — “These Are the Most Scenic Restaurants in America According to OpenTable” & “9 Most Haunted Hotels in America”
26. *Travel Freak* — “Asheville, North Carolina: Outdoor Adventure Mecca of the United States”
27. *Travel + Leisure* — “8 Can’t-miss Points of Interest in Asheville, North Carolina”
28. *USA Today* — “These activity-based spa resorts give you a leg up on fitness,” “50 States: 50 Standout Sandwiches” & “50 Beer Destinations Around the World”
29. *VegNews* — “Why Asheville is One of America’s Hottest Vegan Cities”
30. *Vogue* — “Top Female Chefs Reveal Their Best Summer Grilling Tips”

**Fall Forecast Push & Press Release:** Landis interviewed climate scientists and fall color experts in preparation for the fall color forecast press release. Developed by Landis with direction from Dodie, the angle “Ideal Conditions for ‘Vibrant 2017’ + Big Falls News in Asheville” allowed for color forecast highlights as well as destination news and travel packages, solicited by the team. Content and web teams helped repurpose and optimize for the website. Distributed via PR Newswire ahead of Labor Day Weekend, the release was picked up 258 times with a total potential audience of 21.9 million. The release was also distributed to a list of news desks and meteorologist in the CVB’s advertising markets, as well as those who have signed up to be on the CVB’s media list, and many freelancers that the team frequently pitches. The combined outreach totaled 549.

**Visit North Carolina In-State Media Mission:** Sarah prepped for and attended the Visit North Carolina In-State Media Mission in Charlotte, which provided an opportunity to meet and pitch various regional print, online and broadcast outlets. She made 13 new media contacts and attended a public-relations program update by VisitNC, including their new PR team at Luquire George Andrews (LGA) agency.

**Digital Influencers Initiative:** The PR team continues to work to edit deliverables and echo coverage and capture data from the June digital influencer initiative that brought Adventurous Kate, Expert Vagabond, Anna Everywhere, Travel Freak and The Divergent Travelers to Asheville. The PR team worked with NY agency Development Counselors International (DCI) to conceive and execute paid content relationships with heavyweight influencers with a combined potential reach of 1.1 billion across social platforms. More than 50 local businesses were featured in the immersive and diverse destination experiences that the PR team executed for the influencers. In total, the program returned more than 100 pieces of dynamic visual and video coverage and delivered more than 36 million impressions across their blogs, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube channels. Engagement was also strong, for example, Divergent Traveler’s “5 Adventures You Must Do In Asheville” <http://bit.ly/2sQAdxk> was shared 670 times by their followers. In addition, contracts also included a catalog of digital photo and video assets captured by the visiting media.

**Music Initiative:** As part of phase II of the music effort, Explore Asheville has hosted four influential music outlets with six more on the books for the next three months. During the month of August, the PR team continued to work with Mason Jar Media on the travel coordination and

itinerary for Rachael Roth of Fodor's Travel (September site visit). Roth will be producing a piece that focuses on Asheville as a music destination. The team also connected with Scott Bernstein, editor of JamBase, to begin coordinating his October site visit. Expansion of the music press kit is underway with the PR team providing editorial oversight for a new music story idea sheet.

**Transition Communications:** As part of the communications strategy for the rollout of Explore Asheville as a newly independent organization, a media preview and partner recognition event was conceived and executed to give local media a first look at the new location and hub for tourism. BCTDA members joined key hospitality association, building and construction/design partners for a brief program, celebratory toast and building tour. Marla developed press materials while Dodie headed-up logistics. The event was well attended by local media, and positive feature stories ran in all major local outlets (i.e. WLOS, ACT and Mountain Xpress). On a separate front, updated collateral is now in place.

### **Content Development Projects:**

The content team was busy with several projects during the month of August. Cat Kessler and Jason Tarr—working closely with Explore Asheville leadership—coordinated and conducted 12 interviews for the Faces of Tourism video to be shown at September's Annual Meeting. The interview subjects represented many careers and professional opportunities within the tourism and hospitality industries. In preparation for the total solar eclipse on August 21, Jason pushed eclipse content from ExploreAsheville.com onto our social channels. Total pageviews to eclipse content on ExploreAsheville.com reached almost 200,000 since the initial content was launched in February, with half of those pageviews occurring in the month of August. Jason also worked closely with Marla and Elizabeth White to help launch the new Urban Trail site, hosted on ExploreAsheville.com. Cat planned and executed a video shoot at Biltmore this month, collecting footage for a new social media video to launch soon. Lastly, the content team prepared for the fall color season by mapping out a content schedule for late September into early November, by conducting an audit of existing fall content, and by optimizing and promoting the fall foliage forecast on ExploreAsheville.com.

### ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of August, five new pieces of editorial content were added to ExploreAsheville.com: the 2017 fall color forecast release, and four weekend events posts.
- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to do in Asheville, which received 46,063 new page views, followed by the solar eclipse events blog post, which received 12,490 page views.

### Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

*Visit Asheville page*

- August saw 1,300 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 258,025.
- There were 40 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 video from AAA World showcasing top adventures in Asheville. It has reached 62,863 people organically, generating 1,408 total reactions, and 164 comments.

- The most engaging post this month was a picture of a sunset from Instagram by Brittany Scales. It engaged 6.7 percent of the 32,670 users reached.

#### *Foodtopia* page

- August saw 30 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 25,470 likes.
- There were 19 new Facebook posts added to the Foodtopia page in the month of August.
- The most popular unpaid post in August, a share of an article on Chef Katie Button, reached 4,645 people, generating 116 reactions, 6 comments and 15 shares.

#### Video:

- There were 19,110 new organic YouTube views in August. The most popular video by organic views this month was The Asheville Promise, which received 4,503 non-paid views. Sammy Visits Asheville came in second with 3,551 new views.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 111,371 views. There have been 201,200 views of Explore Asheville content YTD (since July 1, 2017).

#### Pinterest:

- The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 4,590. Foodtopia accounts for 1,373 of those. Visit Asheville – 3,217.

#### Instagram:

- Our VisitAsheville account has 36,596 followers.
- There were 22 new posts in August. The most popular was a mountain sunset. It received 2,085 engagements (likes and comments).

#### Twitter:

- Across all three accounts we have a total of 29,199 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,666 followers. We continue to provide a mix of proactive response to travel inquiries and pushes of website and Instagram content.

#### Asheville Traveler E-newsletter:

- **Subscribers:** We have 120,925 active subscribers.
- **Opens/Click-throughs:** In August, we sent out our monthly e-newsletter to 119,926 subscribers. It had an overall open rate of 18.1 percent and a click-through rate of 3.2 percent.

**CAYLA Program:** During the first two weeks of August, Explore Asheville hosted an intern through the City of Asheville Youth Leadership Academy program. Kaitlyn Srey is a rising senior at Erwin High School and is highly interested in the hospitality industry—she would love to one day own her own hotel. Cat Kessler coordinated a schedule of activities, including assisting with reviewing travel guide listings, attending relevant committee meetings, and joining the EA team at two preview events for brand new hotels. Kaitlyn was highly engaged with industry partners and seemed to learn much from her time with the team.

**ExploreAsheville.com:** In August, website user sessions for ExploreAsheville.com increased 15.9 percent year-over-year, which includes a 22.4 percent increase in organic user sessions, a 31.7 percent increase in email referral sessions, and a 118 percent increase in paid search user

sessions. Mobile visits in July increased by 21 percent year-over-year. Page views for the lodging pages increased 6 percent year-over-year in August.

Website Improvements – SEO and CRO

In August, Simpleview completed its Conversion Rate Optimization analysis on ExploreAsheville.com and provided the marketing team with a Conversion Plan Findings Report. The report included baseline conversion rate metrics for lower funnel actions and strategy for increasing conversions across Explore Asheville’s website. Elizabeth and Cat also worked with Hannah Mullenbach, SEO Analyst, toward Search Engine Optimization improvements in the month of August.

- The organic traffic is up by 13 percent year-over-year.
- The Solar Eclipse page brought in 24,773 visits and resulted in 10 percent of overall organic traffic.
- The event details are up by approximately 5,000 visits, and the top performing event was Leaf Downtown AVL with 931 visits.
- Of the 83,097 "Visit Website" clicks, 76 percent came from organic traffic users.
- The Goal Completions is up 8 percent year-over-year for August.
- Organic pages per visit (3.13) exceeded industry average by 24.6 percent.
- Organic average visit duration (0:03:30) exceeded industry average by 39.1 percent.

**Online Reservations:** There were 54 orders for 88 room nights in August with a total of \$14,634 in booking revenue and \$613.62 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in August were Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, and Virginia. \*Note: there is not a way in aRes to pull accurate room night by State excluding tickets (inflated due to Peak Perks) and cancellations.

August 2017	Current Month	This Month Last Year	Variance Monthly	YTD Actual	YTD Last Year	Variance YTD
Booking Rev	\$14,634	\$11,944	22.5%	\$36,273	\$27,642	31.2%
Commission	\$614	\$495	24.0%	\$1,679	\$1,168	43.8%
Orders	54	39	38.5%	140	83	68.7%
Room Nights	88	83	6.0%	213	169	26.0%

\*Room Nights/Orders no longer reflect cancellations, as previously reported.

**Visitor Guide:** In-market advertising began August 5 and provides a co-op opportunity for partners. To date, the sales goal has nearly been met. Response from accommodation partners to distribute the guides in room has been tremendous with over 103 partners committed. Content development of the guide is an ongoing project.

Visitor Guide Requests

There were 2,460 requests for the Asheville Visitor Guide in August, a 13.1 percent decrease from last August. YTD, there are 4,937 travel guide requests, a 6.4 percent increase from last year.

<b>Top 5 DMAs for August</b>	<b># of Guides</b>	<b>YTD 2017-2018</b>	<b># of Guides</b>
Charlotte	138	Tampa, St. Pete	244
Tampa, St. Pete	129	Charlotte	227
Orlando	114	New York	218
Atlanta	108	Atlanta	198
Washington, DC	105	Orlando	175

**GROUP SALES & SERVICES UPDATE**

Group sales reported 33 definite group bookings in August representing a 34 percent decrease from the prior August. Of these group bookings, 31 were meetings & conventions and two were weddings. The combined total definite room nights in August were 9,873 room nights a 15.6 percent increase over the prior year. The estimated revenue for leads turned definite in August was \$3,049,989 representing a 77.3 percent increase. Actualized revenue was \$1,429,024 a 36.2 percent increase from the prior year.

Sixty-four sales leads (50 for meeting/conventions, seven weddings and seven for motorcoach) representing 21,853 room nights were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in August 2017. This represents an increase of 4.9 percent in number of sales leads issued and a 14.8 percent increase in room nights represented. Person-to-person outreach totaled 990 contacts in August as compared to 984 the prior year, representing a 0.6 percent increase. Indirect outreach totaled 3,333 contacts compared to 10,204 the prior August.

**Sales Calls/Missions:**

- Molly Nelson attended Connect Corporate Marketplace in New Orleans with 37 one-on-one appointments conducted. She attended networking receptions, educational events, and conducted sales calls outside of the event.
- Shawn Boone traveled to Atlanta, making 12 sales calls. One immediate RFP was received.
- Carla McGlynn attended Smart Meeting Northeast in Brooklyn, NY, meeting one-on-one with 14 buyers. Carla attended the educational sessions, reception and networking events, mingling with the 87 planners registered for the event. Three added sales calls were made to planners in the region, one of whom plans over 50 meeting per year, six of them profiled well for us.

**American Society of Association Executives Activities:**

Tina Porter and Carla McGlynn attended the American Society of Association Executives Annual Meeting & Expo (ASAE) held August 12-15 in Toronto. Industry partners attending were Accents on Asheville and Renaissance Asheville Hotel. In the continuing initiative to place Asheville in a larger consideration set, the EACVB co-sponsored the Chuck Fazio HeadShot LOUNGE with the ASAE Foundation.

**Expo:** More than 145 planners stopped by the booth to express interest in hosting a future meeting in AVL. Four initial RFP’s were received with more expected post event. The RFPs represented groups headquartered throughout the US and ranged in size. An e-blast to 1280 registered attendees was sent in advance of the show (28% open rate). Staff participated in industry networking events. A post-trade show email was sent to the planner that came by the ASAE booth (30% open rate).



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

EACVB 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 2200 past attendees to promote the 2018 event. A total of 441 planners came through the Lounge where they were introduced to Asheville as a meetings destination through on-site marketing materials, video presentation, branded items, inclusion in printed on-site guide, hosted receptions and more. Tina staffed the Lounge while Carla and partners manned the booth. A post e-blast was sent to clients who visited the Lounge (Open rate 30%).

**Site Visits/Bookings/Leads:** Six independent site visits were hosted in August with business for all future years: 2021 U.S. Travel Association – Summer Board Meeting – 786 rooms; 2020 Rotary Club District 6910 – 557 rooms; 2017 American Foundry Society – 65 rooms; 2019 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals – 440 rooms; HelmsBriscoe site for future business and 2017 North Carolina Local Government Information Systems Association – 50 rooms overflow.

A sampling of bookings reported in August include:

- 2018 Employers Resource – 225 rooms;
- 2017 American Hospital Association – 60 rooms;
- 2019 NC Nurses Association – 800 rooms;
- 2018 National Association of Social Workers – 80 rooms
- 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games – German Federation (3) – 400 rooms;
- 2017 American Foundry Society – 45 rooms;
- 2017 Square D Reunion – 123 rooms;
- 2018 UNC Chapel Hill SOG Meeting – 45 rooms;
- 2018 ClimateCon – 920 rooms;
- 2017 American College of Cardiology – 50 rooms;
- 2017 Southeastern Affordable Housing – 70 rooms;
- 2018 Southern Forest Service Retiree Association – 200 rooms;
- 2017 SC Manufacturers Alliance – 30 rooms;
- 2018 Ville to Ville Craft Brew Relay – 165 rooms;
- 2018 Emory University Office of Continuing Medical Education – 1507 rooms.

A total of 22 wedding guide requests were fulfilled in August as compared to 53 last year.

**Group Sales Communications**

- The logo and invitation postcard for the rebranded 2018 Asheville 48-Hour Experiences were finalized.
- The home page of the meetings section of ExploreAsheville.com was overhauled, incorporating new brand elements, strategic call to action elements, Twitter feed, testimonials, and industry recognition.
- The look of the sales team's RFP quarterly contest page on ExploreAsheville.com was updated to reflect this fiscal year's prize.

**Media**

- Asheville was featured in the Blue Ridge Traveler publication sent to AAA & CAA offices

**Mass Communications:**

A pre/post trade show email blast was sent to the following in August:

- 1,280 attendees of the ASAE Annual Meeting & Expo to promote booth attendance. Open rate: 28 percent; Click through rate: 14 percent
- 480 New York City area clients in advance of Smart Meetings NE. Open rate: 23 percent Click through rate: 16 percent
- 323 attendees of the Connect Marketplace. Open rate: 58 percent Click through rate: 3 percent
- 144 meeting planners that stopped by the ASAE booth. Open rate: 30 percent Click through rate: 12 percent
- 431 meeting planners that stopped by the ASAE Headshot Lounge. Open rate: 30 percent Click through rate: 16 percent
- 864 D.C. area clients inviting them to an October 13 event: Open rate: 22 percent; Click through rate: 28 percent

### **Convention Servicing Highlights:**

Client meetings: U.S. Travel, Square D Reunion and the 2018 Forest Service Reunion. A hospitality table was set up for the Embroiderer's Guild of America Seminar and a microsite for North Carolina Youth Soccer Association.

### **Departmental Activities:**

- Staff presented to 16 City of Asheville department heads encouraging them to invite their professional associations to meet in Asheville and talked about the services we provide to help make that happen.
- Staff participated in the United Way Back Pack drive;
- Attended ribbon cutting ceremony for the AC Hotel;
- Hosted the City-Wide Task Force meeting at the U.S. Cellular center with a dozen industry partners in attendance;
- Hosted IMEX planning meeting with attending industry partners.

## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

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

Phase II TPDF applications were received from three organizations on the August 30 due date – Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center, Leaf Cultural Arts, and Haywood Street Congregation. The Organic Growers School, one of the four applicants selected by the TPDF Committee to participate in Phase II, declined the invitation, and expressed interest in applying again in a future cycle when their project details are further developed. The TPDF Committee is reviewing the applications in anticipation of the September 28 meeting when the applicants will present their projects to the committee. Site visits will take place on October 10, followed by a final committee meeting on October 19 to determine funding recommendations for the BCTDA.

Staff is awaiting updated scope and finalized schedule details from the City of Asheville regarding the Riverfront Redevelopment project to move forward with the contract amendment as was approved by the BCTDA at the June 28 board meeting. And, the contract for the Woodfin Greenway & Blueway Major Works Project is in development.

### **TPDF Project Ceremony**

The Asheville Community Theatre recognized the BCTDA at their donor recognition ceremony on August 8 for the \$1 million TPDF award. The ceremony was held in the newly renovated

theatre, the first of two phases of the project. Stephanie Brown was on hand to make comments and presented a check along with TPDF Committee members.

### **Partner Engagement:**

#### Media Preview Event

A special event to invite members of the media and key stakeholders for a preview of the new Explore Asheville offices was held on September 6. Community partners Asheville Independent Restaurant Association (AIR), Buncombe County Regional Sports Commission, Asheville Symphony, Asheville Downtown Association, Asheville Music Professionals, River Arts District Artists, and friends helped celebrate the occasion with a toast. Lunch was served prior to the announcements and tour.

#### 2017 BCTDA Annual Meeting – September 13

Plans for the annual meeting are underway. The event, generously hosted by the Omni Grove Park Inn, will be held in Omni's Country Club from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m., and will include a report of the past year, a look ahead as a new independent organization, followed by a networking social.

#### Explore Asheville Open House – September 20

Industry partners and community stakeholders are invited to an Open House Party at the new Explore Asheville offices on September 20, from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m., to tour the new space and celebrate the establishment of the independent organization.

### **Projects:**

The public affairs team worked on collecting assets and content to design the BCTDA 2016-17 Annual Report and the 2017-2018 Sales & Marketing Plan. Brit began developing a partner engagement strategy that incorporates a contest to encourage partners to improve their listing profiles; final details are being finalized. Brit also gathered data edits for the 2018 Official Asheville Visitor Guide and delivered the first round of exports to Brooke who is managing the project with SagaCity.

### **Partner Outreach:**

Brit created nine new partner accounts in August – AC Hotel Asheville Downtown, Cambria Hotel and Suites Downtown Asheville, Asheville Barn Weddings, Woodfire Bar and Grille, Casablanca Cigar Bar, Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites, Biltmore Village Area, Kathy Beaver Photography, Joseph Dix Photography, and Ole Shake's Getaway.

The monthly CVB 101 Open Door sessions were cancelled during the office relocation, and will resume in September. The public affairs team met one-on-one with four tourism industry partners including FOX-N-OTTER, ElectroBike Tours, Holiday Inn Biltmore East, and Crepe Bouree.

### **Community Outreach:**

Pat coordinated a hospitality industry school supply drive from July 24 to August 4 to support the United Way's wider effort. CVB staff and hospitality industry partners played a large part in helping United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County exceed this year's school supply drive goals. A record 2,283 fully-stocked backpacks were filled and distributed to Asheville Middle and Buncombe County Middle School students in time for the first day of school this week. CVB staff and tourism partners helped pack and fill 325 of those packs at a Backpack Packing event on August 17.

Pat attended Leadership Asheville's Breakfast Buzz meeting focused on the public sector's response to Asheville's growth, and a planning meeting with Mountainite, Asheville Greenworks, and RiverLink to discuss collaborative and community-wide Earth Day 2018.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES**

### **Organizational and Administrative Transitioning:**

Building: Things began to settle down related to the building's renovation. However, throughout the month, it was still necessary for Glenn to meet with Jamie Langford (General Contractor), Martin Lewis (Landlord), and various vendors to keep the momentum moving forward and especially address the details. Several deadlines were placed on them to accommodate the BCTDA Meeting on August 30 and the following week's Media Open House.

Administration: On August 2, a meeting was held with Insurance Service of Asheville (ISA) to discuss on-boarding related to staff benefits. Following that meeting, two additional conference calls were held with TASC representatives to discuss three key components of their services; Flex Plan, COBRA, and ERISA compliance.

### **Workforce Development:**

The committee elected to move to a quarterly schedule. The first meeting was held on August 8. The two primary agenda items were a follow-up discussion on the success of the Madison County Job Fair and the Partnership with MANNA Food Bank to provide meals to the underserved in Buncombe County. 31 hotels are signed-up for the program that will occur throughout the month of September, National Hunger Awareness Month. An aggressive goal of providing 100,000 meals was adopted. Glenn & Stephanie met with Terry Bellamy, under contract with A-B Tech, to discuss "Work Ready Communities" and provide her with contacts to leaders in the hospitality industry working on workforce development needs.

### **Festivals and Cultural Events Grant Program:**

The deadline for the 2018 grant round was August 31. There were 16 applicants requesting a total of \$75,000. The committee will convene in September to make funding recommendations to the BCTDA members on September 27.