

June 28, 2017

To: BCTDA
From: Stephanie Pace Brown, Executive Director
Subject: Recap of May 2017 Staff Activities

The National Tourism Week Summit debuted on May 19, drawing an audience of more than 200 tourism partners. A same-day venue change added excitement and tourism pride for the amazing collaboration between the Renaissance and Omni Grove Park Inn who deftly executed the complicated event with only two hours' notice.

The event itself provided valuable insights from TripAdvisor and sales guru Steve Randolph. It was a platform to announce the 2016 Economic Impact Study with an emphasis on the widespread benefits of tourism revenue. The "Faces of Tourism" video closed the program and highlighted the breadth of industry sections which benefit from tourism. Three breakout sessions were offered, including an opportunity to talk with elected leaders. Two state representatives, a state senator, three members of Asheville City Council, and one Buncombe County Commissioner attended.

Local partner organizations were invited to host tables during the networking reception. The event generated positive media coverage including the Asheville Citizen-Times, Mountain Xpress, and WCQS.

MONTH AT A GLANCE

- The Google Trekker backpack arrived. The team managed the collection work for 17 points of interest, and captured footage about the filming process to generate social engagement.
- A variety of website improvements have been implemented, with more to come.
- The sales team traveled to Greensboro, Winston-Salem, New York, and New Jersey for sales calls.
- Beth McKinney completed the three-year curriculum at Southeast Tourism Society's Marketing College, earning her Travel Marketing Professional certification.
- The Asheville ad took the top spot in Successful Meetings evaluation of 43 ads.
- Four planners participated in our 48-Hour Meeting Planner Experience and six planners were hosted for site visits.
- Six new partner accounts were created and five partners attended CVB 101.

MAY CVB METRICS: BY THE NUMBERS

- During May, the sales team posted 1,136 personal contacts (up 58%). May sales activities generated 68 sales leads (up 3%) and 38 convention bookings (up 52%), representing 2,937 rooms (up 30%). Eleven months into the fiscal year, year-to-date bookings are down one percent and room nights represented are up eighteen percent.
- CVB leads generated 24 group events in May (down 46%), with revenue of \$398,012 (down 61%). The services team assisted 39 groups (down 11%).
- The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 22,334 visitors (up 4%), and the Pack Square Park Visitor Pavilion welcomed 1,100 visitors (up 47%).
- The PR team landed 101 significant placements in April (down 6%), with 100 media touchpoints (up 25%). The publicity value of print and broadcast placements totaled \$375,091 with reach of over 23 million. Online placements added \$1,084,393 in value and reach of over 1.1 billion.
- ExploreAsheville.com attracted 513,010 visits (up 14%), including 301,866 to the mobile site (up 2%). Our Facebook fan base grew by 3,382 (down 40%) and video views totaled 61,489 (down 54%).
- Online hotel reservations totaled 106 room nights (up 74%) with total room revenue of \$21,142 (up 102%).

HOTEL & AIRPORT RESULTS

- Buncombe County Finance reported lodging sales totaling \$28,443,055 in April, up 1.5 percent. Ten months into the fiscal year, YTD 2016-17 sales are up 13.8 percent.
- Smith Travel Research reported hotel occupancy of 74.2 percent during April (down 5.7%). The average daily room rate was \$144.15 (up 0.1%), and RevPAR (revenue per available room) was \$107.02 (down 5.6%). Room demand decreased 3.8 percent with 159,739 rooms sold. April 2016 was a record-breaking month for large groups in Asheville.
- May hotel performance improved, with Smith Travel Research reporting an occupancy growth of 2.2 percent, ADR up 3.6 percent, RevPAR up 5.9 percent, demand growth of 4.3 percent and total hotel revenue up 8 percent.
 - Asheville's demand growth of 4.3 percent was less than Savannah (4.4%), Charleston (8.6%), Chattanooga (8.8%) and Greenville SC (6.6%).
 - Demand in Gatlinburg dropped 5.2% and other North Carolina cities occupancy rates that are lagging behind comp sets.
- Passengers at the Asheville Regional Airport increased 14.9 percent to total 69,587 in April.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Advertising: After several months of planning and discussion, production began on a series of videos that will be showcased on the Matador Travel Network in a paid content sponsorship that will continue into July. Brooke Ptaszek engaged more than 25 partners during the filming process. The spring campaign is winding down, and Google Analytics indicates the digital portion of the campaign generated more than 230,000 ExploreAsheville.com sessions through

June 12. The agency reports that 143 million impressions have been delivered by the digital campaign by the end of May. TripAdvisor and Facebook are doing well at delivering engagements and leads, while Quantcast and Sojern are providing intention, transactions, and referrals per Sizmek data. In addition, Lonely Planet's dedicated email delivered high "book now" click conversions along with 1,956 ExploreAsheville.com sessions. The agency began preparing insertion orders for the upcoming fiscal year and print ads are being developed.

Paid search efforts: Compared to last May, site user sessions are up 54 percent (68,543 vs. 44,237), in part due to the continuation of a decrease in overall cost per click, as was the case last month. Google click through rate has improved 22 percent year over year (6.23% vs. 5.08%). The campaign that drove the most clicks to the site continued to be the events campaign, which drove 17,288 clicks to the site from Google and 4,948 clicks from Bing. Top content and keywords this month revolved around the solar eclipse.

General Media Relations:

May presented the PR team with a significant number of media inquiries, site visit requests and proactive outreach opportunities, including a strong Explore Asheville media networking effort at travel blogger conference TBEX and the Public Relations Society of America Travel & Tourism (PRSA) conference. Additionally, the team worked with DCI to finalize the contracts for five high-profile digital influencers visiting in June and worked with Mason Jar Media on the initial details of two music media site visits. In total, the team logged 100 touchpoints, initiated 43 targeted pitches/appointments, and hosted nine media on the ground in Asheville. High profile media support included *Food & Wine*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Endless Vacation*, *CNN.com*, *Food Network and Travel + Leisure China/Society of American Travel Writers* connections. Asheville imagery and assistance was also provided to *Wine Enthusiast*, *Sunseeker*, *TrailBlazer*, *Fabulous*, *Nfocus*, *Love Wins Texas* and *Love Wins California* magazines.

Media Missions

As a member of the executive planning committee for the travel and tourism section of the PRSA, Dodie Stephens had the opportunity to facilitate programming and network with close to 30 top-tier media at the annual PRSA conference in May. Media connections at the conference included *Samantha Brown*, *Robb Report*, *Organic Spa*, *Modern Luxury* and *freelancers for LAist*, *Bon Appetit*, *American Way*, *Outside* and *AARP* magazine. Also mixing professional development with media networking, Landis Taylor attended TBEX in Huntsville with 500+ travel bloggers from across the globe. Landis logged 30+ meaningful connections with bloggers through conference networking and follow-up, and gained insight into DMO/blogger relationships through the eyes of influencers.

Significant Pitch Opportunity

TBEX and PRSA speaker and travel personality Samantha Brown's keynote comments on Asheville gave the PR team the perfect opportunity to reach out with a targeted pitch and gift related to the destination's untold music scene story as she enters the site selection process for the second season of her new PBS show "Samantha Brown's Places to Love." Stephanie had also spoken with Samantha at Destination Showcase where Samantha delivered the keynote and Stephanie had a sponsorship speaking opportunity.

Significant Placements:

- *Better Homes & Gardens* – “Happy Eats”
- *Thrillist.com* – “The Best Burgers in Asheville, According to Our National Burger Critic”
- *National Geographic* – “Where to Find the Best BBQ in America”
- *Food & Wine* – “Asheville Chef Will Cook Your Foraged Foods for You—for Free”
- *Ocala Magazine* – “Visit Asheville”
- *Successful Meetings* – “How CVBs and DMOs Hold the Keys to Better Meetings”
- *Cincinnati Magazine* – “18 Great Summer Escapes”
- *Charlotte Observer* – “Things to Do in Asheville”
- *Airbnbmag* – “When You Need to Reinvent Yourself”
- *MSN.com Lifestyle* – “9 U.S. Restaurants With Awe-Inspiring Views”
- *MSN.com Travel* – “29 Places to Travel This Summer”
- *CS Magazine | Modern Luxury* – “Seduced by a Sunset”
- *The Food Channel* – “Our Top 10 Craft Beer Festivals Around the Country”
- *SparkPeople.com* – “12 Incredibly Inspiring Fitness Retreats for Your Bucket List”
- *TravelPulse.com* – “Ideal Mother’s Day Getaways in the South”
- *USA TODAY* – “50 States: 50 Farmers Markets”
- *Lost in the USA* – “Que Faire À Asheville, La Carolina Du Nord Branchée”
- *The Bitter Southerner* – “No Malt, No Beer”
- *Chowhound.com* – “Cocktails and Good Times in Asheville”
- *TripAdvisor.com* – “Affordable Southern Summer Vacations”
- *QuickStudy.com* – “Beer Tourism”

Content Development Projects: The content team has been busy with many projects in May. Cat Kessler and Jason Tarr wrapped up the Faces of Tourism project that debuted at the National Tourism Week Summit. They then turned their sights to other video projects including a fresh edit of the team’s b-roll reels that are shared with media, as well as a shoot for the long-awaited Music Sizzle video. Cat continued to promote the partnership with Steep Canyon Rangers through ticket giveaways on Facebook—to date, SCR campaigns have reached more than 108,000 highly targeted users in seven markets. She also began the onboarding process with Libris, an online photo storage and organization platform that will be the new home for the ACVB’s digital asset library. This month the content team also launched a regular blog featured called “Things to Do in Asheville This Weekend”—titled to capture a particular trend in Google search traffic. Each week Jason curates and posts a list highlighting top events and activities for visitors to enjoy that weekend. Each post is promoted on social media channels. Additionally, Jason performed a full audit of all summer and summer-related content on ExploreAsheville.com in preparation for upcoming seasonal efforts.

Google Trekker

The Asheville CVB welcomed the Google Trekker backpack and launched/managed the collection work for the 17+ POIs selected to be captured as part of Google’s worldwide mapping project. In addition to managing the Trekker logistics, the team captured footage that will extend coverage across Asheville CVB social channels. Sites range from iconic hikes to waterfall walks to secured urban gardens around Asheville. Once complete, the team will leverage the 360 degree views and mapped trailed through content on ExploreAsheville.com.

ExploreAsheville.com Editorial Content:

- During the month of May, five new pieces of editorial content were added to ExploreAsheville.com: a story highlighting some of Asheville's best attributes as lauded in media accolades, a blog post featuring the video from Jason's Instagram Story on Black Mountain, and three weekend event roundups (see above).
- The most popular blog and story content this month was 50 Things to do in Asheville, which received 42,077 new page views, followed by the Biltmore Concert Series post, which received a whopping 36,783 page views.

Social Media Stats:

Facebook:

Visit Asheville page

- May saw 3,382 daily new likes to Facebook for a total of 255,377.
- There were 62 new Facebook posts added to the Visit Asheville page in the month of May.
- The most popular unpaid Facebook post during the month was a Memorial Day tribute featuring the flag atop Chimney Rock. It reached 180,740 users organically and generated 9,129 engagements, including 301 comments and 1,314 shares.
- The most popular paid post this month was also the announcement of the Biltmore Concert Series lineup. It reached 347,415 users in total (235,905 of those organically), generating 11,173 total reactions, 795 comments and 1,967 shares. This was also the most engaging post, engaging nearly 8 percent of users reached.

Foodtopia page

- May saw 53 daily new likes to the Foodtopia page for a total of 24,847 likes.
- There were 11 new Facebook posts added to the Foodtopia page in the month of May.
- The most popular post — a list of the top burgers in Asheville — reached 7,189 people organically, generating 137 reactions, 13 comments and 30 shares.

Video:

- There were 14,637 new organic YouTube views in May. The most popular video by organic views this month was Return Again, which received 2,578 non-paid views. The Scenic Fall Time Lapse video came in second with 2,210 new views.
- The team broadcast three new Facebook Live videos in May, featuring Dynamite Coffee in Black Mountain, 12 Bones Smokehouse in the River Arts District, and the Treetops Adventure Park. Those three videos have received more than 24,000 views to date.
- Across all our video platforms, there were 61,489 views.
- Asheville video content has received 4.8 million views since July 1, 2016 (fiscal YTD).

Pinterest:

- The combined fan total for our two accounts now totals 4,531. Foodtopia accounts for 1,369 of those. Visit Asheville – 3,162.

Instagram:

- The VisitAsheville account has 32,352 followers.
- There were 42 new posts in May. The most popular was a Memorial Day tribute with an image of Chimney Rock. It received 2,118 engagements (likes and comments).
- The team created one Instagram story in May featuring eight tourism partners in the town of Black Mountain. The first slide of story was viewed more than 3,500 times.

Twitter:

- Across all our accounts (no longer including AshevilleDeals and FallColorHunter) we have a total of 28,199 followers. The most popular account continues to be Foodtopia, which has 14,341 followers. We continue to provide a mix of proactive response to travel inquiries and pushes of website and Instagram content.

Asheville Traveler E-newsletter:

- Subscribers: We have 120,546 active subscribers.
- Opens/Click-throughs: In May, we sent out our monthly e-newsletter to 119,250 subscribers. We had a unique open rate of 13 percent and a click-through rate of 4.6 percent.

Email Platform Migration

In May, Cat and Elizabeth worked to migrate the Asheville Traveler E-newsletter from the Publicaster platform to the MailChimp platform. This will result in a lower monthly fee with added email capabilities such as responsive templates and Litmus email testing system to ensure the email template renders properly across browsers and systems. The MailChimp onboarding process included the migration of 120,000 user contacts, the migration of segments by interest group, and the development of a responsive template.

ExploreAsheville.com: In May, website user sessions for ExploreAsheville.com increased 14.1 percent year over year, which includes a 23.4 percent increase in organic user sessions, a 1,468 percent increase in social referral sessions and a 71 percent increase in paid search user sessions. Mobile visits in May increased by 1.9 percent year over year. Due to an increased investment in the spring campaign, web sessions from display advertising increased 123 percent year over year. Page views for the lodging pages increased 51.6 percent year over year in May. Page views for the event calendar pages increased 16.4 percent year over year.

Website Improvements

The team vetted and selected Crowdriff as a vendor that will be used to aggregate and display social posts and Instagram photos from visitors on ExploreAsheville.com. Generally, DMOs using Crowdriff experience a 20 percent increase in click-through to partners along with a four-fold increase in time on site and a 30 percent reduction in bounce rate due to better user engagement. Elizabeth White and Cat Kessler also worked with Hannah Mullenbach, Simpleview SEO analyst, on improvements that led to a 23 percent increase in organic traffic and a 19 percent increase in bounce rate. Simpleview will also work with the team on an effort to optimize goal conversions such as searching the booking engine, visiting a partner website, or booking a room. Not only will a good CRO strategy help a site earn more leads, referrals, etc., but ultimately it will make the ExploreAsheville.com more valuable to its partners increasing awareness and visits to Asheville. Based on recommendations from the content team, Elizabeth also reworked the design of the Trending section which will launch at the end of June.

Online Reservations: There were 60 orders for 106 room nights in May with a total of \$21,142 in booking revenue and \$807 in commission. The top 5 states for room nights booked in May were North Carolina, Florida, Ohio, Maryland, and South Carolina. *Note: there is not a way in aRes to pull *accurate* room nights by State excluding tickets (inflated due to Peak Perks) and cancellations.

May 2017	Current Month	This Month Last Year	Variance Monthly	YTD Actual	YTD Last Year	Variance YTD
Booking Rev	\$21,142	\$10,456	102.2%	\$148,362	\$148,510	-0.1%
Commission	\$807	\$414	94.9%	\$6,426	\$6,673	-3.7%
Orders	119	73	63%	685	619	10.7%
Room Nights	106	61	73.8%	934	1,006	-7.2%

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

Top 5 DMAs for May 2017	# of Guides Requested	FY 2016-2017 Top 5 DMAs	# of Guides Requested
Tampa, St. Pete	139	New York	1072
New York	132	Tampa, St. Pete	939
Atlanta	124	Atlanta	913
Washington, DC	124	Washington, DC	793
Orlando	109	Orlando	777

Travel Guide: The SagaCity team attended the Tourism Summit to talk about in-market distribution and advertising options. Nearly 46,000 copies have been secured for in-room distribution 60 plus properties have confirmed through June 13. John Almauger, the local Sagacity sales representative has closed over 50 percent of the target sales goal with sales continuing into early September. SagaCity hired Asheville local Katie Knorovsky, National Geographic Traveler staff editor and former managing editor at Smoky Mountain Living, as the managing editor for the 2018 Visitor Guide.

Travel Guide Requests

There were 2,578 requests for the Official Asheville Travel Guide in May, an 11 percent decrease from last May. Year to date, there are 23,962 travel guide requests, a 10 percent decrease from last year. The top 5 DMAs requesting guides for the month and year are: Tampa/St. Pete, New York, Atlanta, Washington D.C., and Orlando. Online travel guide requests increased by 4 percent from last May with 286 unique browsers. Page views were down 3 percent with a total of 5,196 page views. The average time spent viewing was 2.46 minutes, a 2 percent decrease from last May. There were 32 clicks on links, an 11 percent decrease from last May.

GROUP SALES & SERVICES UPDATE

Group sales reported 38 definite group bookings in May as compared to 25 the prior year (up 52%). Of these group bookings, 18 were meetings & conventions, six were group tour, and 14 were weddings. The combined total definite room nights were 2,937 room nights (up 30%). Sixty-eight sales leads (49 for meeting/conventions, ten weddings and nine for motorcoach) representing 17,568 room nights were distributed to Buncombe County accommodations in May. Leads were up 3 percent and rooms represented by those leads were down 25.7 percent over the prior year. Last year there were several large, multi-year groups that went definite. One group represented a multiple year booking at 1,445 room nights each year for three years, which largely explains the difference.

Estimated revenue for leads issued was \$636,023 (up 51%). Actualized revenue was \$398,012 (down 61%). This drop can be attributed to several reasons. Last year there were two large soccer tournaments accounting for 1/5 of the revenue. There was a very large corporate group accounting for another 1/5 of revenue, and there were two group tour series with three dates each. This year there was only one large soccer group and no similarly sized large corporate groups or group tour series.

Person-to-person outreach totaled 1,136 contacts (up 58%). Indirect outreach totaled 2,614 contacts (down 72%). Last year there was a mailer that went out to our database of over 8,000 contacts which explains the decrease.

Sales Calls/Missions:

- Molly Nelson traveled to Greensboro/Winston-Salem for sales calls, meeting with 16 planners and receiving three RFPs totaling 750 room nights.
- Carla McGlynn traveled to the northeast (NY, NJ) for sales calls/presentations to five organizations responsible for planning more than 400 combined meetings per year for the incentive, association, pharma, and technical conference sectors.
- Beth McKinney attended Southeast Tourism Society's Marketing College, completing the three-year curriculum, receiving her Travel Marketing Professional certification.
- A total of 36 wedding guides were downloaded this month, as compared to 37 in May 2016.

Explore Asheville: The 48-Hour Meeting Planner Experience: The fourth 48-Hour Experience of the fiscal year was held May 9-11 with four planners attending from New Jersey, New York, South Carolina, and Georgia. Attendees were vetted using a qualifying questionnaire requiring a verifiable history of their ability to place meeting in the southeast. This was the first visit to Asheville for the participants.

Site Visits/Bookings/Leads:

- Six site visits were hosted this month including: 2020 Tennessee Pharmacists – 350 room nights; 2019 Southern Criminal Justice Association – 450 room nights; 2017 National Association of Homebuilders – 92 room nights; 2017 Bristol-Myers Squibb – 215 room nights; 2018 WNC Health Care – 300 room nights; 2017 NC Health Care Facilities – future events. Staff also assisted the ABRSC with a site visit for United Soccer, meeting with the planner.
- Confirmed: 2017 Forum on Energy, Climate and The Grid – 40 room nights; 2017 North Carolina Association of School Business Officials – 175 room nights; 2017 Launch Potato – 80 room nights; 2017 Asheville Brewers Alliance – 315 room nights; 2017 Metallic Building Company – 60 room nights; 2017 American Malting Barley Association – 32 room nights; 2018 Linde Distributor Association – 413 room nights; among others.
- The team sent out 68 leads representing 17,568 room nights.

Group Sales Communications

- Editorial content for the weddings section of EA.com was finalized and includes stories promoting Asheville as a wedding destination, as well as the accommodations booking service provided by the CVB.
- New concepts for the 2018 meeting planner familiarization trips were reviewed.

Media

- ACVB services were featured and Carli Adams was quoted in a Successful Meetings article, “How CVBs and DMOs Hold the Keys to Better Meetings.”
- The CVB provided answers to questions from a writer with ConventionSouth researching information for an upcoming North Carolina Event Planner's Guide.
- An itinerary was developed for a senior editor with Connect Faith visiting Asheville in early June to research faith-based group travel options.

Mass Communications:

- An invitation to the September 48 Hour Meeting Planner Experience was sent to 806 FL, TN, and AL-based clients. Open Rate: 21 percent Click Through Rate: 22 percent
- A Spring e-newsletter was sent to 1809 Group Tour Operator clients. Open rate: 23 percent Click Through Rate: 16 percent

Convention Servicing:

Promotional assistance was provided to generate interest in attending the NCGILSA meeting which will be held in Asheville in October. This meeting is returning to Asheville for the first time after moving destinations several years ago. Four microsites listing hotel rates for upcoming sporting events were created and shared with the event organizers. A new exclusive service was added to the CVB’s list of services: access to an Economic Impact Calculator for meetings and sporting events.

Departmental Activities:

Completing budgets and evaluations were a high priority this month. Group sales staff attended numerous meetings, including the Tourism Summit and ABRSC. Staff continues to meet with industry partners to assist them in marketing their services/facilities.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS**Tourism Product Development Efforts**

Eight applications were received on May 31 for Phase I of the 2017 TPDF grant cycle for a total ask of \$4,522,500. Applications are in review with the TPDF Committee. The committee will meet on June 21 to determine which projects will be invited to participate in Phase II, and applicants will be notified on June 28. The list of projects in Phase I consideration are as follows:

Organization	Project	Tax Status	Amount Requested
Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center	Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center on Pack Square	501C3	\$200,000
Brother Wolf Animal Rescue	Brother Wolf Animal Sanctuary Learning Center	501C3	\$500,000
Buncombe County Recreation Services	Buncombe County Sports Park Facility Expansion	Gov't	\$200,000
Buncombe County Recreation Services	Lake Julian Park	Gov't	\$250,000
Friends of Beaucatcher Overlook Park	White Fawn Overlook Park	501C3	\$1,500,000

Haywood Street Congregation	Haywood Street Fresco	501C3	\$72,500
LEAF Community Arts (LEAF)	LEAF Cultural Arts Center in Downtown Asheville	501C3	\$1,000,000
Organic Growers School (OGS)	Center for Regenerative & Resilient Community: Farming, Foraging & Fun in Western NC	501C3	\$800,000
TOTAL			\$4,522,500

Contracts for four of the five projects awarded funding in the 2016 TPDF cycle are final and complete, including the Wortham Center, the US Cellular Center, the Asheville Community Theater, and Montreat College. Pat is working with the WNC Farmers Market project team to finalize details on their Agreement.

Montreat College completed their project, and plans are underway for a check presentation ceremony this summer. Plans are also underway for a donor recognition ceremony at the Asheville Community Theatre, tentatively scheduled for August 8.

Update on Major Works Projects

The TPDF committee met on May 11 to discuss the Woodfin Greenway & Blueway project, and again on May 25 to tour the project site. Immediately following the site visit on May 25, the committee met final discussions on the project. The TPDF committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of \$2.25 million for the Woodfin Blueway and Greenway. They directed staff to analyze options for structuring the contract which we will be presented to the committee at their June 21 meeting. The committee will present their recommendation to the BCTDA at the June 28 board meeting.

Partner Engagement:

“Asheville Visitor Research Update” Partner Forum – June 22

Stephanie Brown will present the new Asheville visitor stat reports, including Visitor Profile, Economic Impact, and the Assessment of Impacts on Buncombe County. A postcard highlighting key economic impact stats is in development, and will be distributed at the event.

National Tourism Week Summit – May 12

The half-day Summit event was held at The Omni Grove Park Inn. A water main break the night before the event required a last-minute venue change from the Renaissance Asheville Hotel to The Omni Grove Park Inn. The meeting was an incredible success despite the venue change, with 200 tourism industry partners in attendance.

Steven Paganelli of TripAdvisor delivered the keynote presentation, and Stephanie Brown presented newly released economic impact data accompanied by a video featuring local industry partners illustrating the impact of the tourism industry on their businesses and the community.

Attendees had the opportunity to attend marketing and sales educational sessions, and to connect with local elected officials during a meet and greet. The event culminated with a Tourism Industry Resource Expo with key groups who support tourism industry businesses, and a networking happy hour.

The Expo included representatives from Saga City (publisher of the new Official Asheville Visitor Guide), Asheville Area Arts Council, Asheville Downtown Association, AB-Tech's Business and Hospitality Continuing Education Department, and MapMyBusiness with Google.

Projects:

Brit created six new partner accounts in May – Jargon, Photo Strip Asheville, Studio Zahiya, Sovereign Remedies, Land Rover Experience – Biltmore, and Mojo Co-working. 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 also puts special focus on outreach to music venue partners regularly to ensure they are submitting their events to the Live Music Calendar.

Pat and Brit continue to support planning efforts for the development of the 2018 Asheville Visitor Guide, participating in meetings with SagaCity, and preparing preliminary data exports to assist the vendor in determining page layouts and space requirements.

Acting as the Buncombe County liaison to VisitNC, Brit began updating the accommodations and attractions listings for VisitNC's annual travel guide through the VisitNC Extranet.

Partner Outreach:

The public affairs team hosted a CVB 101 Open Door session on May 16, with five partners including Roots and Fruits, Mountain Kitchen Cooking School, Land Rover Experience – Biltmore, and aSHEville Museum. The session included a presentation on the structure of the CVB and provided an orientation on the CVB's programs 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, and meets monthly with City of Asheville's Dana Frankel. She also attended a hard hat tour of the Asheville Art Museum, the City Manager's Development Forum, and a presentation by Dr. Mary Grant, UNC Asheville Chancellor at CCCD's Creative Mornings. Additionally, she attended a staff meeting at Mountain Bizworks to share CVB background information and marketing and group sales services with their staff to inform them as they work with their own clients who may be eligible tourism industry partners.

Pat met with members from the United Way to discuss plans for the hospitality industry supporting the back-to-school backpack this summer.

To recognize the CVB's support of the Asheville Mural Trail, Pat attended the Mural Dedication Ceremony on May 6 and presented at the Chicken Alley mural.

Pat continues to collaborate with Asheville city staff to support the businesses located in the River Arts District during the construction period, which is expected to be the coming three years. The CVB offered to provide support in the way of hosting visitor information on a dedicated page on ExploreAsheville.com. Representing the CVB/TDA, Pat met with city staff, and the presidents of DADA and RADBA to discuss a draft MOU prepared by city staff outlining each party's responsibilities throughout the process, including the CVB, city, RADA, and RADBA.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

Organizational and Administrative Transitioning:

May was a busy month tying down the final aspects of employee benefits and corporate insurance. Working with Matt Bradley with Insurance Service of Asheville (ISA) all employees who elected to do so were signed-up with the various health-related benefits offered by BCTDA: United Health Care (medical), Principal Financial Group (dental), Community Eye Care, Mutual of Omaha (LTD and EAP) and Aflac (STD).

Other meetings were held with Gary Hannah of Hilliard Lyons, the administrator for our 401K plan through John Hancock. We were able to confirm that all staff will transition their current 401K from the Chamber to the BCTDA without any changes to the plan or loss of investment.

In an effort to provide proper personnel oversight and to be correct and inclusive in records management, we contracted with HR Mavens to steer us through the initial set-up of the equivalent to a Human Relations Department. Two meetings were held during the month. A three-phase process was agreed upon with initial focus addressing payroll records and onboarding materials for what is essentially an entirely new staff.

With just one month remaining before we physically relocate to our new offices located at 27 College Place, Suite 200, staff was busy addressing many details and technical issues related to the move. Each Thursday at 12:30, staff met with the County's IT team and Blake Ray of Saturn Networks to discuss our IT transition from a local server at the chamber to a cloud-based server utilizing Office 365 and its One Drive. A plan was determined where we migrate all Outlook components to Office 365 one week and migrate all electronic files from The Chamber's server to Office 365 and its One Drive. Following the latter migration, hardware changes including new installations and moving workstations between staff. This was accomplished in a single meeting where a table of our IT assets was used to match the hardware with the proper staff, resulting in a far more efficient use of our hardware.

Finally, numerous emails and meetings related to the building's physical space and needs, such as appliances, laminates for the lectern, IT cabling, signage, construction timelines and more were addressed.

Wayfinding:

Three replacement panels for three Downtown kiosks were received from Geograph and taken to Dean Grayson with the City's Public Works Department for installation. Dean and his team installed the panels within a week.

Pat and Glenn had a conference call with Rex Herman to discuss digital signage opportunities as part of the Wayfinding System. Overall, the idea does not seem like a good fit, but there could be possibilities in certain strategic settings. There is no plan to implement at this time.

Workforce Development Committee:

Beginning in May, the WDC began meeting quarterly. With the success of the Career Pathway grant applications and the work being handled by MAWDB through these grants, the committee felt structured meetings should move to a quarterly level and when needed, we could have special "called" meetings. This meeting provided the committee with an update on the work being done by Jared Kay and Amplified Media and a discussion related to participating in Job Fairs outside of Buncombe County took place.

A meeting was hosted by Doubletree Hotel to discuss a hotel industry partnership with Manna Food Bank. Guests can opt out of maid service in exchange for the hotel donating \$2 to Manna. Each \$2.00 allows Manna to provide seven (7) meals to a needy person or family.

Festivals and Cultural Events Grant Program:

Glenn met with Matthew Bacoate to discuss the Skyland Golf Tournament. The golf tournament began in 1959 as a tournament for African Americans, but is now open to all interested participants. It is attended by individuals from over 18 states. Along with the tournament is a social event open to the public.

- Processed the first check for the 2017 Montford Neighborhood Association, a 2017 grantee.
- Sent out press release for the 2018 Festivals and Cultural Events grant program.

New Hire:

Began the process for hiring a new Marketing/PR Assistant with job notices placed on AshevilleCVB.com, LinkedIn and Craigslist. An applicant table was created for Marla as a single go-to document with contacts and other pertinent information. First phone interviews were on May 22.

VISITOR SERVICES

The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed 22,334 guests during the month of May 2017.

The volunteers attended performances at NC Stage, Magnetic Theatre, and Flat Rock Playhouse. Odyssey Clayworks invited them to lunch and to try their hand at making pottery!

Marie Ramsey attended Tourism Day at the I-40 Welcome center near Waynesville. She was accompanied by a representative from Gray Line Trolley. They spent the day greeting visitors and getting acquainted with the staff at the Welcome Center.

Future events include NC Stage, Albemarle Inn, Urban Orchard and Navitat.

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