

November 20, 2019

To: Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

From: Stephanie Pace Brown

Subject: President's Report of October 2019 Activities

MONTH AT A GLANCE

Destination performance lagged in September with an 8.1 percent decrease in Average Daily Rate. Buncombe County posted a one percent increase in occupancy and topped the comp set in total occupancy (78.9%). Several comp markets posted decreases in occupancy including Savannah (-12.6%), Chattanooga (-3.3%), and Greenville, SC (-1.4%). ADR was down in all comp markets except Gatlinburg. Room supply is growing across the southeast with significant jumps in Greenville, SC (6.1%), Charleston (4.6%), Savannah (3.2%), and Chattanooga (3.4%). The demand for short term rentals increased 23.6 percent and occupancy was up 4.5 percent.

The destination advertising campaign ran July 1 through the end of October. Fall and holiday promotions are underway. The Explore Asheville media relations team initiated 386 targeted pitches as they were in full swing for fall, distributing b-roll to 272 contacts and conducting a Fall Media Tour in Birmingham and Atlanta. The media relations team also pitched news releases for winter and holiday experiences.

The group sales team was on the road, conducting sales calls in Orlando and DC. Glenn Ramey joined the team as Group Sales and Services Specialist. And, a new AAA destination training video debuted.

Kathi Petersen joined the team as Director of Public Information and Community Engagement. Kathi hit the ground running and is already an indispensable resource.

The Tourism Management Forum was presented on October 23 with approximately 200 attendees. The Phase 1 report and presentations have been posted on the website. Phase 2 will focus on meetings with the City of Asheville, Buncombe County, and UNC Asheville to develop potential projects.

OCTOBER METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS

- During October, the sales team posted 1,136 personal contacts (down 4%). October sales activities generated 97 sales leads (up 4%) and 52 convention bookings (up 8%), representing 7,788 rooms (up 24%). Four months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are down 21 percent and room nights represented are down 14 percent.

- CVB sales leads generated 72 group events in October (up 13%), with revenue of \$2,024,068 (down 14%). The services team assisted 64 groups (down 2%).
- The PR team landed 38 significant placements in September (down 47%), with 82 media touchpoints (up 28%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$2,117,698 with reach of over 8 million. Online placements added \$114,837 in value and reach of over 160 million.
- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 646,725 visits (up 54%), including 468,832 to the mobile site (up 65%). Our Facebook fan base total is 294,305 (up 5%) and video views totaled 64,437 (up 1%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 76 room nights (down 33%) with total room revenue of \$14,010 (down 24%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 26,244 visitors (up 4%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion welcomed 893 visitors (down 33%).

LODGING & AIRPORT RESULTS

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$39,529,157 in September (up 0.5%).
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 78.9 percent during September (up 1%). The average daily room rate was \$161.83 (down 8%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$127.65 (down 7%). Room demand increased 1 percent with 188,457 rooms sold.
- AIRDNA reported short term rental occupancy of 56.9 percent (up 4.5%), ADR of \$99.20 (down 3.2%), RevPAR of \$56.44 (up 1.2%). Total demand for short term rentals increased 23.6 percent to total 112,222 rooms sold.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 53 percent to total 137,156 in September.

IN THE COMMUNITY

- Dianna attended Rotary.
- Dianna attended the Civic Center Commission and ABRSC monthly meetings.
- Beth was recognized at ASU Hayes School of Music at Asheville High School for working with them on all aspects related to their Buncombe County music tour.
- Dianna, Tina, Daniel, and Pat attended the Southern Conference Basketball Tip-Off Luncheon.
- As part of her role on the Chow Chow planning committee, Dodie Stephens drafted and coordinated distribution of an event recap letter and info packet to Asheville City Council, Buncombe County Commission, and key staff.
- Cat gave a presentation on the work of the BCTDA to A-B Tech's Hospitality Marketing class.
- Marla, Pat, and Stephanie attended the Chamber's 2019 Metro Economy Outlook.
- Pat and Stephanie attended the African Americans in Western North Carolina and Appalachian Conference at UNC Asheville.
- Pat attended the African American Heritage Commission meeting and followed up with an introduction of the BCTDA to the commission members. Pat has been asked to update the commission on BCTDA-funded projects relating to the African American community at the November meeting.

- Pat attended a stakeholder committee meeting representing the BCTDA for the Buncombe Community Remembrance Project, led by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Asheville and Buncombe County, to acknowledge and remember individuals lynched in Buncombe County in conjunction with the Equal Justice Initiative's (EJI) National Memorial for Peace and Justice nationwide initiative.
- Pat attended the Local Living Economy, sub-committee of the Downtown Commission, meeting and is coordinating with the Asheville Grown Business Alliance to co-host a partner forum meeting during Local Love Week in February 2020.
- Pat and Kathi attended the Wortham Center for the Performing Art's donor celebration, where Stephanie presented remarks and participated in the ribbon cutting.
- Kathi represented the CVB at the Outdoor Economy Conference.
- Kathi accompanied Stephanie to the Buncombe County Commissioners meeting, where Stephanie formally provided a BCTDA Annual Update.
- Stephanie and Kathi attended the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce's Smart Series session on Public Policy: Legislation for Business.
- Stephanie attended a Track Collaboration meeting at UNC Asheville.
- Stephanie attended the Asheville Chamber's Legislative Wrap-Up Breakfast.
- Stephanie met with representatives from newly established "Hello Burlington" to provide an overview of the Asheville area's tourism story and answer questions.
- Stephanie attended the SoCon Tip-Off lunch at the Renaissance Asheville Hotel.
- Stephanie spoke at the ribbon cutting for the Kimpton Hotel Arras.
- Stephanie attended the Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission meeting.
- Stephanie attended the Greater Asheville Regional Airport Authority's monthly board meeting.
- Stephanie met with representatives from Buncombe County, the Asheville Tourists, and Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission to discuss the Enka Recreation Destination.
- Stephanie met with Demp Bradford and Asheville City Soccer organizers.
- Stephanie attended a reception at Asheville Community Theatre.
- Stephanie attended AIR and Chow Chow executive committee and board meetings throughout the month.
- Stephanie attended Rotary Club of Asheville meetings every Thursday when she was available.
- Glenn attended a seminar on "Hiring and Firing," offered by the Roberts & Stevens Law Firm.
- Glenn and Pat represented Explore Asheville at the "30 Years of Curve" celebration in the River Arts District.
- Glenn attended Helpmate's "Men Who Care Luncheon" at the Renaissance Asheville Hotel.
- Several CVB staff members attended the Sweet Dreams Full Plates wrap-up and celebration at MANNA Food Bank.
- Glenn attended the Black Mountain Center for the Arts board meeting.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Advertising: For the period of July 1, 2019 through the end of October, the brand campaign delivered 116 million impressions while 237,208 total web user sessions have been generated compared to 132,256 sessions from last year's paid advertising in the same time period (note that the 2018 campaign only ran through October 14, while the 2019 campaign ran through the end of October). The paid Facebook ads are driving the best click through rate at 1.57 percent. Facebook and Trip Advisor have the best engagement with 1.98 and 2.17 average pages per session respectively. The percentage of visitors who exited the site from the advertising landing

page improved from 79 percent last year to 71 percent this year. Web pages per session from advertising sources improved from 1.37 last year to 1.82 pages per session this year.

A fall seasonal campaign inclusive of broadcast radio, native, paid social, and paid search was launched on October 15 and slated to run through November 5. Additionally, a holiday campaign will launch on November 6 comprised of native, paid social and paid search and will end on December 22. The agency is also developing a cozy winter campaign that will launch in early January.

Sarah Kilgore worked closely with the agency to plan all the details of a video shoot that was planned for early October prior to the fall color change. The additional video footage was captured to supplement the brand television spots with a new :15 and :30 versions of the spot. A final version of the spots will be available for the November board meeting.

Marla was a keynote speaker at the Ohio Conference in Travel where she shared Asheville's brand story.

Paid Search: Paid search drove 123k sessions to ExploreAsheville.com in October, an increase of 61 percent YOY. The bounce rate did go up slightly (1.4% YOY), but average session duration was at 3:11, an increase of 3.4 percent YOY. In addition, pages per session were up to 3.59, an increase of 5.5 percent YOY.

	October 2018	October 2019	YoY
Total spend	\$43,507	\$57,260	31.6%
Impressions	1,383,520	1,703,135	51.8%
Clicks	70,110	118,571	69.1%
CTR	5.1%	7.0%	11.4%
CPCs	\$0.62	\$0.48	-22.2%

General Media Relations: The PR Team logged 82 media touchpoints, initiated 386 targeted pitches and hosted two media on the ground in Asheville in October. The month included multiple pitch efforts with the distribution of both a winter release and a holiday release, the Society of American Travel Writers Media Marketplace and a fall b-roll campaign targeting both national media and broadcast contacts in advertising markets. Supported site visits and story support included People Magazine, AAA Go, Saturday Evening Post and Forbes. Asheville imagery and assistance were provided to USA TODAY, The Washington Post, Travel Channel website, Buick Magazine and PureWow, among others. On a separate note, Dodie Stephens is the incoming chair for the Public Relations Society of American Travel & Tourism Section and is currently assisting in the development of the 2021 conference.

Fall Outreach: At the end of October, the PR Team sent fall b-roll footage to 272 contacts representing national broadcast and television contacts in Explore Asheville's advertising markets. The team utilized Cision and TrendKite platforms to create a targeted list reaching news desks, meteorologists, station assignment editors and digital contacts. With the assistance of the content team, the PR Team crafted an updated color report to accompany the footage. Early results included stations in Raleigh and the NC Triad sharing Explore Asheville's images and video.

Fall Media Tour: PR specialist Sarah Lowery completed this year's Fall Media Tour during the first days of October in Birmingham and Atlanta, highlighting the area's fall-color forecast and other Asheville news. Sarah secured television interviews in both markets, as well as meetings

with Southern Living, Food & Wine, HGTV.com/TravelChannel.com, Birmingham Magazine, Atlanta Magazine and more.

Winter Outreach: The PR team crafted a winter news release utilizing cozy winter messaging and destination news. The release was distributed via PR Newswire and picked up 181 times with a potential audience of 45 million. It was also distributed to 759 media friends of Explore Asheville and individually pitched to 36 targeted journalists. The release earned responses from media representing NY Times, Daily Beast, Passport and Travel + Leisure. A representative from TravMedia reached out to the team and offered complimentary distribution through the organization's platform. TravMedia distributed the winter release to an additional 7,053 media contacts.

Holiday Outreach: The PR team crafted a holiday news release, incorporating both partner news and iconic holiday experiences. The release was distributed via PR Newswire and picked up 122 times with a potential audience of 60 million. It was also sent out via Mailchimp to 755 subscribers and media friends of Explore Asheville, with an open rate of 36 percent. TrendKite was used to pinpoint an additional 25 targets. So far, one story has resulted; inclusion in "The 20 Most Festive Places to Spend the Holidays in the U.S." on Insider.com (4.5 million). Partner site Business Insider (17.89 million) also ran the article.

Society of American Travel Writers: Dodie Stephens attended the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) media marketplace event and conference connecting with top travel media across the county. Across the media marketplace and networking events, she had the opportunity to directly pitch more than 24 travel contacts including editors and writers for Outside, Lonely Planet, National Geographic, BBC Travel, Chicago Tribune, Miami Herald, Afar and AAA publications.

Significant Placements:

1. *Elite Daily* | "5 Leaf Peeping Trips to Take with Your SO That'll Give You Heart Eyes"
2. *Food & Wine* | "Asheville's Ambitious Brewers Are Pushing the Boundaries of Beer"
3. *Forbes* | "Breweries of All Shapes, Sizes Make North Carolina a Craft Beer Mecca"
4. *Fortune* | "These Women Are at the Forefront of Asheville's Explosive Fermentation Industry"
5. *Garden & Gun* | "Ten Must-See Spots on the Blue Ridge Parkway"
6. *Insider* | "The 20 most festive places to spend the holidays in the US"
7. *The New York Times* | "Forget the Cookie. I Want a Dog at Check In"
8. *REI Co-op Journal* | "Best Things to Do in Asheville"
9. *Simply Buckhead* | "Small Town, Big Adventures"
10. *Southern Living* | "Why You Should Visit Asheville, North Carolina This Fall"
11. *Travel + Leisure* | "Asheville is One of the Best Craft Beer Cities in the U.S. – Here Are All the Breweries to Visit"

Content Development Projects: The content focus during the month of October was on fall foliage season, as well as preparation for the upcoming holiday season. The team began weekly fall color reports early in the month, capturing fresh photography each week and sharing details of where the color was brightest. Near the end of the month, the team worked with Amplified Media to capture b-roll footage, drone footage and still photography that showcased the fall beauty and illustrated our "Let Your Spirit Run Free" messaging. Footage was shared with regional news stations and edited into a short video for social media, where it has garnered 27,000 views to date. Entrances to ExploreAsheville.com through the fall foliage color reports was up 150 percent over last year.

The team also recently implemented an advanced rights usage agreement which has led to an increase in user-generated content images that better reflect the brand essence of “Let Your Spirit Run Free.”

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of October, seven new pieces of content were added to ExploreAsheville.com: a story rounding up great tours for fall, the press releases for the winter and holiday seasons, and 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 31,280 new pageviews, followed by Top 10 Ways to Experience Fall in Asheville, which received 14,332 pageviews.

Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

Visit Asheville page

- October saw 2,022 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 294,301.
- There were 25 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of October.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was the share of our 2019 Fall Color Video. The post reached 64,943 people organically, generating 2,472 total reactions, and 247 comments.
- The most engaging post this month was the share of our October 17th Fall Color Report. It engaged 7.4 percent of the 51,365 users reached.

Video:

- There were 13,797 new, organic YouTube views in October. The most popular video by organic views this month was the scenic fall time lapse, which received 2,492 non-paid views. The Black Mountain video came in second with 1,204 new views.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 64,437 non-advertising views, with the majority coming from Facebook. There have been 231,145 views of Explore Asheville video content YTD (since July 1, 2019).

Pinterest:

- *Note: Pinterest has changed some of the stats that they display within the platform—a change that appears to be in line with the platform’s shift away from a social media model and more toward a search engine model. Our reporting moving forward will reflect this change.*
- There were 256k organic impressions of pins linking to Explore Asheville content, up 31 percent over the previous month. There were also 14k engagements on these pins, up 39 percent over the previous month.

Instagram:

- Our VisitAsheville account has 66,516 followers.
- There were ten new posts in October. The most popular photo post was a mountain vista with wildflowers. It received 4,301 engagements (likes and comments). The most popular video post was our 2019 Fall Color video update, which was viewed 5,480 times.

Twitter:

- Across all our accounts we have a total of 31,136 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,465 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 125,282 active subscribers.
- Opens/Click-throughs:
 - In October, our monthly Asheville Traveler e-newsletter went out to 125,021 subscribers. It had an overall open rate of 19 percent—a record for our monthly newsletter—and a click-through rate of 3.4 percent.
 - We also sent out four fall color report emails this month. Those went out to an average 16,309 subscribers and saw an average open rate of 37 percent and average click-through rate of 14 percent.

ExploreAsheville.com: Website user sessions in October increased 54.2 percent compared to last year. Organic traffic was up 27.4 percent year-over-year in October. Referral traffic was down 14.9 percent year-over-year, while traffic from eNewsletter clicks was up 19 percent year-over-year in October. Social media traffic, excluding Paid Social, was flat compared with last year. Traffic from advertising campaigns, including Paid Social was up 329.7 percent in October compared to last year. The 2018 Harvest advertising campaign only ran through October 14, while the 2019 campaign ran through the end of October. Sessions to the booking engine increased 19.5 percent year over year in October and booking engine searches increased 18.1 percent. But orders on the booking engine dropped 11.6 percent. Average daily room rate of rooms booked through the booking engine rose by 13.3 percent from \$162.64 in October 2018 to \$184.34 in October 2019, which may have impacted booking conversions.

Website Improvements – SEO, QA & Accessibility: In October, Explore Asheville content and web teams worked with a product called Sitelmpove to assist with search engine optimization, quality assurance and accessibility efforts.

Online Reservations: There were 61 orders for 76 room nights in October with a total of \$14,010.08 in booking revenue and \$333.21 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in October were Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Georgia and Michigan.

October 2019	Current Month	This Month Last Year	Variance Monthly	YTD Actual	YTD Last Year	Variance YTD
Booking Rev	\$14,010	\$18,540	-24%	\$60,915	\$78,388	-22%
Commission	\$333	\$906	-63%	\$1,246	\$3,681	-66%
Orders	61	69	-12%	237	297	-20%
Room Nights	76	114	-33%	359	472	-24%

Visitor Guide: The 202 Visitor Guide is being finalized with edits, listings and photo changes for a final proof delivery on November 19th. Visitor Guide sales for 2020 are pacing nicely and total \$354k to date (more than two thirds of the ads have been sold).

There were 2,530 requests of the *Official Asheville Visitor Guide* in October. Fiscal year-to-date, there have been 11,113 visitor guide requests.

GROUP SALES & SERVICES

Group sales reported 52 definite group bookings in October as compared to 49 last year. Of these group bookings, 27 were for meetings and conventions, nine were group tour and 16 were weddings. The combined total definite room nights were 7,788 room nights, a 15 percent

increase over the prior October. Ninety-seven sales leads (73 for meeting/conventions, 10 for weddings, and 14 for motorcoach) representing 20,417 room nights were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in October. Leads distributed were up four percent while rooms represented were down 25 percent over the prior year.

Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$2,099,809 a 100 percent increase over the prior year. Actualized revenue was \$2,024,068, a 14 percent decrease over the prior year. Person-to-person outreach totaled 1,136, a four percent decrease over last year. Indirect outreach totaled 9,552 contacts, a 69 percent decrease over the prior year.

Sales Calls/Missions:

- Connie Holliday conducted sales calls in the Orlando area prior to the start of the Destination Southeast Trade Show. Six calls were conducted with association and corporate planners. Connie also attended Professional Conference Management Association's luncheon with had 55 people in attendance.
- Shawn Boone made sales calls to 12 DC area association planners. Additionally, he attended the Professional Conference Managers Association – Capital Region's fall networking event with more than 150 attendees. Three immediate RFPs totaling 1800 rooms were received.
- Connie attended South Carolina Society of Association Executives Bowling Tournament (55 players in attendance) and made planned sales calls to five corporate and association groups while in town.

Staff Updates: Ms. Glenn Ramey joined the CVB sales team taking the position of Group Sales & Services Specialist. Ms. Kathryn Dewey, sales manager, returned from leave.

Destination Southeast: The CVB sponsored the opening breakfast at the event, which the full group of 150 people attended (75 were attending planners). The benefit package included a 15-minute speaking opportunity with video, collateral placement at tables, a showcase table with pre-scheduled appointments and a four-page four-color ad and advertorial in Southeast Meetings Guide that were inserts in both Successful Meetings and Meetings & Conventions publications. Connie Holliday represented the CVB, meeting with 22 planners one on one and attended planned networking events. Two leads were resultant from this event, with more expected.

Site Visits/Bookings/Leads: The team hosted/coordinated eight area site visits this month including a general site with a top producer for HelmsBriscoe who influences 100+ meetings per year; 2021 Georgia Technology Authority – 523 rooms, 2022 Southern Criminal Justice Association – 460 rooms, 2020 Growing Outdoors Conference – 225 rooms, 2020 Steel Founders' Society of America meeting – 148 rooms, 2020 Earth Science Information Partners – 578 rooms; 2020 Adams & Reece – 407 rooms, Open date College Music Society, 2020 Steady for Life Tour, 50 rooms.

A sampling of definite groups secured in October include:

- 2019 WNC Chamber Executives – 10 rooms
- 2019 Log & Timer AIM Asheville – 70 rooms
- 2019 & 2020 SYNEX – Partner Trip/Corporation Meeting (5) – 140 rooms
- 2021 Southeastern Women's Studies – 225 rooms
- 2020 A4LE NC Chapter Conference – 220 rooms
- 2019 Goldsboro Bus Company – 15 rooms
- 2020 ACBSP Southeastern Council Fall Conference – 100 rooms

- 2020 Big River Restaurants Conference – 150 rooms
- 2020 Fall Languages Workshop – 200 rooms
- 2019 Center for Craft – 12 rooms
- 2019 Christ Cathedral Church – 20 rooms
- 2020 NC Association of Zoning Officials – 240 rooms
- 2019 Orange Sky Travel – 25 rooms
- 2020 Collette Vacations 208 rooms (four added)
- 2020 Downton Abbey – Sweet Magnolia Tours – 50 rooms
- 2019 McGraw-Hill Higher Education – 56 rooms
- 2020 Spartan Race – 850 rooms
- 2020 NC Association of Community College Trustees – 339 rooms
- 2020 NC Psychiatric – 530 rooms
- 2021 Vacations by Rail (two tours) – 112 rooms
- 2020 NC Association of Nurse Anesthetists – 515 Rooms
- 2020 National Association of Document Examiners – 80 rooms
- 2023 Carolinas Credit Union League – 760 rooms
- 2025 Carolinas Credit Union League – 760 rooms
- 2022 American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists – 845 rooms
- 2020 Leukemia and Lymphoma Society – 282 rooms

A total of eleven wedding guide requests were fulfilled this month as compared to 14 last year.

AAA New Training Video: Daniel Bradley hosted a AAA Explore Asheville destination training video focused on fall and the holiday season. Seventy-two AAA staff attended, up 12 percent from the June 2019 webinar. The new format contained extended live action video clips of three industry partners (DoubleTree by Hilton Asheville-Biltmore, Biltmore, LaZoom) woven in with text and commentary. A shorter video segment focusing on CVB travel guide distribution was included. The video is available on-demand from the AAA web pages. Agent feedback was very positive. Representatives from AAA clubs in Carolina, South, Allied Group, Mid-Atlantic Group and Ohio were represented in the audience.

Group Sales Communications:

- In October it was announced that Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau is a *Smart Meetings* 2019 Platinum Choice Awards winner that honor the hospitality industry's top-ranked hotels, venues and CVBs that display excellence in the meetings industry. Explore Asheville was also selected as a winner in the *ConventionSouth* Readers' Choice Awards
- Reposted an article on Asheville's Economic Success on LinkedIn and had 1087 views

Mass Communications:

- An e-newsletter was sent to 1742 group tour operator clients. Open rate: 16 percent; Clicks: 77
- An email was sent to 680 sport market clients in advance of the TEAMS trade show in Anaheim, CA. Open rate: 32 percent; Clicks: 8

Convention Service Highlights: Staff attended a planning meeting with VisitNC in preparation of hosting the VisitNC 365 Conference in 2020. A hospitality table and VIP gifts were coordinated for the North Carolina Local Government Information Systems Association Fall Conference.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Tourism Product Development Efforts:

TMIP: The BCTDA hosted the Tourism Management Forum on October 23 at A-B Tech Community College's Ferguson Auditorium. The project team presented their findings from the comprehensive assessment of the benefits and impacts of tourism in Asheville and Buncombe County, with a focus on authenticity, local economy, capacity and affordability, infrastructure and capital investment, and connectivity. The Forum included findings from the Community Sentiment Survey and Public Input Workshops that took place in August – elements of Phase 1 of TMIP. Mike Konzen presented the Phase 1 Report with assistance from Denise Miller who shared the results of the surveys. Additionally, a panel discussion concluded the event that was moderated by Ed Manning of Leadership Asheville. The panel included Mike Konzen, Stephanie Brown, Himanshu Karvir and Kevan Frazier. Approximately 200 were in attendance including tourism partners, community stakeholders and local residents. All presentation materials and reports are available on AshevilleCVB.com/TMIP.

The Wortham Center for Performing Arts has recognized the BCTDA's support by naming the outdoor plaza the "Explore Asheville Plaza". A check presentation ceremony took place at a donor recognition event on October 15.

Other TPDF project recognition ceremonies are planned in November with the Asheville Art Museum on November 13 and the Center for Craft on November 16, both of which also include named spaces for Explore Asheville.

Pat continues to work on a plan for visitor information kiosk-type signage at the WNC Farmers Market and a ribbon-cutting event planned in coordination with other happenings at the Farmers Market in the coming months.

Partner Engagement and Events:

Explore Asheville CVB 101 Orientation: The public affairs team hosted a CVB 101 Orientation on October 9, which included five representatives from Pisgah Brewing Company, Nadine Paints, Ignite Fun Party Co., and Black Mountain Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce.

New Partners: There were 10 new partners in October: Aloha Café, Asheville Beauty Academy, Benne on Eagle, Chemist, Contemporaneo Asheville Gallery, Crocodile Wine, From Here and Far Gallery, RendezVous, Sunnyside Trading Co., and Tasty Beverage Co.

Partner Forum - November 20: Planning is underway for a partner meeting featuring "Build the Perfect Listing & ExploreAsheville.com Advertising Opportunities". CVB staff will announce upcoming changes to the website events module and Meredith Sasser with DTN will present tips on improving listings as well as advertising opportunities on ExploreAsheville.com.

Explore Asheville Holiday Party - December 10: Save-the-date for the 7th annual holiday party.

Projects:

African American Heritage Project: The project team is focused on preparing for a series of listening sessions to be conducted by the project team via phone over the next two months. The information learned in these sessions will contribute to preparations for a series of community workshops to be scheduled in January.

Additionally, members of the project team attended the African Americans in Western North Carolina and Appalachian Conference at UNC Asheville and participated in the panel session “Black Lens on Tourism” with Kimberly Hunter as moderator and Dina Bailey as panelist.

Also, Pat coordinated a follow up meeting with the project team, the Asheville Chamber, and the program director of the Civil War Trails to discuss the existing trail markers in Asheville that reference African American history. The Chamber and the BCTDA will co-sponsor the remaining unsponsored signs for a total of \$1,400, with the Chamber contributing one third and the BCTDA covering the balance.

CRM Audit & Visitor Guide: Pat and Joe continue to work on the auditing process for Explore Asheville’s customer relationship management (CRM) database. They are reviewing best practices and support options with SimpleView and have met with the marketing team to assess and prioritize recommendations. The public affairs team is also providing support in reviewing, preparing data, and proofing data for the Visitor Guide listings.

PUBLIC INFORMATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Public Information: Kathi responded to news media requests related to the hotel moratorium, use of the occupancy tax in Buncombe County as compared to changes that Transylvania TDA has undertaken, BCTDA sponsorship of Chow Chow for 2020, and visitation/TPDF support of the River Arts District.

She also wrote and disseminated press releases on the Tourism Management Forum (attended by six media outlets), the October BCTDA board meeting, and 2020 Festival and Cultural Event grant recipients.

TMIP: Kathi supported the project team with respect to the Phase 1 research report, assisting with or developing content for the presentations and speakers for the Tourism Management Forum, and conducting forum follow-up activities, such as writing newsletter articles and providing additional information for media outlets.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Human Resources: Two new staff members were onboarded in October. Kathi Petersen was hired to fill the newly created position of Director of Public Information & Community Engagement. She reports directly to Stephanie and works out of the Public Affairs department. Glenn Ramey was hired as the new Group Sales & Services Specialist, reporting to Dianna. The end of employment process for Ray Vincent-Rossi, who formerly held the Group Sales & Services Specialist position, was executed including the termination of benefits.

Event Grants: Glenn staffed the Events Committee meeting on October 9 where the committee made recommendations totaling \$86,500 for the support of 21 events scheduled for the 2020 calendar year in Buncombe County. On October 30, the BCTDA voted to approve the slate of recommendations offered by the committee.

Document & Email Retention Schedule: On October 25, Glenn and Stephanie met with Jason Woolf of NC Cultural Resources to answer general questions about TDAs across the State. The Statewide Division of Cultural Resources is creating a Document & Retention Schedule specifically for TDAs.

360i Marketing Summit: By invitation, Stephanie joined an exclusive group of high-level marketers for two days of inspiration, education and networking at 360i's Senior Marketer Summit. The agenda included unique and thought-provoking speakers, VIP experiences, and opportunities to connect with and discuss common challenges with peers from iconic national brands. The Summit was held October 16-17 in New York City.