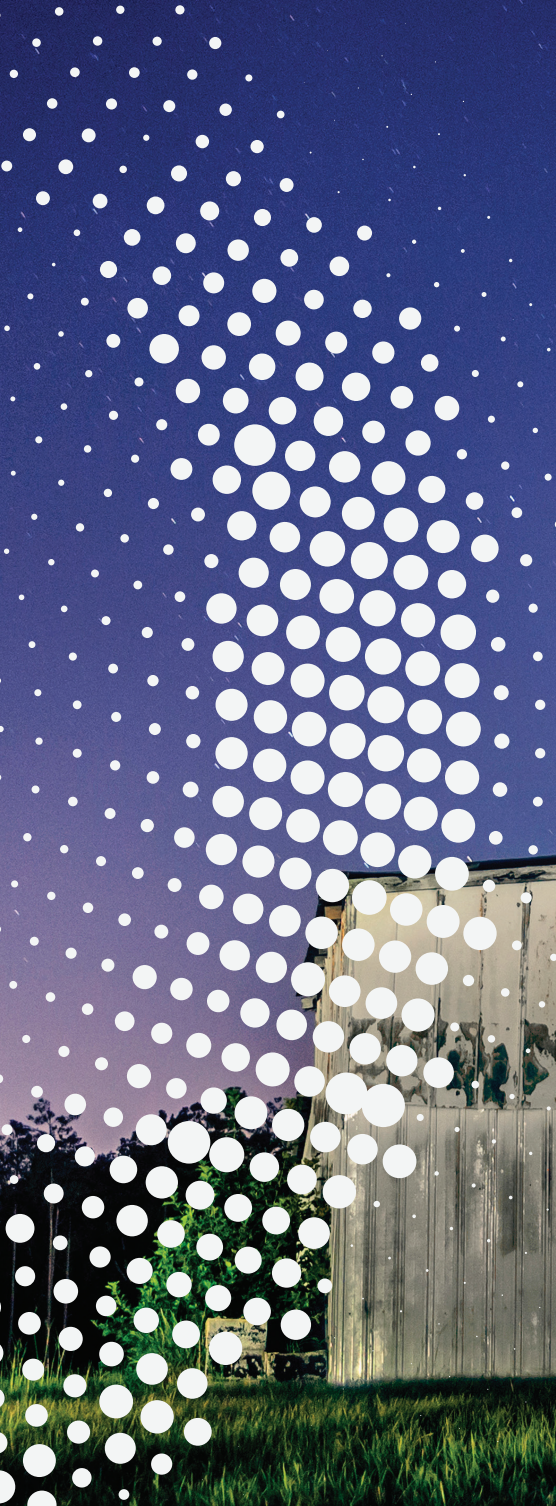




A N N U A L

REPORT

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The Johnston County Visitors Bureau is the official destination marketing organization for the county.

ABOUT US



The Johnston County Visitors Bureau is the official destination marketing organization representing all visitor attractions, hotels, camping, dining, shopping, meetings, festivals and events in JoCo....all these make up the components of the tourism industry that bring visitors to our county. Our funding is primarily provided by the 3% room tax paid by visitors while staying overnight in accommodations, some grants, and the JoCo Hospitality Association which is membership based.

In addition to the county-wide 3% tax, the towns of Benson, Kenly, Selma and Smithfield adopted an additional 2% tax that is 100% dedicated to the marketing and tourism development of their towns. These funds are remitted to the JCVB with separate budget line items and each town appoints a Tourism Marketing Committee to decide how to allocate these marketing dollars.

The JCVB is managed by an 11-member board known as the Johnston County Tourism Authority which was formed in 1987 by enabling legislation that created the 3% room tax. We hope you will see that the JCVB team and board have a strong commitment and dedication for tourism development through our grant programs and believe that the prosperity of the tourism industry is vital to Johnston County.

We invite you to engage with the JCVB staff and call upon the Tourism Authority to build our communities through tourism – visitors bring dollars, support jobs, and drive demand for commercial development.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Johnston County Visitors Bureau is marketing our destinations to visitors, thereby encouraging utilization of accommodations, retail outlets, restaurants, heritage sites, museums, entertainment, and recreation venues for the community's economic benefit.

OUR VISION

The Johnston County Visitors Bureau is the leading authority on travel and tourism in Johnston County and is fully engaged with local and state leaders to successfully promote and develop tourism venues to become the premiere destination on I-95/I-40 in Eastern North Carolina.

CORE VALUES

- We promise to exceed expectations in the delivery of public services for our stakeholders;
- We are professionals, committed to serving with honesty and integrity;
- We are committed to solving problems;
- We are committed to achieving real results that earn the public's trust;
- We are committed to working cooperatively with the visitor industry for the overall good of the county;
- We encourage and value open and honest communication;
- We are committed to continual learning and the pursuit of excellence;
- We are committed to being active partners with all municipalities, county government, and the Chambers of Commerce;
- We are committed to being good stewards of our natural environment and the preservation of the county's cultural, agricultural and Civil War heritage;
- We are committed to development of partnerships and alliances, both in the county and statewide.

2016-17 TOURISM AUTHORITY

Keith Brinson, Chairperson
Nationwide Insurance

Scotty Henley, Vice-Chairperson
The Clayton Center

Lynn Daniels, Secretary
Super 8 of Smithfield

Rosa Andrews, Marketing Chairperson

Ernie Brame, Special Projects
Chairperson
Kenly 95 Petro

Matthew Zapp, Sports Council
Town Manager - Benson

Karen Henthorn
Carolina Premium Outlets

Randy Capps
Johnston Now Magazine

Rick Childrey
Smithfield-Selma Chamber of Commerce

Rick Heilmann
Country Superstars 102.3 WKJO-FM

Chad McLamb, Ex-Officio
Johnston County Finance Director

JCVB TEAM

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” --Henry Ford



COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Eric Dean

Eric is responsible for coordination, design, and production of all collateral materials, to include print, digital, and web components needed for sales, marketing, and communication projects. He creates consistent and effective in-house designs and manages the production process for JCVB promotional tools, including, but not limited to: postcards, brochures, newsletters, annual reports, profile sheets, coupons, monthly calendar of events, advertisements, invitations, billboards, website and e-newsletter designs.



OFFICE MANAGER

Angel Phillips

Angel oversees the office operations to ensure effectiveness and efficiency; responsible for all administrative support services, including general office maintenance, data entry, financial reports and staff support services. She processes accounts payables and receivables and provides monthly analysis. As the Visitor Center Manager she greets visitors, determining the nature of visits, answering routine questions, and directing incoming calls to appropriate staff as well as working with the mail house to fulfill all visitor inquiries.



MARKETING/PR MANAGER

Ashby Brame

Ashby executes the annual strategic marketing plan by contracting with advertising vendors, generating content for ads, writing a weekly BLOG showcasing industry partners and events, managing the social media plan for the bureau, as well as, working with all segments of the Bureau's communications and public relations programs. On the publicity side, Ashby produces and distributes news releases to targeted publications and bloggers to promote what's happening in Johnston County, therefore, encouraging visitors to discover our destinations.



SPORTS & LEISURE SALES

Sarah Campbell

Sarah performs the sales and marketing activities that promote Johnston County tourism industry businesses to meeting planners, sports tournament directors, group tour operators, and the leisure travel market. Through a variety of methods she promotes leisure travel to our destinations with visits to NC Welcome Centers, development of packages, and direct sales missions. She also oversees database management in Simpleview, provides services to groups meeting in the county, and manages the distribution of print materials to more than 125 visitor distribution racks in the county.

Message from CEO

“From completely rebuilding our website and moving into new offices on Venture Drive, this year has been challenging, exciting, and rewarding -- bring it on 2018 we are ready for the next big project.”

The Tourism Industry in Johnston County must truly function as a partnership between the JCVB and area businesses as we work as a team marketing experiences that visitors want. Delivering that marketing message at the right time with the best delivery method is our challenge amidst the media clutter we all experience. How does our destination shine (oh a pun!) in the Triangle market and along our interstate corridors? And maybe more importantly, we should always be asking if we are providing great customer service to our visitors so that they will keep choosing Johnston County over and over again.

There is no doubt that tourism development is coming with more commercial growth along the I-95 and I-40 corridors being announced almost daily and road construction impacting our lives. How do we keep our unique small town charm and agritourism heritage alive is a question we challenge our communities to answer.

Local experiences like picking strawberries on area farms in the Spring, buying food products that consumers trust, and shopping along our historic downtowns are certainly worth protecting. Telling stories about who we are and why we are a great place to visit will remain our focus and key marketing message at JCVB. Shopping local and promotion of locally grown products remains a core value of our marketing plan. We believe in selling who we are and we are unique in many ways. Our agricultural heritage is of great interest to visitors. We may take green fields and scenic barns for granted - but visitors

want to know where their food is grown and touch cotton in the fields. Our world offers an escape from concrete fields and high rise buildings, and there really is something warm and friendly about the people here. Call it Southern Hospitality -- we hear our visitors comment on it all the time! Let's not lose any of these local charms! Ever!

The following 2017 Annual Report is a snapshot for the community to see what's happening at the bureau and our continued resolve for supporting tourism growth in the county...with capital grants, product development of hotel packages, marketing support for events and festivals, publicity efforts, and more!

Great things are happening all around the county -- let's keep these questions and concerns upper most in our minds as we all tackle what 2018 brings.

Tourism and Economic Development go hand and hand...#GrowWithJoCo and #VisitJoCo.



JCVB wins NCTIA Destination Marketing Award for the Beer, Wine, Shine Trail Promotional Video - above is one scene shot at Gregory Vineyards where visitors take a trolley tour of the vineyards.



PRESIDENT/CEO

Donna Bailey-Taylor

Donna is responsible for development of the annual marketing plan, board and committee activities, managing the staff and the budget projections and oversight of all projects.

She works with several community boards including the Howell Woods Advisory Committee, Friends of Bentonville Battlefield, Ava Gardner Museum, and the Clayton Piano Festival. Additional committees in the county include serving on the Towns of Smithfield, Selma, Kenly and Benson Tourism Marketing Committees, as well as, the Johnston County Sports Council and Johnston County Hospitality Association.

VISITOR SPENDING GROWS by 4.9% in 2016

Visit North Carolina announced that domestic visitors to and within Johnston County spent **\$232.49 million in 2016, an increase of 4.9% from 2015.**

Tourism impact highlights for 2016:

The travel and tourism industry directly employs more than 1,830 in Johnston County.*

Total payroll generated by the tourism industry in Johnston County was **\$36.66 million.**

State tax revenue generated in Johnston County totaled **\$13.14 million** through state sales and excise taxes, and taxes on personal and corporate income. About

\$5.83 million in local taxes were generated from sales and property tax revenue from travel-generated and travel-supported businesses.

Visitor spending generated **\$18.97 million** in state and local taxes, which reduces taxes per household in Johnston County by **\$296 dollars.**

*This study is not customized for Johnston County assets like Carolina Premium Outlets' retail sales and outlet shopping employees numbers.





NEW PHOTOS

Local photographers are adding to the collection of appealing images the JCVB team uses on the new website, in advertising, and for social media campaigns.



GEOCACHING

The new Geocaching Heritage Trail was developed with 50 sites in Johnston County and it has already been a big hit bringing visitors to the county.



EXPAND ADS

JCVB advertising efforts have expanded in the meetings and reunion markets -- pitching that Johnston County is a great place to "Meet outside the City".



STATE HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE

State tax receipts as a result of visitor spending rose 5.1 percent to nearly \$1.2 billion in 2016.

Visitors spend more than \$62 million per day in North Carolina. That spending adds more than \$5.1 million per day to state and local tax revenues (about \$3.2 million in state taxes and \$1.9 million in local taxes).

The travel and tourism industry directly employees more than 219,000 North Carolinians.

SALES AND MARKETING Year In Review

Establishing the new Geocaching Trail in 2017 has been a great vehicle to attract visitors to the county.

Over 75 people attended the launch event for the Johnston County Heritage Geotrail (JCHG) on April 29, 2017. The JCHG consists of 50 caches hidden at attractions all over Johnston County. Those that find all 50 caches and record the

codewords in their geocaching passports receive a collectible, keepsake geocoin. Only 250 coins were printed and after that, geocachers will receive JCVB swag items.

Since the opening of the trail 35 people have completed the entire trail with an economic impact of \$9,616.90.



Pictured are Lea and Ed Yahnker from Goldsboro, one of the first couples to complete the trail.

SALES MISSIONS



(left) The Association Executives of North Carolina holds an annual tradeshow in Raleigh where meeting planners can speak with CVBs and destination venues from around the state. Rachel Jones with The Farm attended the show with Sales Manager, Sarah Campbell.

(right) While attending training in Raleigh, the NC Welcome Center staff had a day to spend visiting Johnston County. Sarah toured them around the county to area attractions like the Ava Gardner Museum, Broadslab Distillery, GALOT Motorsports Park and Double Barley Brewery.



BROCHURE DISTRIBUTION

Group Services Distribution

Visitors Guides - 17,130
Sports Bags - 2,080
Gift Bags - 53
Girlfriends Getaway – 74 bags

Visitors Collateral Distribution

Visitors Guides - 35,825
Beer, Wine & Shine Trail - 19,117
Bike Routes - 12,720
Geocaching Trail - 1,450
Run Joco - 4,920
301 Endless Yard Sale - 51,520
Smithfield Walking Tour - 2,426

Other Direct Mail Campaigns

AAA Holiday Mailing - 533 offices
Group Tour Packages - 120
AAA Office Requests - 19 offices, 1,447 pieces

Visitor Inquiries from Ad Placements

Visitors Guides Mailed - 9,485
Top State Requests - NC 2,098
Top City Requests - Raleigh/Durham 812
Top Advertising Sources –
Hearst Travel Group Coop 3,159
N&O Eblast 2,637
Southern Living 1,759
Civil War Times 813

TRAVEL LEISURE SHOWS



(top left) The JCVB attended the Washington DC Travel & Adventure Show January 14-15, 2017 with over 20,587 attendees. We partnered with Visit NC to attend the Philadelphia Travel & Adventure Show March 25-26, 2017 with over 12,934 attendees. (other photos) Additional leisure shows included visits to the NC Welcome Centers, Military Travel Shows, and area business expos to share information with potential visitors to the county.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Our Reach Extends

In October of 2016, the JCVB team embarked on the development of a new website project with Simpleview. This new site is connected to the bureau's CRM to make changes for our tourism partners as seamless as possible.

With months of design concept meetings and branding research on colors, photography, message and site map work, the team launched the new website in June 2017. Today, the site continues to evolve and tourism partners are learning about the forms available to them to enter events and update their listings. Soon, login credentials will be provided to tourism partners to connect with a CRM account. Sarah Campbell will provide one-on-one training for partners and upon request she will make Power-Point presentations to community partners.

Feedback on the new website content is welcome as the JCVB team is passionate about giving visitors to the site the very best experience and access to travel information.

The statistics listed to the right are primarily from the last twelve months with the old site -- new SEO efforts are underway with the new site. Marketing insights are on audience, referrals, devices used, etc., which are important for all tourism related partners seeking to place their efforts in similar key markets.

Top City source of visitors to the site:

Charlotte, NC - 7.63%
Raleigh, NC - 7.43%
Smithfield, NC - 5.95%
Clayton, NC - 5.95%
Atlanta, GA - 3.29%

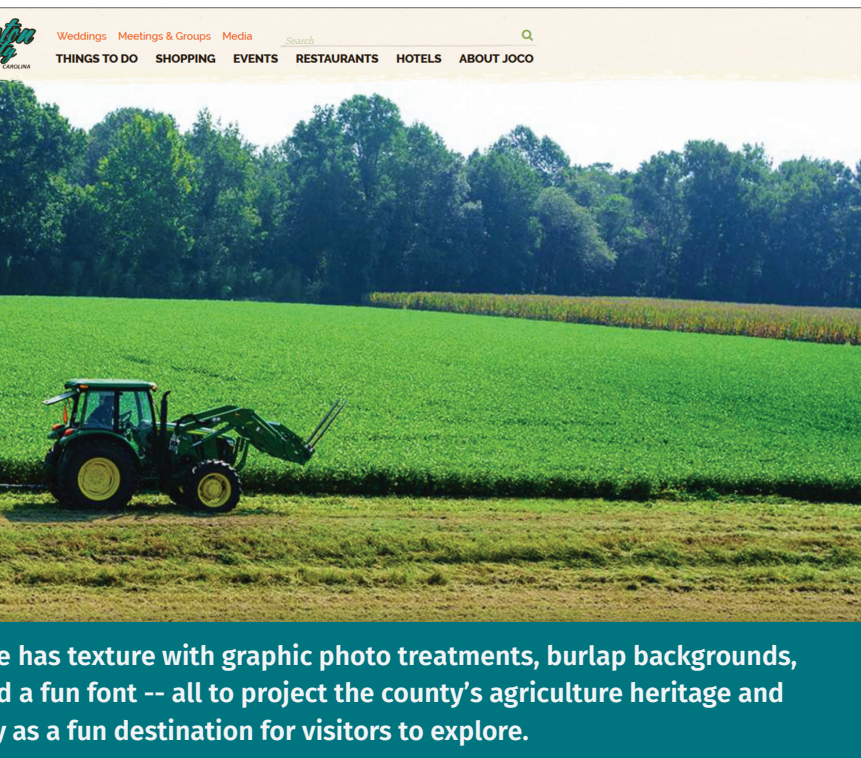


The new JCVB website features rich earthy colors and textures to portray the county's natural beauty.

Demographics by Gender:

Male 31.2%
Female 68.8 %

127,139 page views
1.6 pages per visit
Average duration 1.01 min.



Top sources to the website:

- Google/organic - 23.63%
- Facebook (all) - 24.47%
- Google/CPC - 16.67%
- Direct - 13.73%
- Visitsmithfield/referral - 5.88%

Devices used:

- Mobile - 43,361
- Desktop - 28,196
- Tablet - 8,035

The JCVB staff manages many social and website platforms, in addition to www.johnstoncountync.org, to reach the very niche markets of interest to visitors to the county. Those include the 301 Endless Yard Sale, and Beer, Wine and Shine Trail sites, as well as for the towns: VisitBenson, VisitFourOaks, VisitClayton, VisitKenly, VisitSelma, VisitSmithfield.

REPORT

Our Financial Review

The following is a comprehensive review of the Johnston County Visitors Bureau financials for the year 2016-2017.

NET INCOME

The Johnston County Visitors Bureau is funded by a 3% Room Tax paid by visitors staying in accommodations in the county, which generated **\$843,134.55** in revenues for 2016-17.

Month-by-month 3% collections for FY July 2016 to June 2017 were:

July	\$67,897.52
August	\$72,337.64
September	\$62,401.42
October	\$90,275.69
November	\$77,267.90
December	\$66,655.84
January	\$57,018.42
February	\$55,298.34
March	\$70,988.70
April	\$76,919.63
May	\$73,594.64
June	\$72,478.81

This year's revenues were greatly impacted by Hurricane Matthew in October 2016 and the high demand for rooms by displaced travelers seeking shelter.

In addition, the 301 Endless Yard Sale cooperative program and JoCo Hospitality Association equaled **\$5,812.71** in reimbursements and misc. income. Additional investment income is noted from interest bearing accounts, equaling **\$595.49**.

The Towns of Smithfield, Selma, Kenly and Benson also have a 2% Room Tax which is dedicated to each town's individual marketing campaigns. The following collections were made in each town and remitted to the Tourism Authority:

Smithfield	\$ 248,883.48
Selma	\$ 117,776.03
Kenly	\$ 28,912.87
Benson	\$ 12,610.01

Revenues not expended on behalf of each town are held in Fund Balance Reserves for future marketing or tourism-related projects approved by each town.

SNAPSHOT OF EXPENSES

Two items under expenses greater than FY 15-16 to point out include the increase in marketing/tradeshows and office/departmental supplies. In 2017, the JCVB team attended several new shows and media missions with the VisitNC marketing team. As well as, in preparation of moving into new offices on Venture Drive, office furniture and chairs are coded to office/departmental supplies. All other expenses fall within normal thresholds.

	2017	2016	2015	2014
INCOME SOURCES				
JOHNSTON COUNTY 3%	839,102.05	753,544.57	705,451.29	632,809.22
TOWN OF BENSON	12,231.83	9,524.57	9,480.79	7,117.97
TOWN OF KENLY	27,089.11	24,339.47	26,097.72	24,357.58
TOWN OF SELMA	114,242.75	102,117.52	94,754.07	86,773.35
TOWN OF SMITHFIELD	243,851.30	212,154.25	218,176.49	168,398.87
MISC. REV.	3,071.42	-0-	5,888.40	9,000.00
REIMBURSEMENTS	2,741.29	8,939.98	2,372.25	5,881.42
INVESTMENT INCOME	595.49	659.43	566.88	656.17
TOTAL REVENUES	1,242,926.24	1,111,279.79	1,062,787.89	934,994.58
HUMAN RESOURCES				
SALARIES & WAGES	272,122.68	255,556.20	228,808.10	227,131.27
LONGEVITY PAY	1,350.00	1,200	1,500.00	1,500.00
TRAVEL - PER DIEM	5,100.00	5,100	5,100.00	5,100.00
FRINGE BENEFITS	85,279.57	76,604.10	67,353.08	70,055.06
TOTAL HR	363,852.25	338,460.30	302,761.18	303,786.33
OPERATING EXPENSES				
CONTRACT/PROF FEES	4,936.42	13,281.25	5,100	5,025
TELEPHONE	4,366.43	4,313.37	4,777.83	4,822.23
POSTAGE	8,294.05	5,222.21	10,152.23	12,853.13
PRINTING	29,834.67	21,033.03	43,285.76	44,475.88
UTILITIES	2,623.64	2,908.37	3,671.50	3,296.39
TRAVEL & TRADESHOW	35,275.55	21,728.40	17,260.50	16,729.44
EQUIP/BUILDING LEASE	38,634.84	36,990.91	35,317.67	34,752.04
JOCO/COOP ADVERTISING	247,848.10	156,836.78	146,212.84	133,608.58
OFFICE/DEPART SUPPLIES	20,351.19	4,461.28	2,695.55	3,256.13
SOFTWARE PURCHASES	7,300.00	6,719.99	4,129.00	-0-
BENSON MARKETING	5,483.79	5,818.92	5,836.47	5,567.89
KENLY MARKETING	14,513.35	18,331.81	19,245.93	21,204.67
SELMA MARKETING	64,328.96	54,695.21	58,195.02	53,016.09
SMITHFIELD MARKETING	133,780.41	133,476.19	162,729.22	148,676.60
DUES & SUBSCRIPTIONS	18,774.00	18,478.00	16,999.00	15,365.50
INSURANCE	176.00	400.00	400.00	400.00
5% JOHNSTON FEE	41,955.16	37,581.99	35,051.73	28,301.65
MISC. EXPENSES	5,556.90	4,439.86	6,774.51	6,052.24
RESEARCH	-0-	-0-	25,000.00	25,000.00
GRANTS	28,587.61	52,300	43,951.79	35,750.00
TOTAL OPERATING	697,533.46	599,017.57	760,026.71	631,208.45
TOTAL HR+OPERATING	1,076,473.32	937,477.87	956,220.69	910,506.61
NET +/-	+166,452.92	+173,801.92	+106,567.20	+24,487.97

HOW WE WORK

Social Media Content

PR SUCCESSES

July 2016 – Carolina Razorback Outfitters on Travel Channel's Bizarre Foods

December 2016 – Parade Magazine Selected Johnston County Hams as the Christmas gift to give from NC in the collection "50 Gifts from 50 States"

April 2017 – USA Today ranks Bentonville in a top ten list of most hike-able battlefields in the US

May 2017 – The Toronto Sun prints and syndicates a recipe and blurb about Revival 1869

Keeping up with social media marketing is one of today's top challenges for all businesses -- large and small. Here's a sample of the channels the JCVB team uses to reach audiences active on a variety of social platforms.

Facebook:

VisitJohnston - 14,422 likes
301 Endless Yard Sale - 16,411 likes
Beer, Wine, Shine Trail - 11,418 likes

Instagram: 1,046 followers

Pinterest: 962 followers

Twitter: @jocotourism - 2,511 followers

Youtube Channel: Hosting 42 videos

Johnston County BLOG: The top story in 2017 was the 301 Endless Yard Sale 5th Year - 9,271 clicks



JCVB Wins Two Destination Marketing Achievement Awards

Best Website and Online Communication

Platinum Award - Johnston County Beer, Wine, Shine Trail Video

The Beer, Wine, and Shine Trail is a self-guided, craft beverage tour of Johnston County with five stops: two wineries, two breweries, and one distillery. The Visitors Bureau partnered with an entrepreneurial videographer to create the first quality video about the trail that the bureau could use for online and social sharing.

The full video is 5 minutes long and then has also been divided into 5 smaller 1-minute videos to cover each of the five stops along the trail. The purpose of the video is to share the story of each craft beverage location while raising general awareness of the trail as a destination activity. The video combines first-person interviews of owners and beverage makers while weaving in shots of the locations along the trail.

Before boosting or promoting any posts the video garnered over 6,000+ views on Facebook. The full video, and the 1-minute segments, continue to be used on social media posts to promote the Beer, Wine, and Shine Trail. This project also provided us B-roll footage for use in WRAL campaigns to promote the Sip and Stay Package. Activity on the website for the trail remains strong with more than 4,525 page views, and 1,222 downloads of the trail brochure.



Ashby Brame and Donna Bailey-Taylor attend the NCTIA Awards Dinner in Charlotte.

Best Public Relations

Gold Award - Public Relations campaign, Ava Receives Historic London Blue Plaque

Ava Gardner was honored posthumously with a London Blue Plaque at her last home in Ennismore Garden as part of the 150th anniversary of the historical blue plaque program. The Visitors Bureau staff worked to create press releases, invitations to private and public events, and with the VisitNC team who hosted a film-related event in the UK during this week of activities. The Bureau managed posts on the Ava Gardner Facebook page (160,000+ fans) and designed an exhibit centered around Ava's life in London.

The blue plaque unveiling and Ava Gardner Museum received media attention from multiple outlets including many in the United Kingdom and London: *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *Sky News*, *Daily Mail*, and *BBC News*. In addition, in her home state, both the Ava plaque ceremony and museum were featured in the *News & Observer*. The resulting attention from the press campaign and work by the VisitNC's London office generated \$100,000+ in ad value.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

JCVB Grants Program

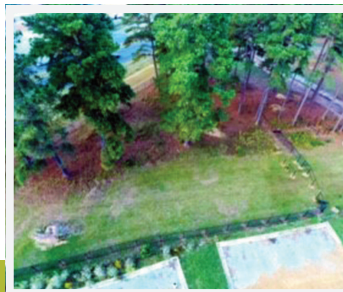


Ava Gardner Museum

\$10,000 - Funds will be used for repair of the exterior wall of the museum building to correct moisture issues with a new wall and roof.

Archer Lodge Community Center

\$1,500 - The project will consist of renovations at the community center to provide a concession stand to serve sporting events.



Benson Dog Park

\$18,750 - Grant will be used to construct the Dog Park at Exit 79 to attract vehicles to exit and utilize the visitor-related businesses at the Benson exit.

Max G. Creech Museum

\$2,500 - Grant funds will be used to make minor repairs to the museum structure, HVAC and display counters.



Johnston Community College Paul A. Johnston Auditorium

\$33,500 - As part of the overall renovation to the auditorium, grant funds will be used to purchase a new fire curtain for the stage.

\$81,615 AWARDED TO TOURISM PROJECTS

On August 3, 2016, eight Tourism Capital Grant applications were approved by the Johnston County Tourism Authority for a total of \$81,615 in funding. The Special Projects Committee reviewed all applications, and made a recommendation to the full board that each project receive a percentage of funds requested based on the grant application guidelines, eligibility, grant scores, and the projected time-line for completion of the project.

Over the past 25 years, the Tourism Authority has awarded more than \$1.2 million in tourism funds to enhance the county's historic, recreational, and cultural assets, therefore, building up the tourism infrastructure. After all, our tourism product is what attracts visitors to explore and choose our destinations and makes Johnston County unique and stand out among the other destinations along I-95 and 40.



**Tobacco Farm
Life Museum**

\$5,365 - Grants funds will be used to make the museum more accessible to group tours and visitors driving RVs to extend the driveway with an additional HWY 301 exit from the parking lot.



**Town of Selma
Parks & Recreation**

\$5,000 - Funds will be used to construct a new regulation tennis court and fencing at Harrison Campus for residents and parks and recreation events.



**Town of Selma
Civic Center**

\$5,000 - Funds will be used for the renovations of this historic building to provide meeting space and an event venue for the Town of Selma.



Corporate Office:

Johnston County Visitors Bureau

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Email: info@johnstoncountync.org

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