

April 26, 2017

To: BCTDA

From: Stephanie Pace Brown, Executive Director

Subject: Recap of March 2017 Staff Activities

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## **MONTH AT A GLANCE**

- Spring advertising started March 20.
- The PR team hosted ten high-profile national beverage writers attending the Beer Marketing and Tourism Conference. Staff participated in a conference panel, and the sales team provided a resources table.
- The sales team hosted 10 meeting planners for The 48-Hour Meeting Planner Experience
- The CVB provided extensive support for the Southern Conference Basketball Tournament.
- The transition and move continue to materialize. The Federal Tax ID number was secured. The employee benefits package was finalized and approved by the Fiduciary Task Force. Extensive work was completed to set up payroll and refine plans for the new offices, including the upfit, IT, and furniture.
- A Major Works TPDF application was received from the Town of Woodfin and the 2017 grant cycle commenced with an applicant information session.
- March partner engagement included a VIP SoCon reception and the March Partner Forum titled "What's New With You?" The public affairs team on boarded nine new partner accounts, had five attendees at CVB 101 and attended several community meetings.

## **MARCH CVB METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS**

- During March, the sales team posted 1,195 personal contacts (up 32%). March sales activities generated 84 sales leads (up 38%) and 53 convention bookings (up 18%), representing 6,128 rooms (down 14%). Nine months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are down six percent and room nights represented are up six percent.
- CVB leads generated 24 group events in March (up 33%), with revenue of \$571,030 (down 29%). The services team assisted 28 groups (up 17%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 13,823 visitors (down 4%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion is closed for the winter.
- The PR team landed 40 significant placements in February (up 21%), with 66 media touchpoints (up 22%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$362,606 with reach of over 7 million. Online placements added \$310,588 in value and reach of over 533 million.

- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 338,697 visits (up 14%), including 204,768 to the mobile site (up 19%). Our Facebook fan base grew by 2,081 (down 58%) and video views totaled 121,578 (up 487%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 131 room nights (up 8%) with total room revenue of \$18,132 (up 23%).

## **HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS**

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$17,317,507 in February, up 12.9 percent. Eight months into the fiscal year, YTD 2016-17 sales are up 15.8 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 57.5 percent during February (up 1%). The average daily room rate was \$117.26 (up 2%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$67.36 (up 3%). Room demand increased 8.4 percent with 115,369 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 19.2 percent to total 49,298 in February.

## **MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**Advertising:** Spring campaign planning continued in preparation for a March 20 launch date. Through April 12, the campaign has driven nearly 51,000 sessions. Facebook advertising is performing well across a variety of actions and is the source of the most goal completions. Included in the campaign is testing of a retail versus inspirational creative messaging. Results will be a component of creative decisions moving forward. Brooke Ptaszek oversaw the installation of the DC Union Station takeover. She also is managing the details in tandem with National Geographic on the upcoming event at National Geographic headquarters in DC on April 28 that was part of the partnership. The event sold out within an hour, which was record-setting for NGT.

**Paid search efforts:** Compared to last March, visits, page views, pages per session and time on site are all up, while bounce rate is down. The brand tourism campaign (a new SEM campaign) is already off to a great start with a 4.3 percent CTR, \$.45 CPC, 4 pages/session, and over three minutes for a time on site. Overall Google cost per click was down 20 percent and the click through rate is at 6.62 percent for the month versus 3.36 percent a year ago, in large measure due to eliminating the Google display campaign. Ad position is also improved to 1.8 versus 2.8. Things to Do and Events ad campaigns continue to outperform all other ad categories.

**General Media Relations:** As has typically been the case, March posted an increase in media requests and site visits with the onset of spring. Landis Taylor and Sarah Lowery attended the Visit NC 365 Conference, pitching Asheville news to Our State, NC Weekend, USA Today, Hoffman Media, WRAL's Tar Heel Traveler and digital influencer Scott Eddy, while Marla Tambellini served as one of the conference speakers. The team also lined up special experiences for media attending the Beer Marketing & Tourism Conference at the end of the month. The team logged 66 touchpoints, hosted 16 media site visits and pushed out 10 targeted pitches. Other high profile media support included AAA World (site visit), the UK's Fabulous Magazine (site visit), Endless Vacation (site visit), Southern Living, Successful Meetings, Runner's World and OUT Magazine. The PR team also made updates to the online press room.

### Beer Marketing and Tourism Conference:

The CVB PR team partnered with Visit NC to host ten high-profile, national beverage writers during the conference and immerse them in Asheville experiences. The writers represented a variety of media outlets such as Travel + Leisure, Saveur, Zagat, USA Today, Thrillist, Atlanta Journal Constitution, Imbibe, DRAFT Magazine and Beer Advocate. The CVB PR team set up immersive experiences for the media group that included connections to over a dozen breweries; VIP tours at Riverbend Malt House, White Labs and New Belgium; and special dining experiences at Wicked Weed, Bhramari Brewhouse and the new 12 Bones/Wedge Brewing location. Dodie Stephens also served as a conference panelist, discussing beer tourism and the CVB's strategy in promoting Asheville's food and beverage scene. Prior the event, a variety of new and updated press materials were developed on the area beer scene that were shared with the 250 conference attendees.

### SIGNIFICANT PLACEMENTS FOR FEBRUARY

- LA Times – “Beyond the Biltmore”
- National Geographic – “Behind the Scenes” (Paid)
- Dish Worth the Drive – “Asheville North Carolina” (Paid)
- Insider – “13 Cool U.S. Cities to Visit for Spring that aren't D.C.”
- Smart Meetings – “North Carolina Meetings, Artsy, Craftsy, and Plenty of Character”
- Southern Living – “14 of the Most Colorful Places to Visit”
- TravelPulse – “Best Spots for a Beer in Asheville, the Brewery Capital of America”
- Spoon University – “Spring Break Destinations, Based on Your Favorite Drink”
- Travelers Today – “The Most Beautiful Botanical Gardens in America”
- Only in Your State – “Chicken Ally in Asheville is the Most Haunted Street in North Carolina”
- RideApart – “10 Places You Must Visit in the Blue Ridge Mountains”
- Roots Rated – “4 Reasons to Hike North Carolina's Mount Mitchell in the Winter”
- The Cheat Sheet – “12 of the Best Places to Take your Dog on Vacation”
- Zagat – “9 Southern Chefs to Watch in 2017”
- Toronto Sun – “Finger Lickin' Fabulous”
- MarieClaire.com – “The 8 Best U.S. Cities to Visit this Spring”
- Gluten-Free Living – “Gluten-free Travel: Asheville, NC”
- New York Magazine – “Have your Aura Photographed in Asheville”
- WBTV – “Asheville Music Scene Story”
- Travelzoo – “11 Experiences You'll Only Have in Asheville” (Paid)
- Draft Magazine – “The Best Beers We Tasted this Week: Asheville Edition”
- Krista Rossow Photography – “On Newsstands: Asheville for National Geographic Traveler”
- Atlanta Magazine – “Take Five: Sleep Cheap”
- FamilyFun Magazine – “2017 Travel Awards, Best for Budget Travelers”
- Trip Advisor – “5 Reasons Black Mountain is America's Prettiest Small Town”

**Music Initiative:** Phase II of the music initiative kicked off with a contract with local music PR firm Mason Jar Media. As part of the partnership, the firm will partner with the ACVB to pitch and secure destination immersion experiences for music journalists, as well as flesh out angles, PR materials and execute targeted outreach timed to coincide with relevant happenings in Asheville's music scene.

**Content Development Projects:** March signaled the beginning of the SEO contract with Simpleview. Cat and Elizabeth had multiple discussions with our dedicated analyst to begin the relationship and to optimize several areas of content on the site, including hotel pages, new and existing spring content, existing beer content, and content pages relevant to the spring campaign. The content team implemented updates to content and metadata. In the first month, Simpleview also completed a barrier analysis and began a competitive analysis, lining ExploreAsheville.com up against similar and competitor DMO sites. Additionally, as part of the spring ad campaign, new content for spring native advertising was written and the team collaborated on the strategy for custom fly-ins to drive the advertising click-throughs further down the funnel. Time was also spent vetting necessary vendors for email marketing, user-generated content and digital asset management. The team launched the first in a series of monthly giveaways in March, hiding a bear icon on one page of the website, and providing hints for visitors to find it. Those who found the bear (“hidden” on the Biltmore Blooms page) entered to win a pair of Biltmore tickets. The giveaway was promoted via e-newsletter and social media and received more than 1,900 unique entries.

#### ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During March, five new pieces of content were added to ExploreAsheville.com, including: blog posts about the Asheville Amadeus Festival, Biltmore Concert Series and Top Spring Events; stories about shopping for art in Biltmore Village and the best spring hikes.
- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to do in Asheville, which received 28,988 new page views, followed by a blog post on the 2017 Biltmore Concert Series, which received 13,399 page views.

#### **Social Media Stats:**

##### Facebook:

##### *Visit Asheville page:*

- March saw 2,081 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 251,083.
- There were 51 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of March.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was our blog post on Biltmore announcing the first concert of the summer series would feature the Goo Goo Dolls. It has reached 147,247 people organically, generating 4,350 total reactions, and 126 comments. This was also the month’s most engaging post, engaging 8.6 percent of users reached.
- The most popular paid post this month was a link to the Los Angeles Times travel piece on Grovewood Village. It reached 91,356 users in total (41,421 of those organically), generating 2,055 total reactions, 39 comments and 347 shares.

##### *Foodtopia page:*

- March saw 53 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 24,856 likes.
- There were 19 new Facebook posts added to the Foodtopia page in the month of March.
- The most popular post—a link to an Asheville Citizen-Times article on the Tupelo Honey expansion—reached 11,880 people organically, generating 465 reactions, 19 comments and 60 shares.

##### Video:

- There were 12,024 new organic YouTube views in March. The most popular video by organic views this month was The Spirit of Asheville, which received 1,933 non-paid views. The Fall Time Lapse video came in second with 1,905 new views.

- The team broadcast one new Facebook Live video in March, featuring a rehearsal of the Asheville Symphony for the Amadeus Festival—the video earned nearly 5,000 views.
- Across all of our video platforms, there were 121,578 views.
- Asheville video content has received 4.7 million views since July 1, 2016 (fiscal YTD).

**Pinterest:**

- The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 4,471. Foodtopia accounts for 1,367 of those; Visit Asheville – 3,104.

**Instagram:**

- Our VisitAsheville account has 27,984 followers.
- There were 35 new posts in March. The most popular shows the red barn at Eliada Home set against a snow-capped Mt. Pisgah. It received 1,678 engagements (likes and comments).

**Twitter:**

- Across all accounts (no longer including AshevilleDeals and FallColorHunter) we have a total of 27,584 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,112 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 118,038 active subscribers.
- **Opens/Click-throughs:** In March, we sent out our monthly e-newsletter to 116,96 subscribers. We had a unique open rate of 12.6 percent and a click-through rate of 2.7 percent.

**ExploreAsheville.com:** In March, website user sessions for ExploreAsheville.com increased 14 percent year-over-year, which includes a 6 percent increase in organic user sessions, a 944 percent increase in social referral sessions and a 10 percent increase in email user sessions. Mobile visits in March increased by 19 percent year over year. Page views for the visitor guide request form were down 19 percent year-over-year. Pageviews to the event calendar pages increased by 4 percent year-over-year.

**Online Reservations:** There were 77 orders for 131 room nights in March with a total of \$18,132 in booking revenue and \$857 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in March were North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Illinois and Kentucky. \*Note: there is not a way in aRes to pull accurate room nights by State excluding tickets (inflated due to Peak Perks) and cancellations.

Top 5 DMAs for March 2017	# of Guides Requested	FY 2016-2017 Top 5 DMAs	# of Guides Requested
New York	133	New York	813
Chicago	97	Atlanta	710
Atlanta	84	Tampa, St. Pete	671
Philadelphia	74	Raleigh, Durham	617
Charlotte	63	Charlotte	597

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

**Travel Guide Requests:** There were 2,308 requests for the Official Asheville Travel Guide in March, a 17 percent decrease from last March. Year-to-date, there are 18,963 travel guide requests, a 10 percent decrease from last year. The top 5 DMAs requesting guides for the month and year are New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Philadelphia and Charlotte. There were 168 unique browsers for the online travel guide, a 41 percent decrease from last March. There were a total of 4,144 page views, a 37 percent decrease from last March. The average time spent viewing was 3.14 minutes, a 13 percent decrease from last March. There were 61 clicks on links, a 15 percent decrease from last March.

## **GROUP SALES & SERVICES**

Group sales reported 53 definite group bookings in March, up 18 percent from the prior year (26 meetings/conventions, 16 weddings, and 11 group tour). The combined total definite room nights were 6,128 room nights, down 14 percent from the previous year. Eighty-four leads (79 for meeting/conventions and weddings and 5 for motorcoach), representing 17,938 room nights, were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in March. Leads distributed were up 38 percent and rooms represented were up 139 percent over the prior year.

Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$1,464,918 (down 8%). Actualized revenue was \$571,030 (down 29%). The drop in revenue is due to two large groups not being held in the city this year (a large Christian women's conference and the Big South Women's Basketball Championship). Person-to-person outreach totaled 1,195 contacts, up 32 percent. Indirect outreach totaled 25,425, up 137 percent.

### **Sales Calls/Missions/FAMS:**

- Molly Nelson conducted sales calls in Florida, meeting with 11 corporate and independent meeting planners. She secured an immediate RFP for a small corporate event.
- Carla McGlynn conducted sales calls in DC in conjunction with Destination Showcase. More than 350 planners attended the event, with 68 stopping at the CVB pod to discuss future potential meetings in Asheville.
- Carla also attended Luxury Meetings in New Jersey, having appointments with 13 corporate planners. Due to the extreme inclement weather, the planned week-long trip had to be rescheduled.
- Shawn Boone conducted sales calls in Chicago, receiving two RFP's totaling 896 room nights during the trip.
- Tina Porter exhibited at the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting Industry Council of Colorado Educational Conference. More than 50 planners came by to learn more about Asheville. Sales calls were incorporated into the trip.
- Beth McKinney attended Heartland Travel Showcase in Tennessee, meeting with 37 motorcoach operators.
- Beth also attended Travel South Domestic Showcase in Missouri, meeting with 38 motorcoach planners in partnership with Biltmore and The Asheville Outlets.
- Twenty-five wedding guides were downloaded this month as compared to 49 guides in March 2016.

**Site Visits/Leads:** The team hosted five site visits in March, including: 2019 NC Society for Respiratory Care Symposium – 425 room nights; 2018 NC Seedman's Association – 275 rooms; 2018 Equestrian Tours – 1,507 room nights; Zephyr Adventures – 2017/2018 possible

beer/culinary tour series; a law firm meeting – 25 rooms. Significant leads include: South Carolina Association of Fairs – a 2020 January group – 525 rooms; 2018 ClimateCon (The Collider) – 425 rooms; 2017 Ingles Markets – Corporate Dietitians – 75 rooms; 2019-2021 national association board meeting – 696 rooms; 2019 BASF – 565 rooms; and 2018 Lawn Doctor – 490 rooms, among others.

A sample of March bookings:

- 2017 Corporate Incentive Group – (Event Specialists of New Orleans) – 165 rooms
- 2018 Antique Fan Collectors Association – 165 rooms
- 2017 International Concrete Repair Institute – 30 rooms
- 2017 Carolinas Credit Union League – 109 rooms
- 2017-2018 Holiday Vacations Tour Series – 225 room
- 2017 Spartan Race – 700 rooms
- 2017 Bristol Myers Squibb – 215 rooms
- 2019 National Association of State Foresters – 560 rooms
- 2017 Mid-Ohio Harley Davidson – 125 rooms
- 2017 CNN Newsource Sales – 83 rooms

**Explore Asheville: The 48-Hour Meeting Planner Experience:** The third 48-Hour Experience of the fiscal year was held March 28-31, with ten independent planners attending. Planners came from California, Idaho, Georgia, Maryland, Texas, New Jersey and Washington. Attendees were vetted using a qualifying questionnaire requiring a verifiable history of their ability to place meetings in the southeast. This was the first visit to Asheville for most of the planners.

**AAA Explore Asheville! Destination Training:** Leann Swims, along with reps from Biltmore, Wildwater/Adventure Center of Asheville, AC Hotel/Aloft and Grandfather Mountain traveled to 13 AAA offices located in the Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Sarasota areas to host destination training for 51 agents. The focus of the training was the arts, brewery, food, and the adventure scene in Asheville.

**Southern Conference Women's & Men's Basketball Tournaments:** In addition to placing overnight rooms, the CVB group sales department played a big supportive role in the tournaments. The CVB provided welcome gifts for VIPs including SoCon staff, school chancellors, coaches, faculty athletic reps, athletic directors and Woman Administrators, and helped coordinate a welcoming atmosphere for teams and fans at SoCon host hotels. Teams were welcomed with banners, balloons, and other personal touches to help create an exciting and memorable atmosphere for the Championships. CVB staff volunteered throughout the Championships.

## **Group Sales Communications**

### **Media:**

- Asheville was listed in *“Successful Meetings list of Destinations on the Rise for Meetings in 2017: These cities and countries are seriously appealing to planners.”*
- Smart Meetings included Asheville in its piece, *“Artsy, Craftsy and Plenty of Character.”* The CVB helped the writer with information for the article.
- The CVB provided information for a writer with Successful Meetings working on an article, *“10 Things CVBs Can Do for Your Groups.”*

**Mass Communications:**

- Invitations to the May and September 48 Hour Meeting Planner Experience were sent to 5,677 people. Open rate: 21 percent, Clicks: 599
- A postcard with *Have More Fun on Us* incentive program details was sent to 8,869 clients.
- An invitation to a client event hosted in Atlanta was sent to 523 Atlanta area clients. Open rate: 25 percent, Clicks: 92
- In advance of the Meetings Industry Council meeting in Denver, a e-blast was sent to 327 clients. Open rate: 11 percent
- A second email inviting clients to a Dallas client event was sent to 413 clients. Open rate: 13 percent, Clicks: 30 percent
- A e-newsletter was sent to 8,506 meeting planner clients. Open rate: 13 percent, Clicks: 11 percent

**Convention Servicing:** Staffed information tables were provided at the Asheville Marathon Expo and the Beer Marketing & Tourism conference. Work began on updating the Attraction Value Card for meeting attendees.

**Departmental Activities:** Staff hosted the quarterly Directors of Sales meeting, prepared for the BCTDA retreat, continued working on department budgets, and met with various industry partners. Staff attended the monthly Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission, SoCon Local Organizing Committee and Civic Center Commission meetings.

**STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES**

**Music Advisory Committee:** On March 3, this committee convened for the marketing staff to provide updates on the website related to music and to hear from the group on ways we might expand their presence and assist them in promoting the music scene in Asheville. They praised the work of the CVB and continued to offer their assistance in any way that furthers the expansion of music in the area.

**Workforce Development for the Hospitality Sector:** On March 13, a meeting was held at the Land of Sky with the MAWDB staff to discuss a Hospitality & Tourism Workforce Transportation Pilot Project with Enterprise Rental Company. The project will provide van service for hotel employees who otherwise would not be able to work in the Asheville market due to various transportation shortfalls.

**Transition:**

- The Fiduciary Task Force met on March 6 to discuss the Federal filing process, learn about the new benefits package proposed for staff and discuss the MOU with the Chamber.
- On March 7, staff met with the architects with a focus on the design elements of the space, including carpeting, wall finishes, tile and general color schemes.
- On March 8, staff met with the County IT team to begin ironing out the technical aspects of the move including AV, the Cloud and phones.
- On March 9, staff met to discuss the moving plan and determine what moving companies to approach.
  - March 17 – met with Joel Gillespie of Smith Dray Moving Company

- On March 14, staff met with TASC representative Steve English to discuss the bundle planned for the CVB's benefits package that includes the Flex Program and COBRA for staff.
- On March 22, staff held a 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting with County IT to better understand the vendors and responsibility for ongoing maintenance and service. The County is setting meetings with three vendors in April.
- On March 28, a meeting was held at PBI with the architects present to discuss interior furnishings. Offices and cubicles were fleshed out, but final decisions were reserved for follow-up renderings from PBI.

**Visitor Readiness Advisory Committee:**

On March 15, met with Jane Anderson of AIR to discuss how this program could better fit the restaurant industry in Asheville. She and the restaurant owners are very excited to introduce this program to their staff, but the cost of sending employees to meetings is a problem. The best outcome from the meeting was to develop a program that can be taken to the restaurants and integrated into regular staff meetings.

**Wayfinding:**

On March 30, met with John Bosio of Merje and Pat Kappes to discuss the planning process for undertaking a county-wide review of the Wayfinding System. Merje will review the criteria for inclusion, new assets in the system, new districts and how the system should inter-connect.

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

**Tourism Product Development Efforts:**

Contracts for the 2016 TPDF awards are nearly complete as final details are worked out with grantees.

The 2017 TPDF grant cycle is underway. Phase I applications are due Wednesday, May 31, 2017. An Information Session for prospective applicants was held on April 5 in the Chamber boardroom. There were thirteen attendees.

Pat met with RiverLink to assist new staff at the grantee organization in preparing their annual reports as required in the TPDF Agreement.

**Major Works Update**

The project team for the Woodfin Greenway & Blueway Major Works Project submitted a detailed application proposal in late March. The TPDF Committee is reviewing the application in preparation for a meeting with the project team on April 13.

The City of Asheville submitted an update on their progress for the South Slope Enhancements Major Works Project in February. They have been focusing on developing community relationships, establishing a steering committee for the South Slope Vision Plan process. The next meeting will be scheduled for July for city staff to provide an update to CVB staff, and to prepare for another session with PGAV.

The city has created a steering committee to assist in South Slope development planning; Pat will attend the kick-off meeting in early April.

### TPDF Award Ceremonies

The WNC Nature Center kicked off their major renovation project at a groundbreaking ceremony on April 7. The BCTDA was recognized for supporting the project with a \$313,000 Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) award. Stephanie Brown made remarks during the ceremony; Robert Foster and Ken Stamps were in attendance representing the TPDF committee.

The City of Asheville has scheduled a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Riverfront Destination Development projects. Robert Foster will present the check to the Mayor recognizing the \$3.5 million that has been awarded to the City of Asheville in 2014 and 2015 by the BCTDA.

### **Partner Engagement:**

#### SoCon VIP Appreciation Reception – March 3

The Asheville CVB and the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission hosted a reception to welcome the Southern Conference Basketball Championships to Asheville, and to express gratitude to the SoCon officials for keeping the tournament in Asheville. Several community leaders and elected officials were in attendance for this well-received event.

#### “What’s New With You?” Partner Forum – March 30

The March Partner Forum continues to be a popular annual spring topic with 57 in attendance. There were so many new happenings on the horizon, we ran out of time to hear them all. Attendees heard updates from several industry partners including representatives from Asheville City staff, Asheville Downtown Association, The Collider, AMOS, French Broad Vignerons, Dog City USA, Center for Craft, Creativity and Design, and Biltmore Industries.

#### “Economic Impact Report” Partner Forum – April 13

Originally scheduled for April 13, this forum has been rescheduled for June 22 while we await the updated economic impact data. A postcard highlighting key economic impact stats is in development, and will be distributed at the event.

#### National Tourism Week Summit – May 12

A half-day Summit event is in development and scheduled for May 12 during National Tourism Week. The event, to be hosted at the Renaissance Asheville Hotel, will be a half-day meeting featuring keynote presentations from national speakers from TripAdvisor and breakout sessions for marketing and sales teams plus a tourism industry expo.

### **Projects:**

Brit created 9 new partner accounts in March – Asheville Wellness Tours, East Fork Pottery Asheville, Asheville City Soccer Club, DJ P-LO - The Ultimate DJ and the Live Music Experience, Grovewood Village, Jayanti Bhakti, Erica Mueller Photography, Asheville Plays, and Sunnyside Trading Company. Brit and Pat continue to reach out to qualified partners to submit information for a listing as well as service the partners who request listings.

Brit continued to assist Elizabeth with an auditing project to ensure that all listing categories and subcategories are represented on ExploreAsheville.com.

She also continued to reach out to music venue partners regularly to ensure they are submitting their events to the live music calendar and has seen an uptick in the number of live music events submitted.

Brit moved forward with preparations for the annual Simpleview Summit, a national user conference for Simpleview software customers taking place the first week of April. This included conference calls with Asheville CVB's CRM Analyst and Account Representative and attending three Simpleview 'SimpleFeed' webinars.

Pat began research on conducting a Wayfinding Program assessment utilizing services of design firm, MERJE. She met with a contact of MERJE for preliminary discussion on process and timeline. The assessment will occur during FY 2017-18.

Pat and Brit continue to support planning efforts for the development of the 2018 Asheville Visitor Guide, and have begun preliminary data exports.

### **Partner Outreach**

The public affairs team hosted a March CVB 101 Open Door session, with five partners in attendance including Cullivers Travels, Two Birds Marketing, VaVaVoom, Twisted Laurel, and Appalachian Mountain Adventures. The session included a presentation on the structure of the CVB and provided an orientation on the CVB's program of work, highlighting ways to connect and best utilize the free marketing services.

### **Community Outreach**

Pat continues to attend community meetings for the South Slope Neighborhood Association to assist with their branding efforts, meets monthly with City of Asheville's Dana Frankel, and attends the Leadership Roundtable on Riverfront Development to stay abreast of construction plans as it relates to partners located in the River Arts District and the visitor experience. She also attended the Downtown Commission meeting to hear an update on the City of Asheville's parking study, and the Haywood Street Advisory team's presentation.

Pat met with members of the community representing various projects and events to discuss how best to utilize CVB support services including the Xpand Festival in South Slope, Dog City USA campaign, Asheville Helicopter Tours, and Shay Brown's Revelry Dinner events at the Masonic Temple.

Pat attended the Artspace Leadership Reception and a Finance & Funder Leadership Focus Group hosted by the Center for Craft, Creativity & Design. CCCD and the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce have worked together to bring Artspace to Asheville to conduct a feasibility assessment of affordable housing for artists.

## **VISITOR SERVICES**

The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 13,823 guests during the month of March 2017. The Pack Square Park Pavilion is closed for the season.

The volunteers attended a performance of "Souvenir" at NC Stage and "Peter and the Starcatcher" at Asheville Community Theatre, which was performed in Belk Theatre on the UNCA Campus. They were also treated to luncheons at Corner Kitchen, Chestnut, and Lobster Trap.

Future events include NC Stage, Magnetic Theatre, Albemarle Inn, Red Ginger, and Urban Orchard. Training for the Volunteers continued with email updates along with "on the job" daily briefings from staff members.