

March 23, 2017

To: BCTDA

From: Stephanie Pace Brown, Executive Director

Subject: Recap of February 2017 Staff Activities

January hotel sales posted disappointing performance with a three percent drop in hotel/motel revenue while total lodging revenue was up 5.9 percent as market share for the month shifted to short term rentals and vacation rentals.

February was a crossroads between the Winter Advertising Campaign and spring planning. The marketing team also executed the Florida media tour, in total logging 67 touchpoints for the month and 107 targeted pitches.

The group sales team is traveling heavily this quarter. During February the team was in DC, Columbia, St. Louis, and Florida.

The Hospitality Outlook on February 24 attracted an audience of more than 200 to the Diana Wortham Theater. Participants heard a lodging report from Chad Church, and overview of tourism from Chris Cavanaugh, and a marketing update from Stephanie.

The executive team has been diligently working through the transition and move. The Fiduciary Task Force recently received a benefits package proposal, and established the timeline for the IRS filing. Everything is currently on track for moving by the end of the fiscal year, and establishing the CVB as an independent organization by July 1.

FEBRUARY CVB METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS

- During February, the sales team posted 952 personal contacts (up 12%). February sales activities generated 73 sales leads (down 10%) and 25 convention bookings (down 19%), representing 6,964 rooms (up 45%). Eight months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are down ten percent and room nights represented are up nine percent.
- CVB leads generated ten group events in February (down 41%), with revenue of \$331,574 (up 38%). The services team assisted 14 groups (down 13%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 8,256 visitors (up 30%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion is closed for the winter.
- The PR team landed 40 significant placements in January (up 33%), with 67 media touchpoints (up 29%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled

\$258,096 with reach of over 5.2 million. Online placements added \$93,402 in value and reach of nearly 248 million.

- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 247,940 visits (up 8%), including 140,692 to the mobile site (up 14%). Our Facebook fan base grew by 1,449 (down 63%) and video views totaled 160,858 (up 391%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 142 room nights (up 65%) with total room revenue of \$19,711 (up 85%).

HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$15,317,438 in January, up 5.9 percent. Seven months into the fiscal year, YTD 2016-17 sales are up 16 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 46.6 percent during January (down 10.8%). The average daily room rate was \$111.33 (up 0.9%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$51.91 (down 10%). Room demand decreased 4.3 percent with 103,663 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 28 percent to total 49,938 in January.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Advertising: The Winter Advertising Campaign (Asheville Peak Perks) is winding down. Travelzoo drove a significant amount of the traffic that resulted in actual transactions on the ExploreAsheville.com site. Broadcast TV generated slightly more sessions on the site, but fewer completed transactions than Travelzoo. Facebook ads generated some traffic to the site, but with a higher bounce rate and very few transactions, ultimately leading to it being cancelled midway through the campaign. While additional ExploreAsheville.com site actions through the use of Get Smart Content and social media efforts led to transactions, the bulk of the transactions were delivered through advertising. The agency and marketing team plan to do a thorough post-mortem of the effort following strategic planning.

With one foot in winter, the team turned its attention to the spring campaign and worked with the agency to finalize details in preparation for a March 20 launch. Landing pages were developed and creative finalized with an incorporation of the Lonely Planet accolade into the “Let the Magic Find You” theme. Spring broadcast television was placed in the following markets: Charlotte, Raleigh, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Nashville, Cincinnati, Tampa, West Palm Beach, Jacksonville, Orlando, and Charleston. The Union Station take over is on track to launch April 1. Brooke continues to partner with National Geographic Traveler on the 2017 components of the integrated content partnership which includes: digital editorial (March & April), a six-page feature story in NGT (April/May), digital marketing (April), social media (April) and an NGT hosted event on April 28.

Paid search efforts:

A total of 45,786 site visits were generated by paid search in February with an average of nearly 3 pages viewed per visit. Click-throughs from desktop still leads by a slight margin over mobile with tablets representing about 11 percent of the click-through traffic. Search terms around things to do and events drove high levels of traffic, followed by outdoors, water adventures and

the Blue Ridge Parkway. However, those that landed on the events/calendar page spent the longest time on the page.

General Media Relations: February was a busy month for the public relations team. Outreach for the team was higher than normal due to Florida media tour appointment pitching, meetings and group pitching around what's new for the destination in 2017 and an increased number of photo requests. The team logged 67 touchpoints, hosted 7 media site visits and pushed out 107 targeted pitches.

High profile media support included *Lonely Planet* guidebooks (site visit), *AAA Vacation Now*, *Outside Magazine*, *Paste* (site visit), *Southern Living* (print and online), *AAA Go*, *Endless Vacation*, *Garden & Gun* and the *LA Times*. Each of February's site visits followed detailed itineraries created by the PR team. After outreach to more than 80 outlets in preparation for the Florida media tour, Landis Taylor and Sarah Lowery had 22 appointments with media in Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota. Freelance connections included *National Geographic Traveler*, *The Miami Herald*, *AAA Go*, *Endless Vacation*, *Men's Journal*, *McClatchy-Tribune* and *AFAR*. Media outlets included *Lifestyles After 50 Magazine*, *Tampa Bay Magazine*, *Orlando Signature Magazine* and *First Coast Magazine*. Work also continued in securing meeting business coverage as Landis sent a newly created press sheet (pulling out specific 2017 news from the destination) as a targeted pitch to 12 different publications. Initial response to the pitches should lead to stories with Connect and Successful Meetings.

North Carolina Beer Month

Sarah took the lead on this project, sending out a call to partners to submit beer-related news, events and packages ahead of promotional efforts surrounding April's North Carolina Beer Month (created by the North Carolina Craft Brewers Guild and Visit North Carolina). Events and packages were compiled and shared with the Visit NC team and CVB staff for content integration across ACVB platforms. Asheville content and copy on NCBeerMonth.com—the dedicated website for the marketing platform—was edited and updated by the PR team.

SIGNIFICANT PLACEMENTS FOR FEBRUARY

- *USA Today 10 Best* – “You Can Easily Pretend You're in Beauty and The Beast at Biltmore”
- *AAA Vacation Now* – “Southern Sampler”
- *ABC News* – “This Bride Hikes 3 Miles in Crocheted Dress for Mountain Top Wedding”
- *CBS News* – “The Dish Katie Button”
- *Mornings with Fox 43Fun* – “Romantic Getaways in Asheville” (Sarah)
- *WSPA* – “Your Carolina With Jack and Megan Plan Your Weekend Trip to Asheville” (Sarah)
- *USA Today* – “10 Great Valentine Trips for Solo Travelers”
- *Atlanta Journal Constitution* – “The 5 Most Romantic Cities in the Deep South”
- *Garden & Gun* – “Katie Button Asheville North Carolina”
- *Furthermore From Equinox* – “48 Hours in Asheville NC”
- *405 Magazine* – “The Allure of Asheville”
- *Atlanta Journal Constitution* – “Whatever You're Hungry For, its Somewhere in North Carolina”
- *Country Living* – “28 Off the Grid Destinations Away From It All”
- *Garden & Gun* – “A Vanderbilt Library Comes to Life”
- *Garden & Gun* – “Asheville at a Glance”
- *Southern Lady* – “Grand Getaways Grove Park Inn”
- *Leisure GroupTravel.com* – “Biltmore House to Display Movie Fashions”
- *Insider* – “11 Spring Break Ideas for People Who Hate the Beach”

- *LA Times* – “Beyond the Biltmore”
- *Where Traveler* – “The Ultimate North Carolina State Parks Road Trip”
- *Tasting Table* – “The 8 Best Vegan Restaurants in America”
- *Go Carolina’s* – “Most Romantic Restaurants in the Carolina’s”
- *Yahoo Finance* – “3 Hot Southern Cities to Visit in 2017”
- *Around Carolina* – “River Arts District” (Landis)
- *U.S. News & World Report* – “America’s Top 7 Scenic Spring Road Trips Under \$500”

Content Development Projects: During the month of February, Cat Kessler and Brooke worked with photographer Emily Chaplin to provide imagery for upcoming projects. The three-day shoot included family scenes at Alchemy and French Broad Chocolate Lounge, and dining scenes at Wicked Weed and Posana, with an eye toward capturing moments that communicate the draw of winter travel. Additionally, the content team developed a strategic set of giveaways for the remaining months of the fiscal year in order to promote ongoing areas of focus and to generate visits to ExploreAsheville.com. Two of the contests will be done in the style of a scavenger hunt within the pages of ExploreAsheville.com and several will involve Steep Canyon Rangers ticket giveaways to align with the sponsorship. In February, the team also piloted a plan to include giveaways in Facebook Live broadcasts, where appropriate.

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of February, five new pieces of content were added to ExploreAsheville.com, including a blog post detailing SoCon tournament weekend activities and a winter travel itinerary by travel writer Andrew Evans. The content team also researched and created a landing page about the 2017 total solar eclipse, and an article highlighting 36 free things to do in Asheville. Lastly, the team crafted a profile on local band Steep Canyon Rangers to support the new partnership and ACVB sponsorship of the Steep Canyon tour bus.
- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to do in Asheville, which received 17,293 new page views, followed by Top 10 Romantic Restaurants, which received 4,544 new page views.

Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

Visit Asheville page:

- February saw 1,449 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 250,056.
- There were 48 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of February.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was a share of the Travel Channel video feature on Biltmore. It has reached 88,607 people organically, generating 2,883 total reactions, and 145 comments. This was also the most engaging post, engaging 6 percent of the users reached.
- The most popular paid post this month was a link to the Travelzoo story on “10 Reasons You Can’t Wait Any Longer to Visit Asheville.” It reached 135,630 users in total (94,838 of those organically), generating 5,056 total reactions, 100 comments and 603 shares.

Foodtopia page:

- February saw 53 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 24,900 likes.
- There were 16 new Facebook posts added to the Foodtopia page in the month of February.

- The most popular post—a link to a CBS This Morning segment featuring Chef Katie Button—reached 5,725 people organically, generating 146 reactions, 4 comments and 27 shares.

Video:

- There were 9,848 new organic YouTube views in February. The most popular video by organic views this month was the Fall Time Lapse, which received 1,726 non-paid views. The Return Again video came in second with 1,618 new views.
- New Facebook Live videos in February included broadcasts from The Chocolate Fetish, Moog Music and Barkley's Mill, with about 26,000 total views.
- Across all of our video platforms, there were 160,858 views.
- Asheville video content has received 4.6 million views since July 1, 2016 (fiscal YTD).

Pinterest:

- The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 4,412. Foodtopia accounts for 1,365 of those. Visit Asheville – 3,047.

Instagram:

- Our Visit Asheville account has 26,215 followers.
- There were 36 new posts in February. The most popular—a sunrise in Great Smoky Mountains National Park—received 1,144 engagements (likes and comments).

Twitter:

- Across all of our active accounts we have a total of 27,185 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 13,968 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 116,639 active subscribers.
- **Opens/Click-throughs:**
 - In February, we sent out our monthly e-newsletter to 116,956 subscribers. We had a unique open rate of 12.1 percent and a click-through rate of 2.1 percent.
 - This month we also sent out a Special Offer email promoting Asheville Peak Perks. This mailing was sent to 116,625 subscribers and saw a unique open rate of 12.7 percent and a click-through rate of 1.4 percent.

Music Initiative: The Steep Canyon Rangers bus was wrapped and information launched in February. The day of launch, Steve Martin, who sometimes tours with the band, retweeted the SCR tweet to his 8.3 million followers. Marla Tambellini and Dodie Stephens prepared an update for the board and the music advisory committee which met March 3. As part of phase II, a contract with local PR agency and music experts Mason Jar is being finalized. The nine-month project includes specific media outreach deliverables.

ExploreAsheville.com: In February, website user sessions for ExploreAsheville.com increased 8 percent year over year, which includes a 16 percent increase in organic user sessions, a 184 percent increase in social referral sessions and a 77 percent increase in email user sessions. Mobile visits in February increased by 14 percent year-over-year. Page views for the visitor guide request form increased by 5 percent year-over-year. Page views to the event calendar pages increased by 9.92 percent year-over-year. As last year was a leap year, the year-over-year February comparisons included one extra day in 2016 as compared with 2017. Brit

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

Online Reservations: There were 81 orders for 142 room nights in February with a total of \$19,711 in booking revenue and \$820 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in February were North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, Pennsylvania and Texas. *Note: there is not a way in aRes to pull accurate room night by State excluding tickets (inflated due to Peak Perks) and cancellations.

January 2017	Current Month	This Month Last Year	Variance Monthly	YTD Actual	YTD Last Year	Variance YTD
Booking Rev	\$19,711	\$10,637	85.3%	\$92,463	\$110,223	-16.1%
Commission	\$820	\$476	72.2%	\$4,016	\$5,018	-20.0%
Orders	159	93	72.8%	637	806	-21.0%
Room Nights	142	86	65.1%	591	746	-20.8%

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

Travel Guide Requests: There were 3,042 requests for the Official Asheville Travel Guide in February, a 20 percent increase from last February. Year-to-date, there are 16,655 travel guide requests, a 9 percent decrease from last year. The top 5 DMAs requesting guides for the month are: New York, Chicago, Charlotte, Atlanta and Philadelphia. There were 179 unique browsers for the online travel guide, a 17 percent decrease from last February. There was a total of 3,813 page views, a 36 percent decrease from last February. The average time spent viewing was 2.83 minutes, a 21 percent decrease from last February. There were 45 clicks on links, a 13 percent increase from last February. Planning for travel guide production got underway in February. Brooke coordinated a kick-off meeting with the SagaCity team to discuss editorial content, design and sales strategy for the upcoming 2018 Visitor Guide.

GROUP SALES & SERVICES

Group sales reported 25 definite group bookings in February, down 19 percent from the prior year (22 meetings/conventions & weddings, three group tour). The combined total definite room nights was 6,964, up 45 percent from the previous year. Seventy-three leads (62 for meeting/conventions and weddings and 11 for motorcoach) representing 20,776 room nights were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in February. Leads distributed were down 9.9 percent and rooms represented were up 65 percent over the prior year.

Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$1,632,299 (up 149%). Actualized revenue was \$331,574 (up 37%). Person-to-person outreach totaled 952 contacts, up 11 percent. Indirect outreach totaled 1,752, down 23 percent.

Sales Calls/Missions/FAMS:

- Carla McGlynn made sales calls in DC in conjunction with DMAI's Spirit of Hospitality Celebration and Destination Showcase (more in March recap). Carla met with a host of new clients, with one client alone planning approximately 400 meetings per year. We expect several meeting opportunities to result from the visit.

- Molly Nelson attended the SCSAE trade show in Columbia, meeting with 35 planners. In addition, 10 sales calls were conducted. Industry partners participating in the tradeshow were Biltmore Farms Hotels, Grand Bohemian and Biltmore. A client breakfast for 10 corporate and association buyers was held preceding the show.
- Beth McKinney exhibited at the Wedding Festivals Bridal Expo. Approximately 300 people stopped to inquire about the ACVB's wedding services.
- Beth also attended the NTA Travel Exchange in St. Louis, meeting with 27 operators.
- Leann Swims conducted two days of AAA Explore Asheville Destination Training webinars for AAA staff from AAA Carolinas, AAA Club Alliance, and AAA South. These clubs combined cover 16 states including NC, SC, GA, TN, WI, MI, IL, MN, FL, AL, and OH. Approximately 87 AAA staff participated in the trainings. Partners featured in the webinar series were: Biltmore, LaZoom and Hampton Inn/Homewood Suites. The overall focus of the webinars was spring in Asheville. A copy of the webinar was uploaded to the AAA pages on our website.
- Twenty-six wedding guides were downloaded this February as compared to 45 in February 2016.

Destination Showcase Washington DC: In keeping with our objective of placing Asheville in a new competitive set, the CVB sponsored the closing reception at the high-level Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) event. More than 800 industry professionals attended. Sponsorship benefits included listing on Showcase website, mobile site, printed pocket guides and signage throughout the event. Stephanie welcomed the audience from the mainstage prior to the start of the show. One e-blast invitation exclusive to Asheville was sent to all registered attendees prior to the event. Staff created a signature drink and the servers wore Lonely Planet embossed shirts (Asheville named #1 Destination in the US). We received a list of registered attendees for future follow-up.

Site Visits/Bookings/Leads: The team hosted with five site visits in February including: 2017 CNN Newsource – 83 rooms; 2017 Spartan Race – 700 rooms; 2019 National Association of State Foresters – 660 rooms; 2017 National Association of Elevator Operators – 175 rooms (48 Hour FAM participant); 2018 NC Medical Group Management – 480 room nights; 2020 International Conference on Black Bear Research and Management – 1,400 room nights. A tour series lead representing nine stays (225 room nights) was sent in February.

A sample of February bookings include:

- 2017 Western Carolina Dart Association – 160 rooms
- 2017 Gran Fondo National Championship Series – 150 rooms
- 2017 Foundation for Strategic Sourcing – 225 rooms (48-Hour FAM participant)
- 2019 Control System Integrators Association – 1,373 room nights
- 2018 Wayne Insurance Group – 93 room nights
- 2017 ULI Carolina's Regional Initiative Councils – 40 rooms
- 2017 UNC Asheville System Advancement Symposium – 500 rooms
- 2018 Equestrian Tours – 1,507 room nights
- 2017 Asheville Lacrosse Classic – 1,000 rooms

Group Sales Communications:

Work with the team's agency, Market Connections, included various small projects related to advertisement placement deadlines. A refresh of the *Have More Fun on Us* marketing postcard

was made in preparation of a mass mailing. Market Connections also designed panels for the upcoming Destination Showcase tradeshow.

A new initiative was launched, a collection of Hot Dates for meeting planners that offer perks and incentives. The CVB collected perk programs from hotel partners and created a new page on the meetings section of ExploreAsheville.com. This will serve as another promotional tool for the CVB team, and provide an additional service to our clients who are considering booking a meeting in Asheville.

An initial review of content and organization of the meetings pages of ExploreAsheville.com occurred by staff including the Director of Content and Web Manager.

Media:

- CVB PR Specialist Landis Taylor sent a total of 12 pitches to meetings publications

Mass Communications:

- An e-blast was sent to 345 DC area clients and registered attendees in advance of Destination Showcase. Opens: 127; Clicks: 21
- An e-blast was sent to 494 Colorado area clients in advance of the Meetings Industry Council meeting. Opens: 124; Clicks: 15
- A Save-the-Date announcement was sent to 836 Dallas area clients for a client event that will be held at the end of April. Opens: 165; Clicks: 114
- An invitation was sent to 77 DC area meeting planners to join CVB staff at the Spirit of Hospitality Celebration attended by Carla McGlynn.
- In advance of the CVB's sponsorship of the closing reception at Destination Showcase, an e-blast with Asheville information was sent by DMAI to 3,441 industry contacts. Open rate: 14 percent

Convention Servicing:

- The majority of convention service efforts were for the Southern Conference Basketball Championship as the CVB led the organization and coordination of team host hotel decorations, VIP welcome gifts and coordinating volunteers for an information table at the US Cellular Center.

Departmental Activities:

Staff hosted the annual department budget and planning retreat; attended the Hospitality Outlook and met with various industry partners. Staff attended the monthly Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission, SoCon Local Organizing Committee and Civic Center Commission meetings, attended a Mosaix event and attended a training webinar.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

Workforce Development for the Hospitality Sector: On February 2, Stephanie and Glenn Cox attended the initial Marketing & Outreach committee meeting for the Hospitality & Tourism industry held at Amplified Media. The general discussion addressed the overall work Amplified Media was hired to undertake with specific discussion centered on creating a logo. The Workforce Development committee met on February 14 with Cultural Homestay International joining as guests. Cultural Homestay connects overseas college students to seasonal jobs in the States and is looking to expand into Buncombe County's hotel industry. On February 21, Glenn attended the Hospitality and Tourism Career Pathways meeting at Kanuga Conference

Center in Henderson County. On February 28, he sat in on a conference call with Land of Sky COG, MAWDB and Enterprise Car Rental to discuss their van rental program hotels could use as a recruitment tool to better connect workers to their properties.

Transition and Move:

- February 3 meeting at PBI to discuss furniture needs and designs
- February 8 meeting with architects to discuss updates to the floorplan
- February 9 meeting with Gene Adams (ASI) to discuss D&O and corporate liability insurance for the BCTDA nonprofit
- February 10 meeting with Jennifer Durrett and the County payroll team to begin the process of transitioning to the County for payroll services
- February 13 meeting with Matt Bradley (ASI) to discuss Life and Disability coverage.
- February 17, Stephanie and Glenn met with Symphony Executive Director David Whitehill to discuss our new space. The Symphony will relocate to the first floor of our building.
- February 20, Stephanie and Glenn met for a second time with PBI to view their revised concepts for our furniture and associated design.
- February 24 meeting with Gene Adams to discuss and complete the D&O application for the BCTDA nonprofit

Visitor Readiness Advisory Committee:

On February 7, the committee met to further discuss the content, format and messaging of this program. To provide historic context, Kevan Frasier (WCU) agreed to develop a shortened version of his “How Did Asheville Get So Cool” presentation. Jonathan Helmken (Gray Line Trolley Tours) said they could do a one-hour tour of Asheville for \$50. To expose attendees to the F&B community, Kendra Penland (Asheville Brewers Alliance) and Jane Anderson (AIR) agreed to host an educational social at a local brewery, catered by a local restaurant, cost TBD. Other areas to be covered are enhanced customer service and an education of local resources beneficial to visitors. On February 23, Glenn attended the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area’s Hospitality Training Wrap-Up at the Folk Art Center.

County Board of Commissioners:

On February 17, Glenn attended the half-day commissioners’ retreat in the County Building.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tourism Product Development Efforts:

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

Pat prepared a summary of Annual Reports for all active TPDF projects, submitted by grantees in January, and presented it at the February board meeting. Pat will work with applicants to ensure they are collecting information throughout the year necessary to provide complete reports.

The 2017 cycle dates have been released on AshevilleCVB.com and in the Partner Connect newsletter. Application materials including a TPDF Program Guide, and Phase I and Phase II application forms, have been prepared and are available for download at ashevillecvb.com/tpdf2017. The cycle will kick-off with an Information Session for prospective applicants on April 5 in the Chamber boardroom.

The project team for the Woodfin Greenway & Blueway Major Works Project is preparing their full application proposal and expects to submit to the TPDF Committee for review by March 20; the team will present the proposal to the committee on April 13.

The City of Asheville submitted an update on their progress for the South Slope Enhancements Major Works Project. They have been focusing on developing community relationships, establishing a steering committee for the South Slope Vision Plan process. They have also requested a second meeting with CVB staff and PGAV representatives in late March or early April.

Pat and Stephanie met with Bernie Stanek and Tom Ryan to answer their questions regarding the feasibility of applying for TPDF funding for their project, NC Mountain Aquatics Center.

Stephanie, Marla and Pat met with Caleb Miles, President of the Pinehurst Convention & Visitors Bureau, to share insights on the TPDF program as Pinehurst considers creating a similar funding program.

Partner Engagement:

Hospitality Outlook – February 24

The annual Hospitality Outlook, held at the Diana Wortham Theatre, was well-attended with more than 200 partners, community stakeholders and elected officials in attendance. Chad Church of Smith Travel Research shared positive news about the Asheville area's trending occupancy rates – the envy of many other destinations. Chris Cavanaugh also enlightened attendees with his presentation, “Dispelling Common Myths about the Buncombe County Visitor Economy.” Stephanie shared an update on CVB programs in her “BCTDA Building Community through Tourism” presentation. The meeting was broadcast on Facebook Live; the video and all presentation files are available for download on AshevilleCVB.com under Past Events.

The Hospitality Outlook was followed by an Investors Reception for lodging owners to engage with speakers, Chad Church and Chris Cavanaugh, and discuss the information presented at the Outlook.

SoCon VIP Appreciation Reception – March 3

The Asheville CVB and the 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

Planning is underway for the next Partner Forum scheduled for March 30. Partners are invited to share their news and updates on new services, offerings and experiences with the CVB and fellow tourism industry partners as we prepare for spring visitors. Attendees will hear updates on latest development and construction in the River Arts District, learn how to experience the Total Solar Eclipse, and about the upcoming Rafael Guastavino "Master Builder of Domes" exhibit at the Swannanoa Valley Museum, to name a few.

“Economic Impact Report” Partner Forum – April 13

The April forum will be focused on presenting new ROI and economic impact data. A postcard highlighting key economic impact stats is in development and will be distributed at the event.

Tourism Summit – May 12

A half-day Summit event is in development and scheduled for May 12 during National Tourism Week. Planning is in early stages but will include a keynote presentation by national speakers from TripAdvisor, and will include a selection of breakout sessions for attendees.

Partner Outreach:

Nine new partner accounts were created in February – Sierra Nevada Brewing Company, Post 25 Kitchen and Lounge, Sky Mountain Events, The Doner Kebabs and Falafels, Slippery Friction Fishing, Blue Ridge Rollergirls, Free Planet Radio, Bartaco Biltmore, and Alchemy Asheville.

Brit continues 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 and Pat hosted a February CVB 101 Open Door session, with 10 partners in attendance including Mojo Kitchen & Lounge, Mosaix Group, Brandits, 12 Bones, Palms of Nature, Brookstone Lodge, H&H Distillery, and the Great Smoky Mountains National Railroad. They discussed the structure of the CVB as it relates to the Chamber, as well as gave an orientation on the CVB's programs of work and ways to connect and partner with the CVB.

Community Outreach:

Pat continues to attend community meetings for the South Slope Neighborhood Association to assist with their branding efforts, and 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.

Pat attended the Asheville city council's Annual Retreat, and met Commissioners Jasmine Beach-Ferrara and Al Whitesides at a Coffee with your Commissioners event.

VISITOR SERVICES

The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 8,256 guests during the month of February 2017. The Pack Square Park Pavilion is closed for the season.

The volunteers attended a performance of "Money and How to Make It" at Magnetic Theatre. They were also treated to a luncheon at Blackbird Restaurant by owners Jesson and Christina Gil. Future events include NC Stage, Magnetic Theatre, Corner Kitchen, Albemarle Inn, Chestnut, Lobster Trap, and Urban Orchard.

Training for the volunteers continued with email updates along with "on the job" daily briefings from staff members.