

July 31, 2019

To: Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority
From: Stephanie Pace Brown
Subject: President's Report of June 2019 Activities

Fiscal year 2019 wrapped at the end of June. The Explore Asheville team is proud of the community benefits of the work we are privileged to perform. We continue to connect with local tourism partners through robust programming that has the singular purpose of helping these businesses attract customers that support them as employers and taxpayers.

Through May, lodging sales were up 9.3% -- an indicator of the total economic value of people who visit and spend money with a wide array of local businesses.

The marketing department drove 4.87 million visits to ExploreAsheville.com to connect customers to more than 1,200 local businesses listed on the site free-of-charge. They placed 587 significant stories that reached 2.28 billion impressions and had a publicity value of \$36 million. These stories publicize local entrepreneurs and enhance the reputation and awareness of Asheville, helping achieve all of our economic development objectives.

The sales department ended the year with 981 leads issued (up 24%), with 566 leads turned definite (up 37%) for a total definite room nights booked of 80,126 (down 3%). The team executed an aggressive schedule of events, trade shows, site visits and FAM tours. And, they enhanced client outreach with new and improved email, print, video and website.

MONTH AT A GLANCE

- This summer the team has been living the brand during a series of Free-Spirited Fridays designed to increase destination knowledge. Team members delved into the visitor experience and then shared what they learned during staff meetings.
- Production work began for the new commercial spots. The new videos will appear in early August.
- The Google DMO Partnership initiative concluded with performance that ranked Explore Asheville among the top participating DMOs. The team uploaded 517 photos and 360-degree images that received more than 2 million views. The team made 47 posts to the Asheville Knowledge Panel, garnering more than 3.7 million views.
- The sales team produced a new and greatly improved AAA training video that debuted to 38 agents located throughout the southeast. Our in-house team produced the 22-minute video that includes live action clips of partners, and pre-recorded content.
- The sales team completed a direct mail piece and corresponding website.

- The first meeting of the Community Leadership Council was held with nearly all of the 50 members in attendance.
- The project team for the African American Heritage project began work.
- Partner events included: CVB 101, Extranet Training in Black Mountain, Visitor Center Volunteer Orientation, Summer Social and Backpack Drive. Plans are underway for the 360i Marketing Seminar and the BCTDA Annual Meeting.

JUNE METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS

- During June, the sales team posted 954 personal contacts (up 9%). June sales activities generated 64 sales leads (up 7%) and 39 convention bookings (up 95%), representing 7,216 rooms (up 349%). Twelve months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are up 37 percent and room nights represented are down 3 percent.
- CVB sales leads generated 46 group events in June (up 28%), with revenue of \$1,588,165 (up 56%). The services team assisted 45 groups (up 25%).
- The PR team landed 22 significant placements in May (down 58%), with 69 media touchpoints (flat). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$418,473 with reach of over 919,000. Online placements added \$42,098 in value and reach of over 68 million.
- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 643,735 visits (up 45%), including 511,050 to the mobile site (up 59%). Our Facebook fan base total is 289,137 (up 5%) and video views totaled 77,507 (up 83%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 108 room nights (down 19%) with total room revenue of \$20,101 (down 5%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 21,388 visitors (down 3%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion welcomed 1,125 visitors (down 11%).

HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$38,336,466 in May, an increase of 11 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 77.1 percent during May (up 3%). The average daily room rate was \$159.15 (up 3.2%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$122.77 (up 6.4%). Room demand increased 4.7 percent with 190,466 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 46 percent to total 143,695 in May.

IN THE COMMUNITY

- Stephanie participated in board meetings for AIR, the Greater Asheville Regional Airport Authority and the Asheville Area Riverfront Commission.
- Stephanie chaired the Nominating Committee for thee Destinations International Foundation and concluded her board service with the Annual Convention.
- Stephanie attended Rotary meetings, the Chamber Annual Meeting, Bob McMurray's retirement party, Leadership Asheville Breakfast Buzz, and a charrette with Stephens Lee alumni.
- Marla attended the Asheville Downtown Association Issues committee meeting in June.

- Kathryn and Dianna met with UNC Asheville Conferences and Camps personnel to develop future collaborative booking strategies.
- Several staff members attended the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce's Annual Meeting.
- Group sales hosted the bi-annual Citywide Task Force to establish common metrics to identify viable large group RFPs for follow up by the sales team.
- Sales team members attended a site visit of Haywood Park Hotel.
- Tina and Dianna met with representatives from the WNC Agricultural Center to review collaborative opportunities.
- Dianna attended the North Carolina Bar Association's opening reception at Biltmore's Amherst.
- Dianna attended the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission meeting.
- Glenn, Marla, Stephanie and Dianna attended the retirement party for Bob McMurray from the Black Mountain - Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce on June 26.
- Dianna and Stephanie met with Mr. Byrd, the new general manager at Renaissance Asheville Hotel, along with Ms. Pola Laughlin, Director of Sales.
- Pat attended an Asheville BAC Meeting at Amplified Media hosted by Goodwill.
- Eight CVB staff members participated in the Chamber Challenge 5k race.
- Pat attended the Local Living Economy, sub-committee of the Downtown Commission, meeting and provided updates on TMIP process.
- Eight team members attended Leadership Asheville's Buzz Breakfast, entitled "How Do We Build a Connected Community?".
- Pat attended the United Way Employee Campaign Coordinator "Mini Summer Boot Camp."
- Pat attended the meeting of The Block Community Collaborative (formerly "Eagle/Market Stakeholder Group") and provided updates on the African-American Heritage and Wayfinding signage projects.
- Glenn attended the Chamber's Intercity Visit to Portland, Maine on June 2 – 5.
- At the request of Land of Sky Regional Council of Governments, Glenn attended a discussion on regional trails and greenways on June 12.
- Glenn walked through Black Mountain on June 14 to encourage more participation from eligible partners on our website, through the CRM and to attend a CVB 101 session in Black Mountain on June 18, hosted by the new Hampton Inn.
- Glenn attended the board meeting of the Piney Grove Historic Cemetery on June 14.
- Glenn attended the first meeting of the City's Public Art Committee on June 27.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Advertising: Staff worked with the agency throughout June on locations, final script, wardrobe, casting and other elements of the production leading up to the final shoot. The new video spots will appear in broadcast and streaming beginning in early August. Media recommendations were also presented by the agency for the upcoming campaign. An overview will be presented at the monthly board meeting. The agency and EA staff are also working on the data input for the media modeling project that will help influence media buys moving forward. Finally, the process began to transition paid search marketing efforts from Simpleview to 360i to take advantage of the agency's expertise in this arena and more closely align SEM with ongoing campaigns.

Spring Campaign: The spring campaign continued to drive strong web traffic through June with nearly 594k YTD sessions recorded. However, some vendors that are delivering strong clickthrough are also seeing high bounce rates which will be important to monitor in the next campaign to ensure we are delivering efficiency and quality traffic.

Paid Search: Total paid search clicks for June was 86,308, a 103 percent increase in clicks and 122 percent increase in sessions, year over year. Other June highlights:

- June pages per visit were at 3.67
- June average time on site was 3:15
- CTR of 7.39 percent

In FY18-19, paid search generated:

- 828,459 clicks
- 161 hotel bookings for \$69k in revenue
- 8,000 visitor guide requests
- An average of 3.37 pages per visit

General Media Relations: The PR team logged 70 media touchpoints, initiated 41 targeted pitches and hosted 6 media on the ground in Asheville in June. Pitch numbers were boosted by travel to U.S. Travel's IPW Media Marketplace event, a quick trip LA media tour with VisitNC and attendance at the Public Relations Society of American Travel & Tourism Conference. Supported site visits included *Private Clubs*, *UNC-TV*, *Elks Magazine*, *South Magazine*, *ShortEscapes.net* and *G Geschichte* from Germany. Asheville imagery and assistance were provided to *Family Vacation Critic*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *AFAR*, *Food Network* and *PureWow*, among others.

IPW Media Marketplace: Dodie joined VisitNC and other PRs from North Carolina and around the world at Brand USA's IPW media marketplace. She networked and took appointments with top tier domestic and global media including *LA Times*, *Samantha Brown's Places to Live*, *AFAR*, *MSN*, *National Geographic*, *Peter Greenberg*, *TripSavvy.com*, *Out Travler* and top travel blog *Land Lopers.com*. She also joined VisitNC on a quick L.A. media tour including appointments with *Fodors* and *NBC News/Access Hollywood*. Dodie also networked and supported team NC on the convention floor providing information to additional media and providing destination news to group buyers.

PRSA Travel: As secretary and sponsorship co-chair for the Travel & Tourism section of the Public Relations Society of America, Dodie helped activate conference content and travel media speakers for PRSA Travel 2019 in Philadelphia. At conference, Dodie supported programming, sponsors and networked with the close to 30 top travel media in attendance, which included pitchable moments with *New York Times*, *HGTV.com*, *TravelChannel.com*, *Private Clubs* and *CNN Travel* among others. Dodie moves into section leadership as 2020 conference co-chair.

PR Partner Outreach: Audrey and Sarah met with the Arras' PR agency, Bread & Butter, while their team was in town.

Significant Placements:

1. *AAA World* | "To the (American) Manor Born"
2. *Boca Magazine* | "Asheville, NC: When Eating is Your Destination"
3. *Carolina Parent* | "Guide: Glamping in North Carolina"
4. *Eater* | "The Past as Possibility in the Appalachian South"
5. *Garden & Gun* | "A Guide to the Blue Ridge Parkway"
6. *Here Magazine* | "Worth Traveling For: The Foundry Hotel in Asheville, NC"
7. *National Geographic Traveler* | "The 28 friendliest neighborhoods in U.S. Cities"
8. *Outside Online* | "The Go List: 10 Amazing Glamping Spots in North America"
9. *Samantha Brown's Places to Love* | "It's June! Let's Go Somewhere"
10. *Southern Living* | "50 Reasons to Love Summer in the South"
11. *Trekaroo* | "The Best Things to do In Asheville with Kids"

Chow Chow: Explore Asheville Chow Chow media relations continue to move ahead. The team worked with several associated PR entities to coordinate and execute national media invitations. VisitNC has offered to partner with Explore Asheville on travel costs bringing the total number of potential VIP media to 18. Invitations are in process. Explore Asheville PR is working to confirm travel arrangements for confirmed media, while also providing some insight on Asheville's modern Appalachian culinary scene.

Marla Tambellini, Cat Kessler and the agency sent marketing recommendations to Angel to assist in more effective and efficient advertising. In addition, the content team has also developed a strategy for Explore Asheville owned channels to encourage ticket sales through social media posts, a dedicated email to subscribers self-selected as foodies, an insider's guide blog post and integrating festival messaging where appropriate on ExploreAsheville.com. The team also crafted a set of social messages that the Chow Chow team can deploy through their channels in order to emphasize destination drivers and trip planning information.

Content Development Projects: The content team's work during the month of June wrapped up several projects and initiatives for the end of the fiscal year, such as deploying new pins on Pinterest, formalizing a strategy for the coming year's website improvements, and continuing to contribute to the Google DMO Partnership program goals.

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of June, six new pieces of content were added to ExploreAsheville.com: a post announcing Biltmore's new Downton Abbey exhibition, a photo-tour of the Biltmore Railway exhibition, four new "things to do this weekend" blog posts.
- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to do in Asheville, which received 29,937 new pageviews, followed by the Asheville Hiking Guide, which received 8,487 pageviews.

This month, the team also completed a long-form video showcasing the features of nearby Black Mountain and a shorter version of the video designed for social media use. To date, the videos have already received 2,700 views on YouTube and 28,000 views on Facebook. This video completes a strategy for developing a more robust catalog of Black Mountain content, which this spring included a new landing page and new articles about top things to do and events in the town. Since publishing the new content in March, traffic to the Black Mountain pages is up more than 300 percent YOY.

Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

Visit Asheville page

- June saw 2,049 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 289,137.
- There were 21 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of June.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was the video Jason created about Black Mountain. The share of the "social media cutdown" version of the video reached 82,990 people organically, generating 2,506 total reactions, and 298 comments.
- The most popular paid (boosted) post in the month of June was the link to the Chow Chow festival page. The post reached 40,207 people (8,059 organic) and generated 418 reactions.
- The most engaging post this month was the share of our blog post on the new Downton Abbey exhibition coming to Biltmore. It engaged 11.2 percent of the 69,569 users reached.

Video:

- There were 9,861 new, organic YouTube views in June. The most popular video by organic views this month was our overview of Biltmore Estate, which received 939 non-paid views. Return Again came in second with 900 new views.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 77,507 non-advertising views, with the majority coming from Facebook. There have been 1.6 million views of Explore Asheville content YTD (since July 1, 2018).

Pinterest:

- The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 5,400. Foodtopia accounts for 1,445 of those. Explore Asheville – 3,955.

Instagram:

- Our VisitAsheville account has 60,810 followers.
- There were 4 new posts in June. The most popular was a Robert Stephens photo of a hiking trail. It received 2,244 engagements (likes and comments).

Twitter:

- Across all our accounts we have a total of 30,891 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,556 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 120,759 active subscribers.
- Opens/Click-throughs: In June, our monthly Asheville Traveler e-newsletter went out to 121,015 subscribers. It had an overall open rate of 17.2 percent and a click-through rate of 2.6 percent.

Google DMO Partnership: The team wrapped up the first year of focused effort on improving Asheville's assets in the Google travel ecosystem. As of the end of the fiscal year, the team—in cooperation with Miles Partnership—had uploaded 517 still and 360-degree images that received over 2 million views. The team answered 249 questions about local businesses, suggested edits to 65 Google My Business listings, added 2 new places to Google Maps, and provided answers to 27 Q&A questions posited by locals and visitors. The content team made 47 posts to the Asheville Knowledge Panel, garnering more than 3.7 million views—among the top DMOs in Miles program (and the world). All this activity brought the Explore Asheville account to a Google Local Guide Level 6.

ExploreAsheville.com: Website user sessions in June increased 44.58 percent compared to last year. June 2019 was the highest single month traffic for ExploreAsheville.com with 643,735 user sessions. Organic traffic was down 1.03 percent year-over-year in June. Referral traffic was down 29.15 percent year-over-year, and traffic from e-newsletter clicks was down 14.06 percent year-over-year in June. Social media traffic, excluding Paid Social, was up 45.86 percent year-over-year in June due to the Biltmore Downton Abbey. The biggest gains in traffic were from Paid Social, Paid Search and spring advertising campaign initiatives. Paid Search traffic in June improved 118.41 percent compared with last year. Traffic from the spring advertising campaigns was up 496.49 percent in June compared to last year. However, bounce rates and time on site need to be addressed moving forward to ensure we are reaching more qualified traffic.

Website Improvements – SEO and CRO: In June, Simpleview and Explore Asheville staff continue to work on efforts to improve site conversion rates based on established goals and KPIs. The biggest improvements in organic search traffic in the month of June were to the

Things to Do This Weekend page (up 77.4%), the Things to Do page (up 89.91%) and the Iconic Asheville Biltmore page (up 628.49%).

Explore Asheville hired a new Web Manager, Josh Jones, who will be tasked with implementing a website refresh in Fiscal Year 2019-2020.

Online Reservations: There were 71 orders for 108 room nights in June with a total of \$20,101 in booking revenue and \$896.33 commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in June were Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee and South Carolina.

June 2019	Current Month	This Month Last Year	Variance Monthly	YTD Actual	YTD Last Year	Variance YTD
Booking Rev	\$20,101	\$21,216	-5.25%	\$169,858	\$165,904	2.38%
Commission	\$896.33	\$951.18	-5.77%	\$7,828.23	\$7,594.24	3.08%
Orders	71	78	-8.97%	646	657	-1.67%
Room Nights	108	134	-19.40%	1,054	1,053	0.09%

Visitor Guide: There were 4,030 requests of the *Official Asheville Visitor Guide* in June. Fiscal year-to-date, there have been 41,900 visitor guide requests.

Top 5 DMAs for June	# of Guides Requested	FY 2018-2019 Top 5 DMAs	# of Guides Requested
NEW YORK	196	NEW YORK	2,052
TAMPA-ST. PETE, SARASOTA	161	TAMPA-ST. PETE, SARASOTA	1,502
CHICAGO	145	ATLANTA	1,409
ATLANTA	142	WASHINGTON, DC	1,351
PHILADELPHIA	120	CHICAGO	1,235

Community Engagement: Several elements of the local campaign continued or were place for June, including print ads in the Urban News, Capital at Play, online ads on AVL Today, Ashvegas and Asheville Radio Group, and radio spots on iHeart and Blue Ridge Public Radio.

GROUP SALES & SERVICES UPDATE

Group sales reported 39 definite group bookings this month as compared to 20 the prior year. This represents a 95 percent increase. Of these group bookings, 31 were meetings & conventions, seven were weddings and one was a motorcoach group. The combined total definite rooms were 7,216 room nights, a 350 percent increase over the prior year. Sixty-five sales leads (52 meetings/conventions, 12 weddings and one motorcoach) representing 14,891 room nights were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in June. Leads were up by five percent and rooms represented by the leads were up 14 percent over the prior year. Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$1,929,264, a 500 percent increase from the prior year. Actualized revenues were \$1,918,922, a 90 percent increase from the prior year. Person-to-

person outreach totaled 954 contacts, a 9 percent increase over last year. Indirect outreach totaled 15,929 contacts, a 45 percent increase over the prior year.

The group sales team exceeded the 2018-2019 room night goal, coming in at 80,126 room nights, with an estimated total revenue value of \$16,530,000.

Sales Calls/Missions/FAMS:

- Shawn Boone traveled to Atlanta calling on 10 accounts building his visit around attending the Society of Incentive Travel Excellence Southeast Spring Networking with 150 attendees. One immediate RFP for 300 rooms was received.
- Tina traveled to Dallas, Texas calling on nine client groups representing direct and third-party buyers. A presentation/lunch was held with The Event Lounge with four staff attending.
- Tina also attended the NC Sports Association Annual meeting. The organization is comprised of entities across NC who share a direct interest in supporting sports events.
- Dianna attended U.S. Travel Association's IPW, the leading international inbound travel trade show for travel to the United States. Dianna met with 61 international and domestic tour operators and participated in networking events.
- A total of 26 wedding guides was downloaded this month, as compared to 31 in June 2017.

AAA New Training Video: Using an upgraded GoToWebinar platform, the team showcased the new and greatly improved AAA Explore Asheville destination training video to 38 agents located throughout the southeast. The new format contained extended live action video clips of three industry partners (Hampton Inn & Suites Asheville Biltmore Area, The Adventure Center of Asheville, Biltmore) woven in with text and commentary. Shorter video segments of the WNC Farmer's Market, NC Arboretum and the Nature Center with incorporated also. Leann Swims and Daniel Bradley co-hosted this summer segment. Utilizing Daniel's extensive video production/editing capabilities, the team produced the 22-minute video in-house. A comparison of stats to a February 2019 training webinar using the traditional Power Point format showed an increase from 15 percent increase in average attentiveness (52 percent in February versus 67 percent in June) and an increase of 12 percent in the average interest rate (66 percent in February versus 78 percent in June). The video is available on-demand from the AAA web pages. Agent feedback was very positive. The team is formulating a distribution strategy around the video.

Site Visits/Leads: Five site visits were hosted including 2020 American Packaging Sales Meeting – 240 rooms, 2021 AFFI Food and Beverage Environmental Conference – 700 rooms, NHS Global Events – General site visit on behalf of several of their clients, 2020 National Association of Publicly Funded Truck Driving Schools – 290 rooms, 2023 American Quilter's Society – 700 rooms.

A sample of June bookings includes (but is not limited to):

- 2019 XDIN Annual Conference- 200 rooms
- 2019 Blue Ridge Pride – 40 rooms
- 2019 Building Material Suppliers Association – 16 rooms
- 2019 USDA Forest Service Fuel Assessment – 45 rooms
- 2019 SAS Institute SE Summit – 214 rooms
- 2019 Asheville Ultimate Club Summer Hoedown Showdown – 135 rooms
- 2019 Christopher Newport University Football – 45 rooms
- 2019 Impact Baseball Invitational – 120 rooms
- 2019 Bonita Travels Holiday Tour – 40 rooms
- 2019 Center for Craft Creative Media – 109 rooms
- 2019 Lawyer Board Meeting – 32 rooms

- 2019 Summit Design and Engineering – 30 rooms
- 2019 ABYSA Adult Beer City Cup - 500 rooms
- 2020 American Chestnut Foundation Fall Board – 260 rooms
- 2020 NC Bar Association Real Property Section Annual – 215 rooms
- 2020 Frankfort American High School Reunion – 123 rooms
- 2020 National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists – 85 rooms
- 2020 USDA Forest Service Southern Region Training- 300 rooms
- 2020 Society for Design Admin Educational Symposium – 172 rooms * *FAM ATTENDEES*
- 2020 NC Medical Group Management Association – 350 rooms
- 2020 League of Agricultural and Equine Centers Symposium – 298 rooms
- 2020 Vile to Vile Craft Brew Relay – 140 rooms
- 2020 Gala Gymnastics – 480 rooms
- 2020 National Association of Women in Construction – 110 rooms
- 2023 Society for Wood Science and Technology – 630 rooms

Group Sales Communications: A new mailer campaign and corresponding microsite was finalized with plans to launch in July.

Mass Communications: An e-newsletter was sent to 11,696 meeting planner clients in our database.

- Open Rate: 11 percent
- Clicks: 532

Convention Service Highlights: Registration staffing assistance was provided to American Boiler Manufacturers Association Summer Meeting and staff attended the opening reception for the North Carolina Bar Association (NCBA) Annual Meeting. Additionally, 450 attraction value cards and other host amenities were provided to NCBA. Several group literature deliveries were made to both CVB-sourced and non-sourced groups.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tourism Product Development Efforts:

TMIP: The first Community Leadership Council (CLC) meeting was held in the Explore Asheville Boardroom on June 12. All members of the council attended in person or via conference call, and several members of the public observed the meeting. The PGAV team introduced the TMIP process and moderated a discussion around community priorities. The next set of CLC and Community Input meetings will be announced as schedules are confirmed.

Pat continues to develop the work scope with PGAV for the African American Heritage project work with the first phases to focus on research, community engagement, and interpretive planning; and has scheduled a kick-off meeting for the project team on July 1.

Pat continues to work on a plan for visitor information kiosk-type signage at the WNC Farmers' Market.

Partner Engagement and Events:

Explore Asheville CVB 101 Orientation: The public affairs team hosted a CVB 101 Orientation on June 12, which included 14 representatives from Asheville Art Museum, Asheville Explore Tours, Dining Innovations, Mosaix Group, Rustic Grape Wine Bar, Sawhorse, Sunshine River Tours, TalentServed, Urban Escape Vehicles, and WPVM 103.7 Independent Radio.

Explore Asheville Black Mountain Extranet Training: The public affairs team hosted an Extranet Training for Black Mountain businesses on June 18, which included 10 representatives from Black Mountain Center for the Arts, Chifferobe, Foothills Meats, Hampton Inn Black Mountain, Mountain Me, Red Rocker Inn, Roots + Fruits Market, Spice It Up, The Dancing Dragonfly, and Visions of Creation.

Visitor Center Volunteer Orientation – June 11: An orientation was held for the visitor center volunteers with a focus on sharing WelcomeToAVL.com platform and resource materials.

Summer Social & Backpack Drive – June 19: Despite heavy rain, the Summer Social was a great success with approximately 150 attendees. The event was held in the Event Center at Highland Brewing. Pong AVL provided three ping pong tables and Asheville Plays brought party games for attendees to enjoy. In support of the United Way's annual school supply drive, partners contributed 160 backpacks!

360i Marketing Seminar – August 6: Planning is underway for a full-day session on marketing provided by 360i. The event will be offered for free to tourism partners as well as nonprofit organizations in the community and will be held at the US Cellular Center Banquet Room.

BCTDA Annual Meeting – September 5: Planning has begun for the 2019 BCTDA Annual Meeting to be held at the Omni Grove Park Inn.

Projects: Pat and Glenn continue to manage the process of maintaining and updating the Wayfinding system signage. Additionally, Pat is working with MERJE on their preliminary designs to be presented at the follow-up Public Input Session in the River Arts District. MERJE will incorporate CVB staff feedback and prep for the Input Session which will be scheduled sometime in August.

CRM Audit: Pat and Joe continue to do prep for a multi-month auditing process for Explore Asheville's customer relationship management (CRM) database and are refining the approach as new listing category structure issues arise. They are working closely with Elizabeth to determine best approach to meet overall organizational goals regarding partner listings on ExploreAsheville.com and in the Visitor Guide. They are reviewing best practices and support options with Simpleview and await a work scope proposal.

AshevilleCVB.com Industry Website Redesign: Joe redesigned the industry website, ExploreAshevilleCVB.com, due to issues with the website's theme. Based on the new design functionality, additional formatting changes were made to the navigation menu and the homepage layout. The updated website will launch in July.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

Administration: Glenn onboarded new Web Manager, Josh Jones and new Sales & Services Specialist, Ray Vincent-Rossi. Jenn Kass-Green was placed in our medical benefit policies after completing her 90 days. Glenn completed all requirements for the termination of Leann Swims effective June 30.

Glenn continued to meet with Drew Pollick with Craft HR Solutions to strengthen the HR Department.

Glenn met with Matt Bradley from ISA to finalize employee benefits for the new fiscal year. Glenn coordinated one-on-one meetings between staff and ISA reps Matt Bradley and Jake Kimsey with Aflac to discuss their benefit selections. Three medical plans are offered with United HealthCare for FY19/20. Life, AD&D and LTD moved from Mutual of Omaha to Lincoln Financial. Dental moved from Principal to Lincoln Financial. Community Eye Care remained unchanged. Later in June, Glenn met again with Matt to review the costs of benefits for each staff member prior to notifying County Payroll for upcoming payroll deductions.

Glenn and Stephanie met with Sam Stickney to review the corporate policies for the BCTDA: Liability, Directors and Officers and Workers Comp.

Wayfinding Signage: We were notified of four signs hit by vehicles in June. The City's Public Works Department retrieved all signs and placed them in storage.

Archiving BCTDA Historic Documents and Materials: Will Morgan, a student at UNC-A who is completing his master's in public history and who is associated with WNC Archives, continued archiving and organizing 30 years of BCTDA files in our off-site storage. He has archived over 50 percent of the materials in the storage rooms.

Attraction Partners Collaborative: Glenn worked with Ken Stamps (Navitat) and Jeff Greiner (Asheville Adventure Park) to develop a survey for the attraction partners and send it out. To date, over 25 surveys have been completed.