



December 20, 2017

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

The holiday advertising campaign has been in full swing and the final touches for the winter campaign are in development, while the sales team continues a heavy travel schedule moving into the end of the year.

We have facilitated a series of productive meetings with the City and County to develop a shared vision for tourism development for the next decade. Initial meetings with staff created a foundation of understanding of the TPDF criteria, and respective capital plans. Elected leaders and TDA Chair Jim Muth joined the conversation and provided next steps for staff.

MONTH AT A GLANCE

- Sarah Kilgore will join the team as Director of Advertising on January 2.
- PR staff participated in the Visit NC Media Mission in Atlanta.
- Sales staff attended TEAMS Sports Conference in Orlando, Smart Meetings Texas, Luxury Meeting Summits in Cleveland and Cincinnati, sales calls in Nashville, Travel South International in Charleston, and AAA Superbowl of Knowledge in Concord.
- Dianna Pierce represented Explore Asheville for a sales mission to Germany and Switzerland.
- The November 16th Partner Forum featured a sales and marketing update.
- The December 6 Holiday Party was hosted by the Renaissance and US Foods for an expected crowd of 330 tourism partners. Superstar Awards were presented to Tom Roberson, DeWayne Barton, Chris Corl, and the Omni Grove Park Inn team.
- The CVB convened a meeting of glass artists, organizations and attractions to discuss opportunities associated with the Chihuly exhibit at Biltmore.

NOVEMBER METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS

- During November, the sales team posted 1,208 personal contacts (up 32%). November sales activities generated 66 sales leads (down 8%) and 34 convention bookings (up 31%), representing 7,723 rooms (up 25%). Five months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are up 5 percent and room nights represented are up 6 percent.
- CVB leads generated 33 group events in November (up 32%), with revenue of \$361,528 (down 27%). The services team assisted 30 groups (down 6%).

- The PR team landed 46 significant placements in November (down 32%), with 60 media touchpoints (up 140%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$215,656 with reach of over 6.7 million. Online placements added \$341,964 in value and reach of over 413 million.
- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 300,593 visits (up 1%), including 194,539 to the mobile site (up 6%). Our Facebook fan base grew by 5,176 (down 24%) and video views totaled 790,581 (up 742%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 52 room nights (up 63%) with total room revenue of \$7,696 (up 41%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 16,375 visitors (up 9%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion is closed for the winter.

HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$43,379,653 in October, an increase of 2.4 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 83 percent during October (down 2.2%). The average daily room rate was \$187.68 (down 0.6%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$155.76 (down 2.8%). Room demand increased 2 percent with 192,389 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 17.3 percent to total 102,095 in October, posting a record month of enplanements.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Advertising: The holiday campaign will run for another two weeks and will be trailed by holiday retargeting ads through the long Christmas weekend. While the spend this year has been approximately the same compared to last year, clicks to the Web site are off considerably. This is primarily due to designing a campaign that optimizes against a high bounce rate, resulting in click-throughs from a more engaged and interested audience. Last year, Yahoo traffic drove 35,000 click-throughs to ExploreAsheville.com but had an unacceptable 90 percent bounce rate and didn't deliver visits according to Arrivalist data. Arrivals of visitors exposed to the 2017 holiday campaign have already surpassed total arrivals based on the same time frame and campaign exposure in 2016.

Video and image assets for The Southern Weekend/Local Palate content were compiled this month, and a photo shoot was planned for the Winter campaign. Creative concepts for winter were discussed and direction provided to the agency which will finalize display ads in December for execution beginning the second week of January.

Paid search efforts: Compared to paid search efforts in November 2016, Simpleview reports that ExploreAsheville.com sessions are up 9 percent and pages per session are up 11 percent. Average time on the site for each session is up 18 percent, and the bounce rate has also improved. While both Google and Bing click-through rates are both up, Bing is showing the biggest improvement with a 28 percent increase year-over-year. The Things to Do campaign generated the most overall clicks to the site in Google AdWords, while the events campaign

commanded the most clicks in Bing. During November, the two pay-per-click campaigns cost \$33,351 and generated 49,868 click-throughs to the site.

New Hire: The new Director of Advertising, Sarah Kilgore, is slated to start January 2. She comes to us from Orlando where she served as corporate marketing manager for the Kessler Collection of hotels. Prior to that, she worked as the marketing manager for the Hotel Duval. She also has extensive writing experience, having worked in various marketing and PR positions since graduating from University of Georgia in 2005. Given her work with Kessler, she is very familiar with Asheville and counts herself as one of our biggest destination fans. She is excited to join us, and we are delighted to welcome her.

General Media Relations: November's focus was activation on holiday and other proactive PR efforts, as well as high-touch site visit support for media representing *Food & Wine*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Uproxx* (music) and *FoodNetwork.com*. Media outreach included distribution of a holiday news release and Explore Asheville presence at the Visit NC Media Mission in Atlanta. Additional touchpoints of note included *Meetings Today*, *Zagat*, *Nat Geo* and *HGTV*. In total, the team logged 60 touchpoints, initiated 130 targeted pitches and hosted six journalists on the ground in Asheville. Asheville imagery and assistance were provided to *Forbes Travel Guide*, *National Geographic Traveler* magazine, *Fodor's Travel*, *New York Post* and *Cooking Channel*, among others.

Holiday Round-Up Release & TrendKite: In support of the Explore Asheville holiday campaign, the PR team reworked an ExploreAsheville.com editorial ([8 Ways Asheville Sparkles for the Holidays](#)) for media relevancy and news value. Distribution of the release targeted 111 contacts including daily newspapers in key ad markets, the team's list of regional and national media contacts, as well as contacts curated through TrendKite's coverage and contact platform. The team worked with TrendKite to develop dashboards identifying writers and outlets with a history of covering Asheville holiday news, who were likely to produce a successful national piece, or who had previously covered holiday news from competitor destinations. Searches were used to create a targeted list of specific pitch targets.

Visit NC Atlanta Media Mission

In early November, Landis attended the Visit NC Atlanta Media Mission where she directly networked with 18 writers, editors, bloggers, and influencers. Highlights include pitching a *CNN* senior producer and meeting the new editor of *Southbound*. Explore Asheville helped coordinate an opportunity to have truffles and chocolate bars from French Broad Chocolates offered as an experiential element at the media event.

M&C/Group PR Efforts: During the month of November, PR and M&C communications worked together to compile an extensive amount of information for *Meetings Today*. The Asheville coverage will appear in the January issue and should focus on why meeting planners should choose Asheville for their next meeting. There will also be a "Hip Hood" section that focuses on the offerings of the River Arts District. The PR team also assisted with images. Editorial calendar research for M&C and group publications also began in November.

Significant Placements

1. Chicago Sun Times – "These activity-based spa resorts give you a leg up on fitness"
2. Consequence of Sound – "Asheville is America's Next Great Music City"
3. Domino – "Our Top Holiday Destinations That Won't Break the Bank"
4. Eater – "The 10 Hottest New Restaurants in Asheville, North Carolina"
5. Fodor's Travel – "Why Asheville's Music Scene is Like Nothing You've Ever Experienced"

6. Food & Wine – “48 Hours in Asheville: Where to Eat and Drink”
7. Lauren Elyce Blog – “Asheville Travel Guide and Vlog”
8. Louella Reese Blog – “Asheville Travel Diary & Guide”
9. My Style Vita – “Postcards from North Carolina”
10. New York Post – “Heel Thyself: An art lover’s guide to North Carolina”
11. Peanut Butter Fingers – “A Weekend in Black Mountain”
12. Peanut Butter Fingers – “Things I’m Loving Friday #209”
13. Southern Living – “48 Hours in Asheville: Where to Eat and Drink”
14. St. Louis Post-Dispatch – “Small towns that go big for Christmas”
15. U.S. News & World Report – “6 Lesser-Known Destinations to Get Into the Holiday Spirit”
16. WTOP – “Is Asheville the new Portland? 9 great culinary and brew experiences”
17. XOJET Arrivé – “Holidays in the South: An XOJET Journey Through Asheville, Pinehurst, Charleston, and Bluffton”

Content Development Projects: Many of the content team’s projects during the month of November focused on the holiday season, while also looking forward to winter. Included in those efforts were several photo shoots including one at Cappella on 9 as well as more extensive planning for a shoot that took place the first week of December for the winter campaign. The team also pulled together footage to support the upcoming Southern Weekend partnership with Local Palate, and supported the public announcement of the 2018 Fed Cup event. Cat attended the Internet Summit conference in Raleigh.

Holiday Season: One of the content team’s objectives for the holiday season is to capture fresh visual content from holiday attractions and events, both for immediate use on social media channels and for use in promoting the season in 2018. Jason captured high-res photography, video and 360-degree imagery at Biltmore, Winter Lights, The Omni Grove Park Inn, downtown Asheville, and the Grove Arcade, creating photo blogs and social media videos along the way. One video—a 25-second slideshow promoting Winter Lights—went viral on the Visit Asheville Facebook page, garnering 560,000+ views and 11,000+ shares during the month of November. A post highlighting 360-degree image of the Biltmore Library also performed very well, reaching 540,000+ users and generating 4,300+ shares.

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of November, seven new pieces of editorial content were added to the website: Two photo blogs covering Christmas at Biltmore and Gingerbread at The Omni Grove Park Inn, the final 2017 fall color report, and four “Things to Do This Weekend” posts.
- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to do in Asheville, which received 28,446 new page views, followed by a story about Winter Lights at the N.C. Arboretum, which received 18,930 page views.

Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

Visit Asheville page

- November saw 5,176 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 266,230.
- There were 48 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of November.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was a 360-degree image Jason shot in George Vanderbilt’s library at Biltmore. It has reached 543,497 people organically, generating 29,772 total reactions, and 2,831 comments and 4,203 shares. It was also the most engaging post this month, engaging 5.5 percent of users reached.

- The most popular boosted Facebook post during the month of November was the snackable video Jason created to tease the opening of Winter Lights at the North Carolina arboretum. The video reached 1,417,377 people (1,397,308 organically), generating 53,908 total reactions and 10,713 comments.

Foodtopia page

- November saw 36 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 25,424 likes.
- There were 19 new Facebook posts added to the Foodtopia page in the month of November.
- The most popular unpaid post in November, a share of a blog by “Sightdoing with the Girl and Globe,” reached 4,774 people, generating 109 reactions, 16 comments and 18 shares.

Video:

- There were 10,335 new, organic YouTube views in November. The most popular video by organic views this month was the Fall Time Lapse, which received 2,191 non-paid views. The Spirit of Asheville came in second with 1,409 new views.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 790,581 views, with the majority coming from Facebook. There have been 1,334,118 views of Explore Asheville content year-to-date (since July 1, 2017).

Pinterest:

- The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 4,671. Foodtopia accounts for 1,380 of those; Visit Asheville – 3,291.

Instagram:

- Our Visit Asheville account has 40,925 followers.
- There were 21 new posts in November. The most popular was a picture of the lights at Antler Hill Village at Biltmore. It received 3,089 engagements (likes and comments).

Twitter:

- Across all three accounts we have a total of 29,702 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,781 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 120,499 active subscribers.
- Opens/Click-throughs: In November, our monthly Asheville Traveler e-newsletter went out to 121,041 subscribers. It had an overall open rate of 18.3 percent and a click-through rate of 3.7 percent.

ExploreAsheville.com: In November, website user sessions for ExploreAsheville.com increased 0.8 percent year-over-year, which includes a 19.5 percent increase in organic user sessions, an 80.7 percent increase in social referral sessions, and a 24.3 percent increase in paid search user sessions. Mobile visits in November increased by 9.3 percent year-over-year. Display and advertising campaign traffic decreased significantly, as reflected in the advertising recap, due to adjustments to the campaign in 2017. Direct traffic to the site was down 31.6 percent. Further investigation revealed that bot traffic from an advertiser in November 2016 that continued into January, accounted for approximately 25,000 unqualified sessions. Of note, this will be reflected in the 2016 monthly numbers through January as well as the YTD numbers for the remainder of the year.

Website Improvements – SEO and CRO: In November, Simpleview continued its conversion rate optimization efforts on ExploreAsheville.com. The split test on the Home Page, Things to Do page, and Story/Blog content ran for the month with a goal to improve conversions to the Places to Stay page and listing detail pages. Results will be reviewed by the marketing team in December. The organic engagement continues to outperform the industry averages and was up 20 percent year-over-year in November.

- The Things to Do page continues to be a top performing page, year-over-year, with 9,521 organic visits, 80 percent new users, a bounce rate of 26 percent, 4.59 pages per session and an average session duration of 00:04:23.
- The events page had great engagement with 12,729 organic visits and a 00:04:18 average session.
- The top event detail page was Biltmore Candlelight Christmas Evenings with 5,039 visits, up nearly 570 visits year-over-year.
- The top blog post was National Gingerbread House Competition Winners with 873 visits.

ExploreAsheville.com continues to outperform industry averages with 29 percent more total pages per visit, 42 percent longer visit duration, 37 percent more organic pages per visit and 54 percent longer organic visit duration as compared to industry average in the month of November.

Online Reservations: There were 34 orders for 52 room nights in November with a total of \$7,696 in booking revenue and \$348.91 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in October were Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Florida.

November 2017	Current Month	This Month Last Year	Variance Monthly	YTD Actual	YTD Last Year	Variance YTD
Booking Rev	\$7,696	\$5,469	40.72%	\$71,652	\$49,203	45.63%
Commission	\$348.91	\$237.24	46.69%	\$3,277.28	\$2,179.52	50.37%
Orders	34	25	36.00%	268	169	58.58%
Room Nights	52	32	62.50%	419	281	49.11%

Visitor Guide: There was significant editing and listing work that was conducted in November and continued into December as the guide was readied for the printer. The guide remains on track to deliver in January.

Visitor Guide Requests

There were 1,198 requests for the Official Asheville Travel Guide in November, a 15 percent increase from last November. Year-to-date, there are 12,189 travel guide requests, a 0.7 percent increase from last year. The top 5 DMAs requesting guides for the month and year are:

Top 5 DMAs for November 2017	# of Guides Requested	FY 2017-2018 Top 5 DMAs	# of Guides Requested
Atlanta	59	New York	546
New York	48	Tampa – St Pete	497
Raleigh-Durham	45	Atlanta	449
Tampa – St Pete	43	Washington, DC	406
Orlando	34	Orlando	390

GROUP SALES & SERVICES UPDATE

Group sales reported 34 definite group bookings in November, a 31 percent increase over the prior year. Of these group bookings, 19 were for meetings & conventions, three were group tour, and 12 were weddings. The combined total definite room nights were 7,723 room nights, a 25 percent increase over the prior November. Sixty-six leads (56 for meeting/conventions, eight weddings, and two motorcoach) representing 22,406 room nights were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in November. Leads distributed were down 8.3 percent and rooms represented were down 5.3 percent over the prior year.

Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$1,912,568, a 24 percent increase over the prior year. Actualized revenue was \$361,528, a 28.7 percent decrease over the prior year. This drop can mainly be attributed to one large group with over \$181,000 in revenue. Person-to-person outreach totaled 1,208 contacts, a 32 percent increase from last year. Indirect outreach totaled 2,384, a 77 percent decrease over the prior year.

Sales Calls/Missions:

- Tina Porter attended TEAMS Sports Conference in Orlando, exhibiting in partnership with North Carolina Sports Association. The team conducted 52 appointments and sponsored one of the convention-wide receptions. Tina also met one-on-one with seven sports planners.
- Tina attended Smart Meetings Texas, conducting 14 one-on-one appointments largely with corporate planners. Additionally, four area sales calls were incorporated in the visit.
- Shawn attended back-to-back Luxury Meeting Summits in Cleveland and Cincinnati. Collectively, 19 one-on-one appointments were conducted. Shawn incorporated six sales calls into the visit. Two RFPs were immediately received (1075 rooms) as a direct result.
- Molly Nelson conducted 14 sales calls in Nashville, calling on corporate and association accounts.
- Dianna Pierce attended Travel South International in Charleston, conducting 28 one-on-one appointments with buyers responsible for FIT and group markets. Partnering with the CVB were Biltmore and Asheville Outlets. The team also engaged in numerous networking events.
- Leann Swims attended AAA Superbowl of Knowledge in Concord, connecting with more than 230 agents during the tradeshow. Staff also attended agent and vendor trainings/events. The Biltmore partnered with the CVB.

Visit NC Sales & Media Mission: Dianna participated in Visit North Carolina's International Sales and Media mission. Coordinated by Lieb Management, the international representation firm for North Carolina, and spearheaded by Visit NC leadership, the team called on top European tour operators and product managers in Germany and Switzerland. Included were Kuoni/DER Touristik (Kuoni is the largest in Switzerland and DER is one of Germany's largest tour operators into the U.S., operating under different brands), Canusa (Germany's largest direct seller to North America), Explorer Fernreisen (specializing in long-haul travel), CRD International (a leading specialized tour operator for North American destinations), Swiss TravelHouse Group (second biggest Swiss tour operator selling through various brands); FTI Touristik (fourth largest German Tour operator), Knecht Reisen (Features large selection of products to US). As part of the mission the team hosted agent trainings (58 participants) and hosted three client lunches/media events. Two articles related to the visit have already been published – Travelnews and Travel Inside (trade).

Site Visits/Bookings/Leads: The team hosted eight area site visits this month. They included: 2020 Pediatric Dermatology – 725 room nights, 2018 Southeastern Electric Exchange – 76 room nights, 2018 NC ArcGIS Users – 500 room nights, 2018 Victorians Institute – 300 room nights, 2018 NC Association for Property and Evidence – 225 room nights, 2019 Zeta Phi Beta Sorority – 405 room nights, 2018 Trips by Patty – 50 room nights, 2019 Poser Family Reunion – 50 room nights, 2018 Zero to Three – 992 room nights.

November bookings for future years include (but not limited to):

- 2018 Endo Pharmaceuticals – 42 rooms
- 2018 CAUSE Classroom Summit – 120 rooms
- 2018 Bureau of Digital / DMP Camps – 150 rooms (two groups)
- 2018 Solid Waste Association – 354 rooms
- 2018 Southern Association of Independent Schools – 300 rooms (two groups)
- 2018 Fever Productions Cheer & Dance – 350 rooms
- 2018 Fire on the Mountain – 50 rooms
- 2018 Spartan Race – 720 rooms
- 2018 Compass Travel – 44 rooms
- 2018 National Town Builders – 105 rooms
- 2018 NC Association of Electric Cooperatives – 245 rooms (two groups)
- 2018 Carpetbagger Lacrosse – 1,000 rooms
- 2018 Women's Motorcycle Tours – 20 rooms
- 2019 Delta Kappa Gamma SE Regional – 894 rooms

A total of 11 wedding guide requests were fulfilled this month as compared to 30 in November 2016.

Group Sales Communications:

Explore Asheville was judged as a finalist of the 1st Annual 2017 Stella Awards, as one of the Best CVBs in the Southeast region, among a very select few. The Stella Awards recognize excellence in the meetings industry and we are honored to be acknowledged.

Additional Media Coverage:

The CVB provided extensive information to a writer working on a story for Meetings Today that will focus on the River Arts District and how meeting planners and attendees can experience the arts destination.

Mass Communications:

- An e-newsletter was sent to 1762 group tour clients. Open rate: 28 percent; Click to Open ratio: 33 percent
- An invitation to a client event was sent to 108 Raleigh-area corporate clients. Open rate: 33 percent; Click to Open ratio: 61 percent
- The same invitation was sent to 315 Raleigh-area association clients. Open rate: 28 percent; Click to Open ratio: 41 percent

Convention Servicing Highlight: Carli Adams attended the Local Organizing Committee Meetings for the SoCon basketball championships as well as two planning meetings for the Fed Cup event. An information table was set up for the NC Family Physicians annual winter meeting. Microsites were created for four upcoming sporting events.

Departmental Activities: Team members attended USTA's Fed Cup announcement held at the US Cellular Center, Dianna Pierce presented a sales update at the November Partner Forum and the second sports strategy meeting (internal) was held with staff from Explore Asheville, ABRSC and the US Cellular. Staff also attended WomanUp, participated in a guided RAD tour, and hosted/attended numerous planning meeting for events scheduled to occur in December.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tourism Product Development Efforts: The Enka Youth Sports Association submitted a contract extension request for the Enka Ballfields. The project was awarded \$2,000,000 in 2014, with an original completion date of May 2017. The BCTDA granted a project completion date extension to November 2017. The grant recipient has since elected to upgrade the concessions, requiring additional time for construction. The ballfields will be complete in December 2017; and the new concession is expected to complete in April 2018. No TPDF monies have been disbursed to date. Tournaments are currently being booked with the first big tournament (USA Softball Super 80 show case) scheduled in July 2018. At the November board meeting, the BCTDA voted to extend the contract completion deadline to June 2018.

Staff is working through contract development and amendments with recent TPDF award recipients - City of Asheville Riverfront Redevelopment project, Buncombe County Woodfin Greenway & Blueway project, and the Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center Expansion project.

The BCTDA received a challenge to the Haywood Street Congregation award for its fresco project. Contract development is on hold while under legal review with the TDA's attorney.

LEAF Community Arts is continuing to develop its proposal and will notify staff when it is ready to present its updated application to the TPDF Committee for consideration.

As a follow-up to the meeting in September with staff members of the City of Asheville and Buncombe County to discuss the possibility of collaborating on product development projects, a larger group was convened in October. Additional staff members from each team, plus Councilwomen Gwen Wisler and Julie Mayfield and Commissioners Brownie Newman and Joe Belcher, gathered to share general information on city and county project planning and status. There was consensus the group would continue discussions on the possibility of coordinating joint priorities and project priorities, and planned to meet again in December.

Partner Engagement:

Sales & Marketing Update Partner Forum – November 16

The Marketing and PR team presented the holiday marketing plan and top line results from the recent late summer & early fall campaign to a full house on November 16. Due to a water main break, the meeting was relocated from CVB offices to the Chamber Boardroom. The Group Sales and Services team also presented key FY 17-18 initiatives and an overview of PR efforts directed towards the meetings market plus new collateral supporting the initiatives. Additionally, a representative from DTN provided a brief overview of advertising opportunities on ExploreAsheville.com.

Explore Asheville CVB Holiday Party – December 6

Planning is underway for holiday party. Generous sponsors, the Renaissance Asheville Hotel, and US Foods, are providing an incredible venue and menu for the occasion, along with beverages from Biltmore, Omni Grove Park Inn, and the Asheville Brewers Alliance. We will be presenting our 5th Annual CVB Superstar Awards to recognize and honor partners for outstanding contributions and support throughout the year. Plans also include music by Swing Step and a fun photo booth by TapSnap. Party guests are encouraged to help support the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program in its 9th year at the Renaissance Asheville Hotel.

Special Partner Forum – Major Events in 2018 – January 24

Planning is underway for a special partner meeting in January to gather and share information on major events in the community in the coming year. The event will also include information updates from staff of the Tryon Equestrian Center, and Biltmore about the Chihuly exhibit.

Projects:

Pat is working with MERJE to develop a list of new assets and areas in Buncombe County to be considered for the Wayfinding Assessment project; and is coordinating a visit from the team in December.

The public affairs team continues to review and assess the current lodging listing policy, and Pat is preparing the information to share with CVB leadership in December.

The team also dedicated significant resources to assisting the marketing team on the 2018 Visitor Guide data export and review process.

Partner Outreach: Brit created ten new partner accounts in November – Asheville Photo Tours, LLC, Bright Light Wellness, LLC, WAXON Batik and Dye Studio, Foundation Woodworks, White Labs Kitchen & Tap, Taste Carolina Gourmet Food Tours, Mingle Events and Rentals, Rebecca King Hawkinson Fine Art, Baba Nahm, and BimBerBon. The public affairs team hosted the monthly Explore Asheville CVB 101 Orientation. Eight attended including staff from, Team ECCO Ocean Center & Aquarium. Expedia, Bright Light Wellness, Princess Anne Hotel, and Ryan Naylor who represents social and marketing efforts for several businesses in Asheville. Brit continues to reach out to qualified partners to submit information for a listing, to respond to partner extranet issues, and to monitor listing updates and event submissions in the CRM.

Community Outreach: Pat convened a meeting with several area glass artists, organizations, and attractions at the Explore Asheville office, including Biltmore staff to discuss the Chihuly exhibit at Biltmore in 2018, and learn about other associated events and visitor offerings being created around the topic.

Pat attended the Fall City Manager's Development Forum, and the WomanUp event.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

Building: Group Texting was set-up to alert CVB staff of schedule changes, weather-related changes, etc. Stephanie, Jonna, and Glenn are administrators and therefore, eligible to send group texts.

Administration: In-person interviews were set for three finalists for the Director of Advertising position. Ultimately, Marla Tambellini selected Sarah Kilgore, formerly with the Kessler Collection in Orlando, FL. Her start date is set for January 2, 2018.

After receiving over 325 applications, the application process is closed for the newly created Business Intelligence Manager position. The hiring process will begin in January.

On November 20, Gary Hannah, the BCTDA 401K administrator, attended the staff meeting to distribute disclosure forms and answer any questions staff have about the new Safe Harbor structure for the 401K Plan.

Wayfinding:

On November 8, ahead of the November RAD Art Stroll, Geograph was in town to install a new kiosk for the River Arts District, located at 14 Riverside Drive.

Workforce Development:

On November 14, the Workforce Development Steering Committee convened for its quarterly meeting. Representatives from the Buncombe County Re-Entry Council attended to educate the committee on their program. They outlined their vetting and referral processes of previous criminal offenders to employers, such as the lodging industry. These individuals eligible for dislocated worker funding through MAWDB.

Natalie Shaft, VP of HR with Biltmore Farms, discussed how she has been successfully navigating the Dislocated Worker Program through her application process. When eligible, a new-hire's salary is subsidized, for a limited period of time, with funds administered by MAWDB. Natalie also shared information about a February recruitment event called Talent Jam. Biltmore Farms is partnering with AB Tech on a "speed recruiting" process where interested candidates are given the opportunity to speak with multiple employers within a fast-paced environment. All lodging properties are invited to attend.