



2016-2017 ANNUAL REPORT

visit
knoxville
TENNESSEE

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

It's been a remarkable year for Visit Knoxville and the incredible partners that assist us in our ongoing efforts to contribute to the success of Knoxville and Knox County. We started the year with a set of organization goals:

- Launch new branding for Knoxville: Knoxville Will Surprise You
- Create points-of-entry welcome/directional billboards
- Enhance guest (and local) experience with Visitors Center renovation
- Enhance convention hosting capabilities at the KCC with improved/increased WiFi service (NOTE: To date, over **11,000** users have connected to the network and been presented with the VK splash page)
- Oversee and fund the installment of an art/lighting scripture for Neyland Greenway (on hold)
- Increase the quantity and quality of recruited sporting events with sports flooring
- Secure **\$2.5 million** in total film production in Knoxville/Knox County

I am proud to report that, with one exception, we have met these goals thanks to the committed work of this team as well as the hotels, attractions, venues and vendors that support us on a daily basis. Quarterly reports from 2016-17 detail the activities that have produced a substantial amount of economic impact generated by conventions, sporting events and leisure travel. In this Annual Report, we celebrate the highlights, which include:

- Generating more than **\$177 million** in economic impact in booked business
- Exceeding our booking goal by **18%** and servicing **272** conventions, sporting events, festivals & meetings
- Increasing website visitation by **25%**

In summary, it's been a busy year, but it's been a great year and we look forward to an even better one next year. As always, feel free to contact me for details on any of the information on the following pages. You can also find our quarterly reports at VisitKnoxville.com under Media/Public Notices & Reports.

Thank you for all you do for Visit Knoxville.

Kim Bumpas

Kim Bumpas

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CONVENTION SALES & SPORTS COMMISSION

The Visit Knoxville Sales Team once again exceeded several goals in a very exciting, successful year. Detailed information is listed below. These numbers include the activities of the Convention Sales team and the Visit Knoxville Sports Commission. Please see page seven for additional 2016-17 highlights.

BOOKED EVENTS

132
(exceeded goal of 112)

Of the **132** events, **68%** were new business. **30** booked at the Knoxville Convention Center. NOTE: The VK Sports Commission had one cancellation in FY16-17.

PRODUCED OVER \$177 MILLION OF FUTURE ECONOMIC IMPACT

TOTAL LEADS

362
(exceeded goal of 285)

More than **47% (171)** went to the Knoxville Convention Center.

HOSTED SITE VISITS

42

Among them, USA Cycling, National Society of Sons of the American Revolution, Dock Dogs and Tennessee Professional Firefighters Association. These groups have since booked Knoxville for future years. Visit Knoxville currently has booked **19** of these **42** groups for future years.

HOSTED FAMILIARIZATION (FAM) TOURS

3

The team hosted three FAM tours with a total of **47** meeting planners, event organizers and tour operators representing **29** groups. As a result, Classic Thunderbird Club International, Tennessee Grocers & Convenience Store Association and Zeta Phi Beta have chosen Knoxville for future events. Visit Knoxville currently has **5** pending bookings resulting from FAM activity.

CONDUCTED MORE THAN SALES APPOINTMENTS

45

These appointments were conducted in the target markets of Washington DC, and Chicago. Notable appointments include American Hospital Association, American Osteopathic Association, National Association of Home Builders, and American Fisheries Society.

ATTENDED TRADE SHOWS

32

Over **500** appointments/meetings were conducted by Visit Knoxville Sales Directors and attending partners. Shows included Connect Marketplace, TEAMS Conference, Religious Conference Management Emerge Conference, American Bus Association, and Experient Envision Conference. Visit Knoxville issued **39** sales leads resulting from the shows and has turned **7** groups definite for future years.

EXECUTED EVENT SCOUTING & PRE-PROMOTE TRIPS

8

Event scouting trips included Southeast Theatre Conference, Bassmaster Classic, K2 Volleyball, and AAU Cross Country.

A VK representative also conducted a pre-promote in Birmingham for the Southeast Tourism Society which promoted Knoxville as the host city for the 2017 Spring Symposium.

VK CONCIERGE VISITS

340

The VK staff made a total of 340 visits to our hotel properties to provide information, promotional materials and tokens of appreciation.

NOTES OF APPRECIATION

"We were treated like visiting royalty. We simply have never had a better first encounter and tour going back 30 years in the event planning business."

Ronald Winter,
Planner for HMM-161ASSOC

"Knoxville exceeded everyone's expectations! This hidden jewel of southern charm and hospitality captured the hearts of all the attendees and their family members."

Alice Henderson,
Planner, Flying Physicians Association

"Your attention to detail and devotion to making sure everything was great is to be commended. This will go down in our history as one of the best reunions we have had."

Don Kelby, Executive Director
National 4th Infantry Division Association

CONVENTION & SPORTS SERVICES

The Visit Knoxville Convention Services Team provides services for conventions, trade shows, events and festivals utilizing a consultative approach based on the unique needs, specific goals and attendee interests of each group. Providing planners with a high level of customer service and visitors with an enhanced experience positively influences the opportunities for repeat business and visits. Services include (but aren't limited to) partner referrals, destination information, itinerary suggestions, promotional material production, on-site information tables and off-site special event assistance.

SERVICED >>> CONVENTIONS, SPORTING EVENTS, FESTIVALS & MEETINGS

272

Featured groups include:

- American Water Works Association
- Structural Building Components Association
- Grassroots Outdoor Alliance
- Capitol Christmas Tree
- Ozone Invitational
- Bassmaster Elite Series
- Southeast Tourism Society
- Annual Street Rod Nationals South
- USA Cycling Pro Road Race & Time Trial National Championships
- Destination Imagination Global Finals



"Thank you for opening up your wonderful city to our Global Finals participants. The VK Staff is amazing!"

Looking forward to next year!"

Dr. Chuck Cadle, CEO
Destination Imagination

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Produced a new print and digital Meeting Planner Guide

Created a Promotional Video for Conventions Sales

- The video features computer generated images of downtown and key facilities as well as stats on downtown hotels, restaurants and more. It's a great companion piece to the Meeting Planner Guide and will be featured on the website and at trade shows throughout the year

Created a new VK tradeshow booth for increased presence and visibility at shows

Purchased over **50,000** square feet of Sport Court that configures to create **10** basketball or **14** volleyball courts (additional configurations are also possible for a variety of sports and events)

- The Sport Court flooring is stored in four (4) 53-foot trailers (aka rolling billboards) that feature Knoxville and Knoxville Convention Center images, VK and Sports Commission logos and URLs
- The flooring was utilized to produce **6** youth tournaments welcoming more than **305** teams to Knoxville



Launched the Visit Knoxville Housing System

Welcomed more than **7,500** youth athletes and their families at Battle in Rocky Top, an annual national youth football tournament

Organized and welcomed two high-profile events and a number of athletes and fans to Knoxville, with Bassmaster Elite Series and USA Cycling Pro Road and Time Trial National Championships

- Overall promotion of Bassmaster Elite in Knoxville helped produce record numbers for the event. Bassmaster.com reported more than **1.1 million visits**, a **38%** increase over total website visits during the previously most-viewed tournament.



"The entire team in Knoxville went above and beyond to insure we had a great time. Our needs before, during and after the event were more than satisfied. Everyone at Visit Knoxville made us feel like friends, and not just clients."

Eric Lopez,
Director of B.A.S.S. Operations

NOTABLE EVENTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BIG CITY LITTLE ATTITUDE

Plan your next medical meeting in the city that treats everyone like a local. Discover world-class amenities mixed with sophisticated Southern Hospitality, a perfect combination.

Knoxville will surprise you.

visit **knoxville** TENNESSEE



Launched Knoxville Will Surprise You

The branding is being utilized in all forms of media in both the leisure and convention sales markets, including two broadcast commercials. A variation of the branding, Knoxville Will Floor You, was created and implemented for the Visit Knoxville Sports Commission.



Launched Visit Knoxville APP

The app, developed to provide unique information on Knoxville, includes suggestions for how to spend A Day in Knoxville as well as what you'll find ONLY in Knoxville.



Implemented FREE Wi-Fi at Knoxville Convention Center

The highly anticipated installation took place via an agreement with ShowNets. Free Wi-Fi is an attractive benefit for event and meeting planners and improves the overall guest experience.



Redesigned the Visitors Center

The newly designed, more open space provides a welcoming feel of openness and functionality, and also allows for better showcasing of merchandise and brochures. The response from visitors and locals has been overwhelmingly positive.



Hosted USA Cycling

Served as the Local Organizing Committee for the 2017 Pro Road & Time Trial National Championships to create an outstanding experience for cyclists, sponsors and the Knoxville Community.

"The city is made for bike racing, with the river and the hills. Visit Knoxville hit the ball out of the park."

Derek Bouchard-Hall,
President & CEO, USA Cycling



Partnered with Greetings Tour Mural

Located at 1143 N Broadway near K Brew, the Knoxville postcard is the second largest in the Greetings Tour series, the first of its kind in Tennessee, and a hot new photo spot.



Partnered with the Knoxville Chamber on Signage at McGhee Tyson Airport

The signage promotes both visitation and relocation to Knoxville.



Created Eye-Catching Knoxville Billboards

In addition to creating billboards for the Ale Trail and Downtown Dining, VK created landing pages for additional information on visitknoxville.com

Added Photo Banners to the Dwight Kessel Garage

VK partnered with RiverHill Gateway Neighborhood Association and TDTD to install the Cradle of Country Music and Chisholm Tavern photo banners



Announced Olli

Formed partnership with Local Motors to offer paid tours for conventions and visitors on this self-driving passenger shuttle that will launch in late FY17-18.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

The Visit Knoxville Marketing and Communications Team continues to implement an aggressive marketing strategy to promote Knoxville and Knox County to potential visitors and meeting/event planners. The team also looks for new approaches to reach these audiences.

Advertising and marketing materials designed for Visit Knoxville direct people to the Visit Knoxville website. Digital advertising links directly to it. The success of this year's creative and is reflected in part by the numbers below.

TOTAL NUMBER OF WEBSITE VISITS: 805,218 (up 25 %)

UNIQUE VISITS: **598,371**
(UP 25%)

PAGE VIEWS: **2,076,573**
(UP 18.5%)

AVERAGE VIEWS PER DAY: **5,000-6,000**

Organic traffic experienced a **27.9%** increase over last year. The top organic landing pages with increases over last year include Events (**up 128%**), and Plan a Trip (**up 169%**). Views of Stakeholder Listings are up **153.5%**.

Traffic for the Dining section of the site is up by **84.8%** over last year. The top performing page is Dog Friendly Patios, followed by Nightlife and Breweries.

Mobile visitors have increased by **62%** (**453,924 in FY16-17 compared to 280,150 in FY15-16**).

ONLINE VISITORS GUIDE REQUESTS:

1,426
(UP 82.8%)

Of the **1,420** clicks to Request a Visitors Guide, **982** were from organic visitors - an increase of **186.3%** over last year.

ENEWSLETTER SIGNUPS:

1,404
(UP 104.4%)

A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Partnered with the Knoxville Chamber to design and print **225,000** copies of the Official Knoxville 2017 Knoxville Visitors & Relocation Guide (digital version also available)

Programmed and promoted Bike Boat Brew & Bark for a second year in conjunction with the Knoxville Powerboat Classic that airs on Fox Sports South.



Partnered with the University of Tennessee Office of Admissions to produce the UT Visitors Guide

Collaborated with the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD) on the following projects:

- Match My Trip – The promotion featured The Tennessean, Navitat and J.C. Holdway and reached **4,097,542** viewers via Facebook ads
- Digital promotion (Instagram and online content) of Knoxville's Outdoor and Music Scenes created in partnership with TravelMindset utilized two social media influencers with a total Instagram following of **82,500**

Promoted Knoxville to an international audience through relationships with Tennessee Department of Tourism, Lofthouse, Lonely Planet and a variety of internationally recognized influencers

Hosted a professional trail rider from Pinkbike, a top notch mountain bike site, for filming of a series entitled East Bound and Down

Achieved Knoxville stories and mentions in a number of respected publications including, but not limited to, T+L, Lonely Planet, Architectural Digest, Draft Magazine, Good Grit, Redbook and Bassmaster Magazine

Partnered with Pivot Cycles to create a partnership highlighting Knoxville as a world class destination for mountain bikers (for leisure and winter training)

Created a series of How to Knox videos for online promotion (visit our YouTube channel to view)

Partnered with SMG and the City of Knoxville to create a new logo for Chilhowee Park & Exhibition Center



Expanded our partnership with the University of Tennessee Athletic Department to add VK logo to clear stadium bags and feature Visit Knoxville on the Game Day app

Partnered with CBID and Union Ave Books to create and promote a Where's Waldo Scavenger Hunt



Incorporated event-specific hashtags to feed Instagram posts to large video screens at high-profile events including Bassmaster, Big Ears, Destination Imagination and USA Cycling

Partnered with CBID to create and promote Elf on the Shelf as part of Christmas in the City, the first community event of its kind

NOTE: In this year's "America's Favorite Places" survey, Travel + Leisure readers voted Knoxville ninth on the list of "Favorite Cities for Christmas Lights".

Assumed ownership of the KnoxvilleFirstFriday URL and, with the support of CBID, developed a website promoting this long-running Knoxville experience



Partnered (for a second year) with Knoxville Mercury on Knoxville's Top Knox Awards to help promote "local favorites" to visitors

Assisted Knoxville Brew Tours on a state-wide promotional tour

Brought Asheville's ABC affiliate, WLOS, back to Knoxville for a second year to produce a series of news stories on Knoxville (segments include Zoo Knoxville, Phoenix Pharmacy, Maple Hall and other local partners)

Collaborated with local photographer Bruce McCamish on the Knoxville Photography Project to add **1,025** to VK's photo library



VISITOR SERVICES

The Visitor Services team focuses on creating the best experience possible for our visitors. As the “face of Knoxville”, these individuals welcome, advise and help travelers find not only information, but souvenirs and gifts to mark their time in Knoxville. The team also plays a key role in our local community, providing information and services that help create opportunities to learn more about what’s offered throughout the city and county.

The numbers below were amassed despite a two month period during which the Visitors Center was closed for renovation. During this time, Visitor Services operated in a small, temporary space.

DISTRIBUTED VISITORS GUIDES: **193,367**

Visitors Guide requests are received from around the world. Within the U.S., the most requests came from the following states:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Florida | 6. Texas |
| 2. Tennessee | 7. Pennsylvania |
| 3. Ohio | 8. New York |
| 4. Illinois | 9. Georgia |
| 5. North Carolina | 10. Virginia |

GREETED WALK-IN VISITORS FROM AROUND THE WORLD: **23,472**

In addition, the team facilitated **45** group reservations for WDVX Blue Plate Special, the free live radio broadcast that takes place Monday-Saturday at noon

HANDED OUT BROCHURES: **33,505**

The Visitors Center features brochures and rack cards from more than **80** local and regional partners

RIDE ALONG PROGRAM: **20,000**

The Ride Along Program provides tourism partners the opportunity to include their collateral materials to individuals requesting a mailed copy of the Official Knoxville Visitors & Relocation Guide

TRAINED TOUR AMBASSADORS: **233**

Training took place as part of Visit Knoxville’s Gotta Know Knoxville program

LOGGED VOLUNTEER HOURS: **2,804**

This no-cost, service-added benefit provides valuable support to VK’s clients and the community

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Hosted **28** TN State Welcome Center Associates for a Knoxville FAM Tour

Operating merchandise booths at **6** offsite events/festivals

Conducted **9** Step-On Tours for meeting, tour and community groups



BEFORE



AFTER

VISIT KNOXVILLE FILM OFFICE

The Visit Knoxville Film Office continued to promote Knoxville and Knox County as a premiere filming location for feature films, TV shows, videos and commercials. Riding the success and publicity of last year's production of *Dog Years*, the Office made additional strides in reaching out to the film community.

- Worked with the Tennessee Entertainment Commission and Mar Vista Entertainment to land *The Road Less Traveled*, a \$500,000 feature film that was shot in Knoxville in October 2016. The film is expected to release in June 2017.
- Worked with the Tennessee Entertainment Commission and Mar Vista Entertainment to land *Hush Little Baby*, a \$500,000 feature film that was shot in Knoxville in December 2016. The film aired in June 2017.
- Partnered with the film portion of the 2016 Big Ears Music Festival, holding a reception for out of town filmmakers and partnering with the Tennessee Entertainment Commission to produce a video promoting film in Knoxville (the film played ahead of the film blocks during the festival)
- Attended the Tribeca Film Festival for the World Premiere of *Dog Years*, starring Burt Reynolds, Ariel Winter and Chevy Chase (filming took place in Knoxville in June 2016) The film was picked up by A24, production & distribution company for Oscar Winner *Moonlight*.
 - The Film Office also hosted a reception during the festival.
- Entered into a partnership with Regal Entertainment so that any film shot in Knoxville (and utilizing state and local film incentives) will be screened by Regal's film buyers for possible distribution in their art house theater chain

Visit Knoxville

FILM/KNOX

filmknoxvilletn.com

HUSH LITTLE BABY

BIG CITY LITTLE ATTITUDE

Visit the big town that treats everyone like a local. Discover a sophisticated mix of culture and cuisine served up with genuine Southern hospitality.

Knoxville will surprise you.

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