

Explore ASHEVILLE

Convention & Visitors Bureau

July 1, 2020

Dear Explore Asheville Partner:

My name is Chris Cavanaugh and I want to introduce myself as the interim executive director of the Explore Asheville CVB. I know some of you already but there are many more of you whom I look forward to meeting.

In any other year this would be a relatively easy job to take on. Surrounded by a great team, extraordinary partners, and an amazing community, my silent mantra would be, "Keep the seat warm for the next CEO and just don't screw it up, Chris."

This obviously isn't any other year.

I could go on and on about the enormous challenges we face. But you've already been dealing with those challenges for almost four months. You and your teams have inspired me with your perseverance, innovation, and dedication in trying to overcome a series of seemingly never-ending hurdles. I don't know how you do it.

But here's the thing—in spite of all this uncertainty, I'm still surrounded by a great team, extraordinary partners, and an amazing community as I begin this job. I have no idea how long I'll be in this office, but I pledge to do everything I can to help you and Buncombe County get through this. Asheville has been my home for 25 years and will continue to be after the next CEO is selected. Our team will



do everything we can to help you build a stronger destination and community. Asheville is the place where I've built a business, raised my family, and made lifelong friends, but I believe our best days are still ahead of us.

All of you are making great personal sacrifices to save your businesses and organizations and to keep the things we love about this community intact. I'll do my part by donating half of my salary from this job to local organizations dedicated to equity and inclusion and coronavirus recovery. It's a very small thing compared to what all of you are doing.

Finally, I want to give two shout-outs. First, to the essential workers who have fought the good fight and kept this community running for the last four months. You represent the very best of us. There can be no doubt you deserve a statue.

And my kudos to Stephanie Brown, Explore Asheville's departing CEO, for a job well done. Over the last eight years you have been a leader, innovator, builder, and guide. We are lucky that you gave us your time and talents and that you so worked hard to make this a better place. I wish you nothing but the best in your next adventure.

I look forward to working with you in the days to come. This won't be easy, but I pledge to give you all I can.

Stay safe and stay sane.



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