

May 30, 2018

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

MONTH AT A GLANCE

- The PR team hosted 21 media, logged 11 touchpoints and initiated 106 targeted pitches – and, attended two media events in New York City organized by Visit NC.
- The sponsorship for the World Equestrian Games was implemented on a tight turn around. The team contributed two full-page ads, two pages of editorial and the cover image with cutline for the Destination Guide that will be distributed to every ticket purchaser. The sales team has booked 7,000 room nights associated with this event.
- Our National Tourism Week Summit was held May 3 with attendance of more than 200. A press release touting the spring campaign and its anticipated economic impact garnered positive coverage and set the stage for a subsequent piece by Mountain Xpress titled “Growing Asheville’s Tourism Industry.” We also began a new round of in-banner videos on the Citizen-Times web site featuring the “Faces of Tourism” video.
- Sales calls were made in Cincinnati and staff attended Luxury Meetings Pittsburgh. The sales team hosted eight site visits and distributed 76 leads.
- Twenty-two tour operators attended our three-day Absolutely Asheville Motorcoach FAM.

APRIL METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS

- During April, the sales team posted 1,102 personal contacts (down 3%). April sales activities generated 77 sales leads (up 17%) and 34 convention bookings (up 3%), representing 6,429 rooms (down 35%). Ten months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are up 8 percent and room nights represented are down 0.3 percent.
- CVB sales leads generated 37 group events in April (up 61%), with revenue of \$1,282,889 (up 7%). The services team assisted 36 groups (flat).
- The PR team landed 40 significant placements in April (down 51%), with 111 media touchpoints (down 5%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$2,954,102 with reach of nearly 3 million. Online placements added \$145,780 in value and reach of over 255 million.

- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 334,630 visits (down 23%), including 214,229 to the mobile site (down 24%). Our Facebook fan base grew by 2,476 (up 7%) and video views totaled 60,773 (down 6%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 88 room nights (down 17%) with total room revenue of \$13,825 (down 17%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 17,111 visitors (down 13%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion welcomed 866 visitors (down 17%).

HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$28,219,220 in March, an increase of 15.9 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 69.4 percent during March (up 1.1%). The average daily room rate was \$131.67 (up 4.3%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$91.41 (up 5.5%). Room demand increased 8.4 percent with 166,834 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 17.8 percent to total 76,565 in March.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Advertising: Spring advertising was in full swing in April with most of the components in market. Two of the national broadcast buys, HGTV and The Weather Channel, launched. Asheville received paid feature placement as The Weather Channel's "Great Weekend Destination" on two weekends (4/21 & 4/28). Radio also launched in April including brand spots on broadcast radio and NPR sponsorships in DC, Atlanta and Raleigh. On the digital front, a comprehensive paid social push via Facebook began and included Canvas ads as well as placements on Collections and Carousel in addition to video units. Additionally, native content, Undertone units, Summer of Glass ads, and a USA Today listicle all began in April. Lastly, as part of our retargeting expansion, funnel-based and pillar-specific retargeting units began running in mid-April.

Conversations with Miles Media Partnership led to development of a supplemental campaign using Amazon, Samsung, Samba TV, and Tremor as media partners. The strategy was to use reallocated ad production dollars to expand reach while not duplicating the spring media campaign. Creative will be developed in May and the campaign will run through the end of June.

Dodie Stephens and Sarah Kilgore worked with Zach King (a digital editing magician and social media influencer with 27 million followers) to shoot a short film featuring various locations throughout Asheville. King's team was inspired by the creative brief that that CVB provided and significantly expanded the original partnership plans to set a short film in Asheville. King's videos generally get millions of views and extremely high engagement. The window for coordination was short and the team mobilized partners and permitting/logistic elements for a shoot that spanned multiple locations across Asheville from the Blue Ridge Parkway to the Biltmore. As of early May, King had already shared two "Behind the Scenes" videos on his YouTube channel that were garnering substantial viewership. The film is now in post-production and should be finalized in late May and shared in early June.

A partnership with National Geographic that will result in a half-hour time slot on National Geographic Channel has been fleshed out. In mid-April, the production team came to Asheville for scouting and production is set to begin in late May and early June with a tentative air date in late September or October.

Paid Search Efforts: Compared to last April, site visits are down by 20 percent primarily due to the Eclipse ads that ran this time last year (these ads accounted for 17,000 sessions). Pages per session are up by 29 percent, and average session duration is up by 46 percent. April saw an increase in online bookings, bringing the year to date revenue to nearly \$30,000. The brand tourism campaign is the top performing campaign, followed by the campaigns for events and outdoor adventure. From January 1 to April 30, almost 6,000 visitor guide requests can be directly attributed to paid search efforts through Google and Bing.

General Media Relations: April ushered in a wave of media inquiries and site visits for the PR team. The team executed a high volume of intensive media itineraries and on-the-ground details for media representing *Good Times Magazine Canada*, *AAA Home & Away*, *Travel Pulse*, *AXS.com (music site)*, *Millennial Money Podcast*, *Dallas Morning News* and several international publications from Brand USA and World Equestrian Games FAM trips. April also included a NYC Media Tour, a Summer of Glass press release, a visit from digital influencer Zach King and support for an on-the-ground *National Geographic* team (see above). Additional touchpoints of note included *Group Travel Leader*, *NC Weekend*, *Nylon*, *TravelChannel.com* and *CNN Digital Travel*. In total, the team logged 111 touchpoints, initiated 106 targeted pitches and hosted or supported more than 21 media on the ground in Asheville. Asheville imagery and assistance were also provided to *Sunseeker*, *Destinations* magazine (a bi-monthly print and digital publication of the American Bus Association), *Charleston Magazine*, *Indianapolis Monthly*, *Washington Life* magazine and *WhereTraveler.com*, among others.

Brand USA and World Equestrian Games FAMs: The PR team supported FAM visits for two international groups of media in April – a Brand USA group of four writers focusing on Asheville’s music scene and a World Equestrian Games group of six writers exploring Asheville as a destination that is near the site of the Games this September. The Brand USA group, consisting of UK writers representing *The Sun*, *The Express*, *The Metro* and *This Week* spent two nights in the destination exploring various aspects of the music scene. The WEG media group spent an afternoon in Asheville on a Craft City Food & Art Tour led by the Center for Craft, Creativity & Design. Media represented *AP*, *Reuters*, *EFE América* and equestrian magazines in China and Sweden.

NY Media Tour: PR Manager Landis Taylor was in NY April 24-27 for two media events organized by Visit NC and their agency LGA. An event at Meredith Publishing allowed destination representatives to meet and pitch editors from publications including *Martha Stewart Living*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Parents*, *Rachael Ray Every Day*, *Family Circle* and *Midwest Living*. An evening media reception included an attendee list of over 50 journalists that represented outlets such as *Skift*, *Peter Greenberg Worldwide*, *The Rachael Ray Show*, *Fodor’s*, *Paste* and *Shermans Travel*. Landis also booked a deskside appointment with Laura Begley Bloom, the newly appointed Chief Content Officer of *Family Traveller* and former editor at *Yahoo Travel*, *Travel + Leisure* and *Conde Nast’s Brides* magazine.

Asheville’s Summer of Glass Press Release: In April, the PR team crafted a release around Asheville’s Summer of Glass including news around special visitor experiences and travel packages, the Chihuly exhibition at Biltmore and the region’s connection to the beginning of the studio glass art movement in America. The release was picked up 263 times with a potential

audience of 15 million. It was also sent to 310 media subscribers of Explore Asheville. An additional 22 media contacts were pitched after the team utilized TrendKite to find writers and outlets who have previously focused on destination art scene coverage.

Community Communications: In advance of National Tourism Week, Marla Tambellini and Dodie Stephens rolled out several tactical elements to generate awareness around the importance and impact of tourism. A new release that used the spring campaign as a news hook shared the ROI of advertising while also noting the significant investments BCTDA makes in the community. Explore Asheville also began a new round of in-banner videos on the Citizen-Times web site featuring the “Faces of Tourism” video.

Significant Placements

1. Courier Magazine – “*Foodie Cities and Scenes*”
2. CSPAN – “*Cities Tour: Asheville*”
3. Dating With Passports Blog – “*Hotel Review: The Inn on Biltmore Estate*”
4. Getting on Travel – “*Asheville’s Biltmore Estate Shines in Every Season*”
5. Leisure Group Travel – “*South Region: Latest & Greatest, April Edition*”
6. MeetingsNet – “*Asheville, N.C., to Welcome New Meeting Hotels, Event Spaces*”
7. Southern Living – “*South’s Best Brewery: No. 1 Highland Brewing Company*”
8. TravelPulse – “*The Music and Arts Scene Worth Traveling For*”
9. Trips to Discover – “*Foodie Fanatics Flock to These 5 Cities in North Carolina*”
10. Trips to Discover – “*7 Best Places to Watch Live Music in North Carolina*”
11. USA Today – “*Outdoor Beer Gardens Across America*”
12. Wander With Wonder Blog – “*Discovering Asheville, NC: Architecture, Beer, Music and More*”
13. Women’s Running – “*Bring the Family!*”

Content Development Projects: The content team continued work on several projects in the month of April, including community initiatives and traffic-building efforts.

Tryon Destination Guide: In preparation for the World Equestrian Games, and as a part of the CVB’s sponsorship package, the content team updated and optimized existing WEG web content, attended a test event and shared visual assets and info via social media, compiled written and visual assets for inclusion in the print and digital Destination Guide publication, and provided creative for ad placements, signage and email blasts.

Ultimate Top 8 Getaway Giveaway: Launched in late March, the team continued to promote the Top 8 contest through email and social channels. Over eight weeks, the contest pages received 25,000 pageviews and more than 5,400 entries. Facebook posts promoting the giveaway reached more than 160,000 users, and the grand prize package elements donated by each of the category winners are valued at \$1,100. Moving forward the team will use the results of each week’s voting to create highly engaging new content pieces for web, travel guide and other channels.

Content & Partnership Efforts: Several of the team’s projects this month involved various partnership arrangements. Cat continued to work with the team at Haute Route to maximize registration and exposure for the event. She also assembled content for paid opportunities with TripAdvisor and National Geographic, and she met with stakeholders in the River Arts District regarding needs and opportunities surrounding the RADTIP project. Jason and Elizabeth wrapped up the deployment of the Google Trekker project, embedding content on more than a dozen webpages and promoting the partnership across channels.

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of April, 11 new pieces of editorial content were added to the website: stories the Google Trekker project and viewing Biltmore in 360, three additional Summer of Glass stories, a snapshot of the new Beyond the Page event, and five “Things to Do This Weekend” posts. Significant updates were also made to the site’s World Equestrian Games page
- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to Do in Asheville, which received 35,274 new page views, followed by What You Can’t Miss in Asheville in 2018, which received 10,558 page views.

Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

Visit Asheville page

- April saw 2,476 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 270,944.
- There were 32 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of April.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was a share of a video on Earth Day. The post reached 92,605 people organically, generating 6,075 total reactions, and 295 comments.
- The most popular paid post this month was a share of a link to Week 1 of our Asheville Ultimate Top 8 Getaway Giveaway page asking people to vote for their favorite place to watch the sunset. It reached 20,338 users in total (8,364 of those organically), generating 217 total reactions, 57 comments and 21 shares.
- The most engaging post this month was a photo share of the moon rising over Burnett Reservoir as seen from Craggy Gardens. It engaged 8.9 percent of the 39,143 users reached.

Foodtopia page

- April saw 35 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 25,235 likes.
- There were 8 new Facebook posts added to the Foodtopia page in the month of April.
- The most popular post — a share of the link announcing Chai Pani earned honors as one of the 23 best Indian restaurants in the country — reached 5,689 people, generating 259 reactions.

Video:

- There were 12,458 new, organic YouTube views in April. The most popular video by organic views this month was the Spirit of Asheville, which received 2,024 non-paid views. Return Again came in second with 1,528 new views.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 60,773 views, with the majority coming from Facebook. There have been 1,881,383 views of Explore Asheville content YTD (since July 1, 2017).

Pinterest:

- The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 4,754. Foodtopia accounts for 1,384 of those. Explore Asheville – 3,370.

Instagram:

- Our VisitAsheville account has 46,593 followers.
- There were 19 new posts in April. The most popular was a picture of a mountain vista by Mitchell Andrew Photo. It received 2,697 engagements (likes and comments).

Twitter:

- Across all three accounts we have a total of 30,442 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,954 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 120,358 active subscribers.
- **Opens/Click-throughs:** In April, our monthly Asheville Traveler e-newsletter went out to 120,349 subscribers. It had an overall open rate of 17.8 percent and a click-through rate of 3.8 percent.

ExploreAsheville.com: Website user sessions dropped in April primarily due to a decrease in paid advertising channels and social media compared to last year. Social was down 55 percent while advertising drove far fewer sessions (a decrease of 69.2 percent). One reason for this was a strategy shift to focus on lower funnel site conversions. Overall, that led to a 23 percent decrease in traffic year-over-year. Organic traffic was flat at a 0.9 percent decrease. Paid search was also down due to the eclipse campaign that was running last spring. One bright spot was the Asheville Traveler email newsletter which was up 31.9 percent year-over-year in April. The variance in sessions from social channels was primarily due to a Facebook algorithm change in April impacting how brands reach users' social feeds. This led to both decreased reach and, ultimately, clickthroughs to the site.

ExploreAsheville.com continues to outperform industry averages with 26 percent more total pages per visit, 36 percent longer visit duration, 35 percent more organic pages per visit, and 47 percent longer organic visit duration as compared to industry average in the month of April.

Website Improvements – SEO and CRO: In April, Simpleview continued its conversion rate optimization efforts on ExploreAsheville.com and worked with staff on a variety of split tests to increase site engagement, conversions and booking engine. Also, of note:

- The Outdoor Adventures section was up 14.9 percent for April with 11,017 organic sessions
- The Hiking page was the 5th highest landing page with 4,616 visits, 7.15 average pages per visit and 0:06:10 average session duration.
- The 50 Things to Do in Asheville post was the second highest landing page for organic traffic with 20,261 visits, 3.29 pages per session and an average session duration of 0:04:07, up 12 percent year-over-year in organic sessions.

Online Reservations: There were 64 orders for 88 room nights in April with a total of \$13,825 in booking revenue and \$647 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in April were Georgia, North Carolina, Michigan, South Carolina and Ohio.

Visitor Guide Requests

There were 3,583 requests for the Official Asheville Travel Guide in April, a 48 percent increase over last year. Year-to-date, there have been 23,646 travel guide requests, up 10.6 percent over last year.

GROUP SALES & SERVICES UPDATE

Group sales reported 34 definite group bookings in April, up three percent from the prior year (24 meetings/conventions, seven weddings, and three group tour). The combined total definite room nights were 6,429 room nights, down 35 percent from the previous year. April 2017 was an extraordinary month for definite room nights due to the booking of the 2020 and 2021 Southern Conference Basketball Conferences. Seventy-seven leads (55 meeting/conventions, 11 weddings, and 11 motorcoach) representing 17,729 room nights were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in April. Leads distributed were up 16.7 percent and rooms represented were up 8.5 percent over the prior year.

Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$1,770,250 (down 35%). This is another example demonstrating how April 2017 was an extraordinary month due to the booking of the 2020 and 2021 Southern Conference Basketball Conferences. Person-to-person outreach totaled 1,102 contacts, down three percent from last year. Indirect outreach totaled 4,332 contacts (up 4%). Actualized revenue was \$1,282,889 (up 7.3%).

Sales Calls/Missions/FAMS:

- Shawn Boone called on ten accounts in Cincinnati, making a group presentation to six planners with Kroger Company. One RFP for 790 room nights resulted from this trip.
- Carla McGlynn attended Luxury Meetings Pittsburgh and had conversations with 12 planners. Carla met with 11 additional clients including five Helms Briscoe representatives, two of which are HB President Club Members. Carla also attended PCMA and MPI networking events while in town.
- Twenty-six wedding guides were downloaded this month as compared to 46 guides in April 2017.

Site Visits/Leads: The team hosted eight site visits this month, including the 2020 NC Strawberry Association – 185 rooms; 2019 CHEP – 150 rooms; 2019 Mid-South Independent School Business Officers – 298 rooms; 2019 Varco Purden Building – 60 rooms; 2019 Mo Summit (two sites) – 250 rooms; 2019 SC Neurological Society – 70 rooms; 2019 American Institute of Architects (11 people on the site visit) – 965 rooms.

A total of 76 leads representing 17,647 room nights were sent in April. A sampling of the leads processed include: 2021 Society of Petroleum Engineers – 503 rooms; 2018 Gala Gymnastics – 280 rooms; 2018 Virbac Mid-Atlantic Regional – 12 rooms (FAM Participant); 2018 Opus Agency – 850 rooms; 2018 Bob Lewis Park - six leads totaling 1,350 rooms; 2019 SC Neurological Association – 70 rooms; 2018 Merial Training – 12 rooms; 2020 American Medical Association – 90 rooms; 2019 International Leadership Association – 755 rooms; 2020 National Society of Pershing Rifles – 380 rooms; 2019 American Music Therapy Association – 190 rooms; 2020 International Association of Refrigerated Warehouses – 1,135 rooms; 2020 Carolina Recycling Association – 979 rooms; 2019 Blue Ridge Rose Society – 80 rooms; 2019 Mo Summit – 250 rooms; 2018 Miller Transportation 69 rooms; 2018 UPS Capital – 80 rooms among others.

A sample of April bookings includes:

- 2018 Bob Lewis Park – Back to School Classic – 375 rooms
- 2018 Outdoor Recreation Industry – 120 rooms
- 2018 National Federation of Grandmother Clubs of America – 120 rooms
- 2018 KCI USA – 33 rooms
- 2019 Batenkill Communications BYO Boot Camp – 212 rooms
- 2020 Alabama National Gas Association – 780 rooms
- 2018-2019 Jupiter Legend Corporation – 270 rooms
- 2020-2022 North Carolina Local Government Information Systems – 2,655 rooms
- 2018 North Carolina Economic Development Association – 225 rooms
- 2018 Duke Institute for Brain Sciences – 130 rooms
- 2018 Center for Spiritual Living – 90 rooms
- 2018 Logan County Gifted Students Trip – 58 rooms
- 2019 Society of Veterinary Soft Tissue Surgery – 90 rooms
- 2018 Asheville's Ultimate 22nd Annual Ho Down – 200 rooms

Absolutely Asheville Motorcoach FAM: Exclusive to the Asheville area, 22 planners representing fourteen tour companies visited April 15-18. The three-day experience targeted operators who have verifiable business to book in the southeast and who have not attended a FAM in Asheville. Planned stops included Biltmore, Crest Mountain, Folk Art Center, Asheville Outlets, Chimney Rock State Park, Sierra Nevada Brewery, River Arts District and local group friendly restaurants. Accommodations were provided by Hampton Inn and Suites Asheville Biltmore Village. Businesses unable to act as a host were invited to participate in an appointment-style local supplier showcase. Thirteen businesses participated in this opportunity. Four leads resulted from this FAM.

AAA: Thirty AAA and CAA Travel counselors visited Asheville as part of the annual Blue Ridge Parkway Association AAA FAM. Counselors explored Biltmore, took a Gray Line trolley tour of Asheville, toured Chimney Rock State Park, and lodged at Hampton Inn Tunnel Road. Sales Support Analyst Susan Lott from The Auto Club Group attended this FAM. Susan is responsible for managing FAM trips for Auto Travel employees throughout 11 states.

Leann Swims hosted two Explore Asheville AAA Training Webinars attended by 64 agents. The subject was Summertime in Asheville. Featured partners included Biltmore, No Taste Like Home Tours, and Hyatt Place Hotel. Attending counselors represented AAA Carolinas, AAA Club Alliance and AAA South. Also participating were agents from the NC Welcome Centers.

Group Sales Communications

The sales' team expanded its marketing toolkit with its first ever Facebook ad promoting the CVB's Have More Fun on Us meeting planner incentive program to a targeted audience with meetings industry interests.

Media Coverage

- Asheville and Explore Asheville services were included in *Smart Meeting's* "Southern Hospitality North Carolina Style" after staff provided extensive information to the writer.
- Asheville was featured in *Leisure Group Travel* – "South Region: Latest & Greatest, April Edition" as a result of a media site visit arranged by the CVB and meeting with staff at the ABA and Travel South tradeshow.

- Carli Adams was interviewed by Savannah Osbourn, staff writer with *The Group Travel Leader Inc.*, for a story highlighting mountain destination.
- Staff provided information to a writer with *Meetings Net* and Asheville was a headlining story in its newsletter with “Asheville, N.C., to Welcome New Meeting Hotels, Event Spaces” marking the first coverage seen by staff in this top meeting industry publication.

Mass Communications

- An email announcing the seasonal flight from Denver to Asheville was sent to 406 Denver-based clients. Open rate: 18 percent; Clicks: 7; Click to Open ratio: 9 percent
- An e-newsletter was sent to all 1,752 Group Tour Operator clients. Open rate: 21 percent; Clicks: 31; Click to Open ratio: 8 percent
- An introduction to Asheville was sent to a list of 415 prospects from a webinar sponsorship. Open rate: 24 percent; Clicks: 26; Click to Open ratio: 25 percent
- An email was sent to 1,759 clients based in the Northeast to introduce Shawn Boone as the new sales manager for the region. Open rate: 16 percent; Clicks: 57; Click to Open ratio: 19 percent
- A promotional email about Explore Asheville’s Have More Fun on Us incentive program sent by *Meetings Today* to 3,092 meeting planner contacts as a part of the CVB’s eMedia Campaign partnership with the publication. Open rate: 9 percent; Clicks: 35

Convention Service Highlights

Meetings were held with planners from the Associated General Contractors and Southern Forest Service Retiree Association. Explore Asheville CVB hosted presentations for the delegation from the Coastal Alabama Business Chamber’s inner-city visit and a welcome presentation for National Eligibility Workers – Professionals Associated Through Human Services. Staff also welcomed 60 attendees with the U.S. Forest Service Asheville meeting and provided a group welcome and gift to Fullington Trailways.

Departmental Activities: A heavy emphasis in April was completing the FY 18-19 departmental budget. The department did a site visit of Sierra Nevada Brewery, hosted a TLC departmental training, helped host the Hospitality Outlook, and attended Workday Training. Staff attended the monthly Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission and Civic Center Commission meetings.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tourism Product Development Efforts:

An Information Session on the application process was held on April 11 in the Explore Asheville Boardroom; fifteen were in attendance. Pat continues to respond to inquiries from prospective applicants, and schedule one-on-one consultations.

Pat is working through contract development and amendments with recent TPDF award recipients - City of Asheville Riverfront Redevelopment project and Buncombe County Woodfin Greenway & Blueway project.

A sub-committee of the TPDF Committee was formed to interview candidates for the open position on the TPDF Committee created with Himanshu Karvir’s term expiration. Robert Foster presented the recommendation to appoint Christopher Levine from the Omni Grove Park Inn to the BCTDA at the April board meeting; the board voted to accept the recommendation.

Partner Engagement:

National Tourism Week Summit – May 3: Planning is underway for the second annual National Tourism Week Summit to be held on May 3 at the Asheville Renaissance Hotel. The luncheon program will feature a keynote presentation by Paul Ouimet of Destinations International who will share the outcome of the recent Destination Assessment Survey and provide insights from his strategic assessment work in over 290 other destinations. Attendees will have the opportunity to choose a follow-up breakout session designed to provide marketing and sales tactics. Additionally, Paul will lead a workshop for invited participants to discuss the results of the assessment and prioritize strategies for the future. The Summit will conclude with an Industry Resource Expo and networking happy hour.

Explore Asheville CVB 101 Orientation: The public affairs team hosted the April CVB 101 Orientation with 14 industry partners in attendance, including staff from Hyatt Place Downtown Agency, CAREI, Susanna Euston Photography, Sierra Nevada Brewing Company, Better Than Unicorns, WorldTourism.com, Blue Star Hospitality, The Foundry Hotel, and Benjamin T Warner DJ & Musician. Additionally, Brit continues to host one-on-one partner trainings when partners request extra assistance with the extranet.

New Partners: Brit created four new partner accounts in April – Lenee’s Glassworks, Inn on Westwood, Deb Williams Designs, and Ambrose West.

Projects & Community Outreach: Pat continues to work with MERJE on the assessment of the county-wide Wayfinding Program to identify gaps in the system and planning for new assets.

Pat attended a Bike Share Feasibility Steering Committee meeting and an Eagle Street/the Block developments community update meeting, both by invitation from City of Asheville staff.

Explore Asheville, on behalf of the BCTDA, sponsored the Asheville Area Arts Council’s Creative Sector Summit. Pat presented an overview to the attendees prior to the keynote presentation, focusing on the BCTDA’s contributions to various arts-related marketing initiatives; and Brit helped to host an Explore Asheville table during the Resource Reception segment of the event.

Service Activity: Several members of the Explore Asheville team participated in the Downtown Clean-up Day. The Asheville Downtown Association and Greenworks hosted the event in honor of Earth Month; and the team joined many other downtown businesses in clearing litter from the streets of downtown.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

Building: Glenn continued to meet with Martin Lewis to trim down the building checklist.

Administration: April continued the budget preparation process. A great deal of attention was given to employee benefits. On April 13, Glenn met with Matt Bradley of ISA to discuss what we might expect from United Healthcare for the coming fiscal year. A similar meeting was held with Kelly Rose, also of ISA, to discuss Aflac and new plans they are rolling out this year.

Wayfinding System: On April 6, Glenn drove the Wayfinding System, outside the City limits of Asheville. This was done in preparation of *Geograph's* annual Wayfinding Maintenance Review scheduled for the week of May 7. Missing and damaged signs of particular significance were identified that Geograph could install during their Maintenance trip, in lieu of waiting still longer for them to come back early in the next fiscal year.

Earned Revenue: Final sponsorships, using discretionary earned revenue from advertising on ExploreAsheville.com and on-line reservations, were made for the current fiscal year. The final tally for event support in FY17-18 was \$113,750.

Finance and Payroll: Jonna and Justine led the CVB side of the County's transition to Work Day for payroll and financial management with significant support from Jennifer Durrett and many others. The old system was "turned off" April 1 and access to transaction level reports is no longer available. We look forward to the continued development of the system.