



June 27, 2018

To: Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

From: Stephanie Pace Brown

Subject: President's Report of March Activities

As we close our first year as an independent organization, I'd like to say how proud I am of the Explore Asheville team. In addition to the regular demands of motivating visitation to Buncombe County, every member of our team moved, worked for months without a finished office, and learned all new budget and payroll systems. I am grateful to them for their patience, flexibility and commitment.

Special thanks to Jonna, Glenn and Justine for their monumental efforts. And, to Marla and Dianna for so ably supporting their teams. We appreciate the vision of the board for establishing Explore Asheville and your support as we work together to achieve our goals.

The fiscal year will end with seven percent more supply than a year ago, along with continued growth in the availability of short term vacation rentals. The efforts of Explore Asheville have contributed to the successful absorption of unprecedented growth in inventory.

The Destination NEXT assessment was completed and presented to the public at the National Tourism Week Summit on May 3. The Explore Asheville staff are now working in teams to develop strategies to support each of the five destination pillars. This work, along with input from BCTDA members and industry stakeholders, will establish new strategic priorities for coming years.

MONTH AT A GLANCE

- 170 attended the National Tourism Week Summit that included a keynote presentation by Paul Ouimet highlighting the Asheville Destination Assessment. The Summit also included three breakout sessions, a networking reception and a partner organization expo.
- Marketing partnerships included the development of an Asheville Premium Destination Page on TripAdvisor.com, and the start of production with National Geographic.
- The PR team hosted five media in the market and made a trip to Greenville, SC to promote Summer of Glass and other destination news. A news release on the outdoor scene was developed.
- Jason's photo blog on Chihuly at Biltmore saw 182,000 users, generating 15,000 reactions, 1,500 comments and 2,000 shares.

- Staff is developing the process for the agency review which will be undertaken this summer. Additional details will be presented at the June board meeting.
- A client event was held in Atlanta. Staff attended Luxury Meeting Summit in Arizona and conducted sales calls. Staff visited AAA branches in Cincinnati.
- Staff volunteered during Haute Route Asheville and provided marketing support.

MAY METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS

- During May, the sales team posted 920 personal contacts (down 19%). May sales activities generated 100 sales leads (up 47%) and 37 convention bookings (down 3%), representing 11,044 rooms (up 276%). Eleven months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are up 7 percent and room nights represented are up 11 percent.
- CVB sales leads generated 38 group events in May (up 58%), with revenue of \$1,000,262 (up 151%). The services team assisted 48 groups (up 23%).
- The PR team landed 13 significant placements in May (down 87%), with 69 media touchpoints (down 31%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$1,831,641 with reach of over 5 million. Online placements added \$255,909 in value and reach of nearly 600 million.
- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 466,430 visits (down 9%), including 324,580 to the mobile site (up 8%). Our Facebook fan base grew by 3,440 (up 2%) and video views totaled 57,350 (down 7%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 131 room nights (up 24%) with total room revenue of \$20,022 (down 5%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 19,136 visitors (down 14%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion welcomed 1,121 visitors (down 2%).

HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$30,883,272 in April, an increase of 8.6 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 73.5 percent during April (down 1%). The average daily room rate was \$147.83 (up 2.3%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$108.65 (up 1.3%). Room demand increased 6.1 percent with 170,926 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 22.1 percent to total 84,957 in April.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Advertising: The final elements of the spring campaign were launched in May along with the supplemental campaign managed by Miles Media Partnership. The Peter Mayer team finalized two sponsored content articles that are running in the USAToday.com network and will be promoted via their social media channels. Both posts have a combined reach of 150K+ and are seeing strong engagement. The spring campaign will wind down in early June while the supplemental campaign (Amazon network, Tremor, SambaTV, and Samsung) will continue through the end June.

Planning for the late summer-fall campaign also got underway. The Peter Mayer team reviewed updated creative with staff and refinements were being made. The media plan was outlined in early June.

The team worked with TripAdvisor to launch an Asheville Premium Destination Page which allows us to use branded content for the destination. This partnership will not only allow us to have a more fully developed presence on TripAdvisor.com, but will allow us to control the messaging and imagery that represents the destination brand.

Production began on the National Geographic partnership project. The production team was in town May 30-June 6 to shoot video and conduct interviews for the half-hour special on National Geographic Channel to air in September. A teaser video will also be produced for use in Nat Geo social channels that will also promote the show.

Paid Search: Compared to last May, sessions are up 18 percent, pages per session are up 35 percent to 3.23 pages, and average session duration is up by 53 percent to 2:50. Bounce rate is also down significantly from 62.45 percent (May 2017) to 42.23 percent (May 2018). Almost 2,000 email signups and over 6,600 visitor guide requests have come in since July 2017. This month there was a total of 818 visitor guide requests, the highest number since January.

General Media Relations: The PR team logged 69 media touchpoints, initiated 10 targeted pitches and hosted 5 media on the ground in Asheville in May. The supported site visits included media representing *Sunseeker Magazine*, *CNN Digital Travel*, and *UNC-TV's NC Weekend*, as well as a German freelance writer representing two major German publishing houses. Story support also included *AAA Home & Away*, *TravelChannel.com*, *Thrillist*, *Forbes*, *Nylon*, *Conde Nast Traveller (UK)* and *Oxford American*. Asheville imagery and assistance were provided to *AFAR*, *Travel + Leisure* and *Matador*.

PR Specialist Sarah Lowery also executed a quick trip to Greenville, SC this month to promote Summer of Glass and other destination news. She taped a segment for "Your Carolina" on *WSPA-TV* (the local CBS affiliate) that aired later in May and detailed information on the various offerings of Summer of Glass, as well as Chihuly at Biltmore. Sarah also met with a freelance writer in town to share the latest Asheville insights.

Additionally, the PR team developed a news release to share news of the outdoor scene. Distribution of the content round-up focusing on summer and fall outdoor adventures was delayed due to the heavy rains and flooding in the area and is being sent out in mid-June.

Significant Placements

1. A Southern Gypsy – "Vegan Restaurants in Asheville: Vegan Guide for Asheville, NC"
2. Bloomberg – "These are America's Fastest Growing Airports"
3. Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine – "Taking the High Road: Haute Route Asheville 2018"
4. Cincinnati Magazine – "The Road Less Traveled"
5. Dallas Morning News – "Asheville May Be the Santa Fe of the Southeast"
6. Metro – "Music Lover or Foodie? New Orleans and Asheville, North Carolina are the Ultimate Mixture of Both"
7. Reader's Digest – "The Best Weekend Getaways in Every State"
8. South Park Magazine – "Your Asheville Bucket List: What to Eat, Drink, and Do on Your Next Weekend Getaway"
9. The Group Travel Leader – "The Sky's the Limit in the Carolinas"
10. Travel Channel – "Why Glass Means a Lot More than Pints in Asheville"
11. Trivago – "6 Top Chefs at Hotel Restaurants Answer, 'What is Southern Food?'"
12. Wander with Wonder – "The Omni Grove Park Inn: A Historic Retreat Near the Blue Ridge Mountains"

Content Development Projects: The content team continued work on several projects in the month of May, including those focused on timely communications.

Social Messaging: Much of the team's social messaging this month was related to timely communications, including those surrounding the flooding late in the month. Other messaging was created around the Haute Route cycling event, the Biltmore Concert Series announcement, and the opening of the Chihuly exhibit at Biltmore. Web content covering the two Biltmore events has received more than 43k pageviews to date, and Facebook posts about the concerts and exhibit have reached nearly 600k users and generated more than 5k shares.

Other Efforts: The team concluded some projects this month, including the Ultimate Top 8 Getaway Giveaway, which reached more than 160k Facebook users and generated 25k pageviews to the site. The results of the Google Trekker project were rolled out across social channels, supported by video and editorial content that the team had been working on. The team continues to update the CrowdRiff user-generated content galleries now embedded across the site. Looking forward, Cat began significant preparations for a photoshoot in early June with photographer Emily Chaplin. Both Cat and Jason contributed to the Destiny Awards entry about the Explore Asheville Music Project.

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of May, seven new pieces of editorial content were added to the website: a story about the tradition of Shindig on the Green, a blog post highlighting the top Asheville experiences as voted on during our Top 8 promotion, a photo tour of Biltmore's Chihuly exhibit, an announcement of 2018 Biltmore Concert Series dates and four new Things to Do This Weekend posts.
- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to Do in Asheville, which received 45,274 new pageviews, followed by the Biltmore Concert Series announcement, which received 19,935 pageviews.

Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

Visit Asheville page

- May saw 3,440 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 273,506.
- There were 43 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of May.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was a photo gallery showing a preview of the Chihuly at Biltmore exhibition during the installation. It has reached 219,908 people organically, generating 17,274 total reactions, and 2,839 comments.
- The most popular paid post this month was Jason's photo blog on Chihuly at Biltmore following the media tour. It reached 182,002 users in total (148,190 of those organically), generating 15,439 total reactions, 1,487 comments and 2,077 shares. This post was also the most engaging. It engaged 8.4 percent of the 182,002 users reached.

Foodtopia page

- May saw 56 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 25,194 likes.
- There were 6 new Facebook posts added to the Foodtopia page in the month of May.
- The most popular post — a share of Citizen Times story highlighting a new White Duck Taco location — reached 6,241 people, generating 273 reactions, 24 comments and 29 shares.

Video:

- There were 12,997 new, organic YouTube views in May. The most popular video by organic views this month was the Spirit of Asheville, which received 2,100 non-paid views. Return Again came in second with 1,701 new views.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 57,350 organic views, with the majority coming from Facebook. There have been 1,938,733 views of Explore Asheville content YTD (since July 1, 2017).

Pinterest:

- The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 4,781. Foodtopia accounts for 1,390 of those. Visit Asheville – 3,391.

Instagram:

- Our VisitAsheville account has 47,758 followers.
- There were 19 new posts in May. The most popular was Jared Kay's stunning aerial photo of a sunset at Biltmore. It received 3,245 engagements (likes and comments).

Twitter:

- Across all three accounts we have a total of 30,559 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,955 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 121,343 active subscribers.
- Opens/Click-throughs: In May, our monthly Asheville Traveler e-newsletter went out to 120,587 subscribers. It had an overall open rate of 16.6 percent and a click-through rate of 5.1 percent. We also sent a reminder email for the Top 8 promotion—it was sent to 119,950 subscribers and had an overall open rate of 17 percent and a click-through rate of 3.6 percent.

ExploreAsheville.com: Website user sessions dropped in May primarily due to a decrease in organic traffic and paid advertising channels compared to last year. Organic traffic was down 8 percent year-over-year in May. The loss can be accounted for in the Home Page, Events Calendar, and Things to Do pages because of algorithm changes that prioritized Trip Advisor content over DMO content. Simpleview SEO team has seen this trend beginning in April across the board with all their clients. Social traffic was down 27.04 percent while advertising drove fewer sessions (a decrease of 44.7 percent). One reason for this was a strategy shift to focus on lower funnel site conversions. Overall, that led to a 9.08 percent decrease in traffic year-over-year. One bright spot was the Asheville Traveler email newsletter which was up 92.98 percent year-over-year in May, due to clicks to Biltmore Concert Series article and Ultimate Top 8 Getaway Giveaway. Also, paid search traffic was up 25.1 percent year-over-year in May. 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 24 percent more total pages per visit, 30 percent longer visit duration, 34 percent more organic pages per visit, and 44 percent longer organic visit duration as compared to industry average in the month of May.

Website Improvements – SEO and CRO: In May, 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 7.19 percent for May with 11,096 organic sessions
- The Things to Do This Weekend page was the 4th highest organic landing page with 5,437 organic visits in May, a 40.85 percent increase over the previous month. This new page did not exist last year.
- The Hiking page continues to outperform average engagement metrics for organic traffic with 4,461 organic visits, 6.72 average pages per visit and 0:05:50 average session duration.
- The 50 Things to Do in Asheville post was the second highest landing page for organic traffic with 22,668 visits, 3.34 pages per session and an average session duration of 0:03:54, up 3.32 percent year-over-year in organic sessions.

Online Reservations: There were 71 orders for 131 room nights in May with a total of \$20,022 in booking revenue and \$866.61 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in May were Georgia, North Carolina, Florida, Tennessee and Virginia.

Visitor Guide: There were 5,867 requests for the Official Asheville Travel Guide in May, a 127 percent increase over last year. Year-to-date, there have been 29,513 travel guide requests, up 23 percent over last year.

GROUP SALES & SERVICES UPDATE

Group sales reported 37 definite group bookings in May (38 last year), representing 11,044 room nights (up 276%). Of these group bookings, 20 were meetings & conventions, four were group tour, and 13 were weddings. This increase in room nights is largely due to the World Equestrian Games booking.

One hundred sales leads (up 47%; 48 for meeting/conventions, eight weddings, and 44 for motorcoach) representing 14,162 room nights (down 19%) were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in May. Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$1,916,579 (up 201%). This increase is attributed to the World Equestrian Games.

Actualized revenue was \$1,000,262 (up 151%). Person-to-person outreach totaled 920 contacts (down 19%). Indirect outreach totaled 11,776 contacts (up 351%).

Kathryn Dewey accepted the position of Sales Manager responsible for the North Carolina market. Kathryn starts on June 18th.

Sales Calls/Missions:

- Shawn Boone traveled to Atlanta for sales calls and to host a client event. Twenty clients attended an Atlanta Braves game at the new stadium at SunTrust Park. Attendance was 100 percent, which is rare for a client event. Industry partners attending were Biltmore and The Omni Grove Park Inn. Shawn also conducted five sales calls in addition to the event.
- Tina Porter attended Luxury Meeting Summit Arizona and met with 22 meeting planners. In addition, Tina made 13 sales calls/presentations with various corporations, associations and independent planning organizations (HPN Global).
- A total of 32 wedding guides were downloaded this month, as compared to 29 in May 2017.

Site Visits/Bookings/Leads:

- Four site visits were hosted including 2020 The Well-Armed Women in Shooting – 945 room nights (three planners), McGraw Hill Education (plans more than 70 meetings annually - five planners), 2021 Society of American Foresters – 370 room nights and 2019 NC Association of ABC Boards – 262 room nights.
- May was a strong group tour month with five leads alone representing 4,110 room nights. The high volume leads included Collette Vacations' 24-departure series representing 1,460 room nights, Road Scholar's 10-departure series representing 1,250 room nights, US Tours' two leads representing 1,000 room nights, and Sunshine Tours' lead representing 400 room nights.

A sampling of May bookings includes:

- 2018 Southern Environmental Enforcement Network – 222 rooms
- 2018 Monte Vista Camp Meeting – 120 rooms
- 2018 Virbac Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting – 12 rooms
- 2018 Varco Pruden Buildings – 67 rooms
- 2018 Blue Ride Lacrosse Classic – 600 rooms
- 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games – 7,490 rooms
- 2018 Southeastern Electric Exchange – 35 rooms
- 2018 Clopay Building Products – 200 rooms
- 2018 Tennessee Credit Union League – 80 rooms
- 2019 NC Division of International Assn. for Identification - 155 rooms
- 2019 Electric Power Research Institute – 40 rooms
- 2019 Tangle U – 450 rooms
- 2020 North Carolina Strawberry Association – 209 rooms

AAA Initiatives

Staff visited seven Cincinnati area AAA branches in May to conduct in-office trainings. Collectively the team worked with more than 40 agents. Participating industry partners were Biltmore, Grandfather Mountain, Great Smoky Mountain Railroad and Milan Hotel Group.

Group Sales Communications

Explore Asheville CVB is a nominee in the 2nd Annual Stella Awards recognizing excellence in the meetings industry in the category of "Best CVB in the Southeast". Improvements to the wedding section of ExploreAsheville.com included the development of a user generated gallery of images of real Asheville Weddings.

Media Coverage

- Asheville was featured in *Group Travel Leader's* article "The Sky's the Limit in the Carolinas" after an interview with staff.
- Carli Adams was interviewed by a writer gathering information for a story about how CVBs can assist meeting planners for *Small Market Meetings*.
- Staff provided information to a writer with *ConventionSouth* working on an "N.C. Event Planner's Guide" that will be featured in the magazine.
- Staff provided information to a writer with *Corporate & Incentive Travel Magazine* writing an article about "emerging destinations" for corporate meetings and events.

Mass Communications

A systemwide promotional postcard mailer promoting Explore Asheville's Have More Fun on Us incentive program was sent to 11,357 meeting planner clients.

An email attempting to re-engage prior lost business clients was sent to 379 contacts. Open rate: 22 percent; Clicks: 10; Click to Open ratio: 11 percent.

Convention Service Highlights

Staff volunteered during Haute Route Asheville and helped with packet assembly, packet pick-up and hospitality. A planning visit was coordinated for the meeting planner with Tangle U, a conference planned for May 2019.

Departmental Activities: Leann Swims, designated superuser of the Simpleview CRM, attended the Simpleview Summit in Arizona for additional training and to hear from industry experts. Leann attended the sessions of CRM What's New, The Evolving Role of Destination Organizations, Marketing the Unique Meeting Spaces in your Destination, Meeting Planners: Successes, Challenges and How they Perceive DMOs, Getting Your Organization GDPR Ready, and The Most Powerful Simpleview CRM Core Reports You Are Likely Not Using among other speed sessions, networking opportunities and keynote speeches. Leann brings this knowledge back to the team for implementation.

Completing budgets and evaluations were a high priority this month. The team created seven microsites in May for inbound groups. The team attended the National Tourism Week Summit and facilitated a breakout titled "So you want a piece of the group market" with more than 50 people in attendance. Staff visited Haiku I Do (wedding), Courtyard and SpringHill Suites (renovations), Great Smoky Mountain Railroad, Chihuly at Biltmore and volunteered for Haute Route Bike Race.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tourism Product Development Efforts:

Pat continues to field inquiries from prospective applicants in anticipation of the June 6 deadline for Phase I of the 2018 grant cycle.

City of Asheville staff presented an update on the South Slope Vision Plan to Stephanie, Marla and Pat. Next steps include scheduling a session for PGAV to meet with City staff, and a second half-day session for PGAV, City staff and CVB staff. These meetings are expected to take place in July.

Stephanie and Pat also met with county staff and Commissioner Joe Belcher to learn about a forthcoming TPDF project proposal for the Buncombe County Sports Complex.

Pat has completed the contract development for the Buncombe County Woodfin Greenway & Blueway project and continues to work with city staff on the amendments for the City of Asheville Riverfront Redevelopment projects.

Partner Engagement:

National Tourism Week Summit: The second annual National Tourism Week Summit, attended by 170 industry partners, was held on May 3 at the Asheville Renaissance Hotel. The luncheon program featured a keynote presentation by Paul Ouimet of Destinations International who shared the outcome of the recent Destination Assessment Survey and provided insights from his strategic assessment work in over 290 other destinations. Attendees had the opportunity to attend one of two follow-up breakout sessions: “Maximizing Your Exposure Across the Google Travel Funnel” presented by Kim Palmer, Director of SEO & Google Project Manager at Miles Partnership, or “The ‘How-to’s’ in Connecting with the Group Market”, a panel discussion with Deb Bowman of Accents on Asheville, Melissa Murray of Mosaix Group, and CVB staff Shawn Boone and Dianna Pierce. Additionally, Paul led a workshop for invited participants to discuss the results of the assessment and prioritize strategies for the future. The Summit concluded with an Industry Resource Expo and networking happy hour. Several organizations participated in the Expo including AIR, City of Asheville, Asheville Downtown Association, SagaCity, A-B Tech Community College, Asheville Area Arts Council, and the Asheville Grown Business Alliance.

Explore Asheville CVB 101 Orientation: The public affairs team hosted the May CVB 101 orientation with nine industry partners in attendance, including staff from Princess Anne Hotel, Hilton Garden Inn Asheville Downtown, Wolf Ridge Resort, Rhubarb, Deb Williams Designs, and Farmside Village. Additionally, Brit continues to host one-on-one extranet trainings for partners requesting extra assistance.

Explore Asheville Summer Social: Planning is underway for a Summer Social event to be held in late July.

New Partners: Brit created nine new partner accounts in May – Asheville Wine Market, Bullington Gardens, Vivian, Yesterday’s Tree Furniture, Appalachian Guild of Healing Arts, Stargazers Designs, Moonlight Makers, Jack’s 47, and New Moon Marketplace.

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. The assessment also includes an update of the criteria for inclusion. Completion of the comprehensive assessment report is expected in June/July. Additionally, Pat is working with county staff on a signage package for the new Coxe Avenue garage.

Pat has joined the Local Living Economy sub-committee. The committee was created by the Downtown Commission and meets monthly to focus on strategizing ways to keep local businesses thriving downtown. The committee includes representation from AIR, ADA, city staff, downtown business owners and Councilman Brian Haynes.

Pat also attended the Spring City Manager’s Development Forum

Explore Asheville, on behalf of the BCTDA, sponsored the ADA’s Downtown After 5 concert series, and hosted an Explore Asheville table at the first event of the summer on May 18. The booth included a banner representing all the businesses represented by Explore Asheville, Visitor Guides, and a raffle with Chihuly at Biltmore tickets as a giveaway. Stephanie, Marla, Glenn, Megan and Pat manned the booth for the evening, and connected with both visitors and residents.

Brit attended her second SimpleView Summit in Phoenix, AR, where she participated in live training sessions focused on best-practices and new tools surrounding the CRM database tool that is used to feed listings, calendar events, and packages and deals into ExploreAsheville.com.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

Building: Continued to work through the building checklist of items needs attention. With the season changing to warmer weather, more attention can now be placed on external work such as painting, cleaning and window washing. Coordinated orders and installation for monitor arms and standing desks for staff in offices. All cubicles were fitted with standing desks from the beginning.

It was determined that our building has been experiencing damaging electrical surges. On May 18, a meeting was held with Tim Emory of Emory Electric to begin looking into the source of these surges. The first thing Emory Electric did was a monitoring of the electric panels and circuitry in the building where they determined everything internally was operating as it should. Their next step was to get Duke Energy involved and see if their equipment was the source of the electrical surges. This investigation is still under progress.

Administration: May continued the budget preparation process. Attention was given to finalizing employee benefits. On May 14, Glenn met with Jake Kimser and Kelly Rose who serve as Aflac reps for ISA. On May 21, Glenn organized a staff meeting with ISA to discuss the FY18-19 benefits offerings. This was followed-up on May 24 with one-on-one meetings between staff and ISA reps to answer questions personal or unique to staff.

On May 22, Stephanie, Marla and Glenn met with HR Craft Solutions to discuss their assistance in recruiting a Marketing Analyst, which is a new position for Explore Asheville. Following an earlier posting, we realized the description needed reworking and we also needed to identify new outlets for posting this job.

Wayfinding System: During the week of May 7, Geograph was in town to undertake their annual spring maintenance review and to install several signs damaged by vehicles.

Earned Revenue: As part of the sponsorship packet for Downtown After 5, Stephanie, Marla, Pat, Glenn and Megan worked BCTDA's first booth at a local event. Visitor Guides were offered to attendees and information was taken for a drawing for two tickets to the Chihuly Exhibit at The Biltmore Estate. Matt Farr of Manna Food Bank was the lucky winner.

Workforce Development: Worked with Goodwill Industries to host their May Business Advisory Council (BAC) meeting with a focus on workforce recruitment and retention in the Hospitality and Tourism industry. A panel was selected to represent various sectors of the H&T industry. They responded to pre-determined questions and questions from the audience via text. Goodwill said it was their largest audience for a BAC event.

Glenn attended a Strive Not to Drive meeting at Sierra Nevada. BCTDA was a sponsor of the Land of Sky COG meeting with an agenda that addressed how transportation can be used to enhance workforce recruitment and retention.

On May 30, Glenn attended EveryBody Works NC - Disability Workforce Development with Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy Cohen at Lioncrest at Biltmore. The meeting detailed the “win-win” of employers hiring individuals who have intellectual or developmental disabilities. These employees were described as a “hidden” employee base that has proven to add value in a variety of ways to a business. Secretary Cohen and other speakers gave examples of the support that is provided to these employees to help enable their success at no cost to the employer.