

The 2024/2025

DISTINCTLY FAYETTEVILLE ANNUAL REPORT



DISTINCTLY
FAYETTEVILLE

www.DistiNctlyFayettevilleNC.com



Cross Creek Linear Park

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DISTINCTLY
FAYETTEVILLE

Message from the President & CEO

As we reflect on the 2025 fiscal year, I am proud to share that this year marked a powerful resurgence for DistiNctly Fayetteville—and for the entire Cumberland County tourism community. We achieved record-breaking performance across our Sales, Marketing, and Visitor Services teams, surpassing all results since before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This momentum not only speaks to the strength of our strategy but, more importantly, to the dedication and talent of our team.

One of our most significant milestones this year was regaining our accreditation from Destinations International through the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP). This rigorous process reaffirms that our organization operates at the highest standards of excellence in professionalism, accountability, and performance. Our reaccreditation underscores our commitment to leading with integrity and making a positive impact.

In addition to driving visitation and economic development, we took meaningful steps to give back to the community we proudly serve. Our team set an internal goal for community service hours—and not only met it, but exceeded it by 38 hours. This is a testament to our shared belief that supporting our neighbors is an integral part of our role as community caretakers.

As we look ahead, we remain inspired by the promise of what is to come. Thank you for your continued support and partnership. Together, we are building a brighter, more vibrant destination—one visit, one story, and one act of service at a time..



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Heath'.

Warm regards,

Devin Heath
President & CEO
DistiNctly Fayetteville

DISTINCTLY
FAYETTEVILLE



Mission, Vision & Values

DistiNtly Fayetteville is Cumberland County's Destination Marketing Organization (DMO.) The organization promotes the area and encourages visitation for leisure travel, meetings, or tournaments. It also devises strategies to enhance visitor experiences and encourage repeat visitation, stimulating the local economy.

Distinctly Fayetteville is accredited through **Destinations International's (DI) Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP)**. This means DistiNtly Fayetteville meets the highest standards and best practices in destination marketing.

Mission

To position Cumberland County as a distinct destination for conventions, tournaments, and individual travel.

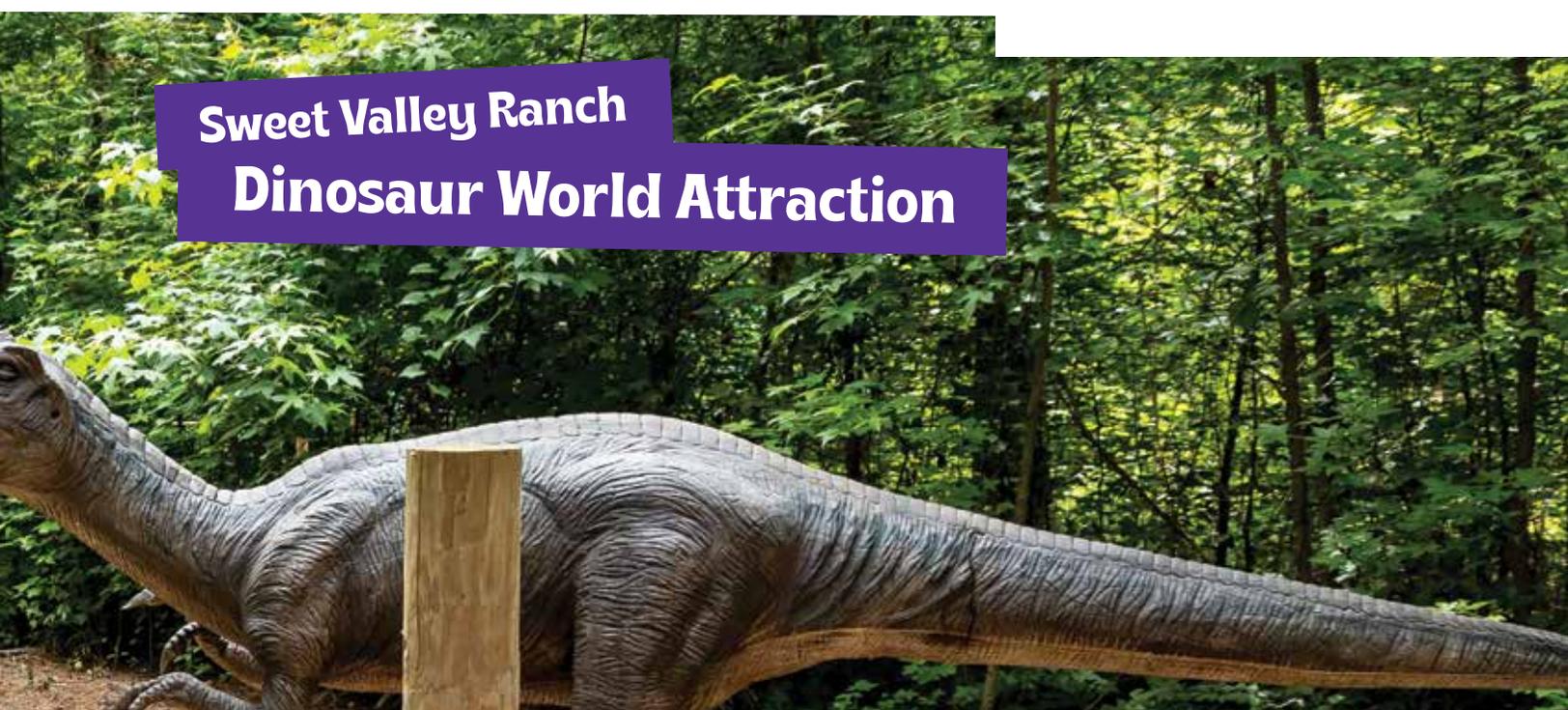
Vision

DistiNtly Fayetteville strives to be the leading destination authority by supporting and marketing the Cumberland County visitor experience and advocating community tourism benefits.

Values

Our organization's Core Values are our guiding principles, providing direction and guiding our decisions and how we work to achieve our Vision:

- * **Transparency**
- * **Visibility**
- * **Respectability**
- * **Partnership**

A large, realistic dinosaur sculpture, possibly a T-Rex, is positioned in a lush, green forest. The dinosaur is dark grey with textured skin and is standing on a wooden post. The background is filled with dense green foliage and trees.

Sweet Valley Ranch Dinosaur World Attraction

Board of Directors

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, DistiNctly Fayetteville was provided guidance and leadership by the DistiNctly Fayetteville Board of Directors and would like to thank the board for their leadership over the past year and all previous years.

The support and leadership they have provided over the years have been invaluable. As of July 1, 2025, oversight and governance of DistiNctly Fayetteville will fall under the Cumberland County Tourism Development Authority (TDA).

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Sheba McNeil
Board Chair



Lilly Schmidt
Vice Chair
Director of Sales
TownePlace Suites -
Fayetteville Cross Creek



Seth Benalt
Treasurer
General Manager
Crown Complex



Jodi Phelps
Secretary
Chief of Staff
City of Fayetteville

MEMBERS



RaShawn Moore
Founder/Owner
Uptown's Chicken & Waffles



Byron Mitchell
Area General Manager
Hampton Inn & Suites
Fayetteville



Michelle Skinner
General Manager
Fayetteville Woodpeckers



Sally Shutt
Assistant County Manager
Cumberland County

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS



Michelle Williams
Regional Director of Sales
Candlewood Suites,
Fairfiled Inn & Suites,
Home2Suites by Hilton



Nate Ernst
Owner
Luigi's Italian Chophouse
and Bar



Renee Lane
Executive Director
Airborne & Special Operations
Museum Foundation



Nat Robertson
CEO & President
Greater Fayetteville
Chamber

Our Team Members



Devin Heath
President & CEO



Diana Potts
Director of Administration



**Kimberly Griffith
Dixon**
Director of Finance



Melody Foote
Director of Marketing



Robert Cox
Director of Sales &
Sports Commission



**Jennifer
Radonich**
Partner & PR
Manager



**Isaiah
Griffin**
Convention Sales
Manager



**Miroslava
Cabrera-Ramirez**
Visitor Services
Manager



**Donnie
Byers**
Creative &
Communications
Manager



**Pernel
Edwards**
Sports Sales
Manager



**Kaih
Dodson**
Visitor Information
Counselor



**Keyona
Smith**
Marketing
Coordinator



**Sierra
Robbins**
Sports
Development
Manager



**Cardell
Hunt**
Visitor Information
Counselor



**Robyn
Pitt**
Marketing
Coordinator



**Tracy
Hudson**
Digital
Marketing
Manager



**Kylea
Callahan**
Visitor Information
Counselor



**Brooks
Hoffman**
Storyteller



**Sherail
Monroe**
Visitor Information
Counselor

Why Tourism Matters

You might not notice at first, but tourism is one of the most powerful economic drivers in Cumberland County, NC. It's not just about visitors snapping photos or attending events. It's about the money that flowed directly into our hotels, restaurants, gas stations, museums, and small businesses. That spending supported nearly 4,800 local jobs, which provided millions in salary compensation. Visitor spending also generated millions in local and state revenue. As a result, county services cost less while residents pay less in taxes.

Key Economic Impact Numbers

2024 Visitor Spending in County: \$698 million
Local Jobs Created: Nearly 4,800
Combined Income from Jobs: \$176.49 million
Local and State Revenue Generated: \$47.32 million
Tax Savings per County Resident: \$140.03

Who Are Our Visitors

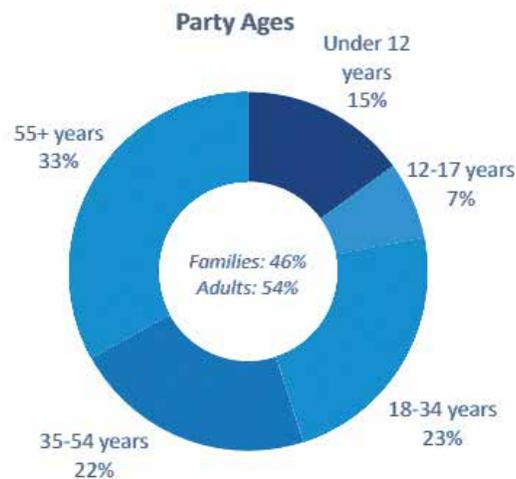
Cumberland County Perception Study – H2R Market Research, October 2024

This study assessed awareness of Fayetteville and Cumberland County as a travel destination. It provided a snapshot of our leisure visitors who drive to the destination.

Nearly one in three visitors indicated visiting friends or family was the primary reason for travel to the area. Those travelers averaged just over 52 years in age and primarily traveled without children.



Average Adult Age: 52.2
Average Child Age: 8.0
Average party size: 2.52



Domestic Travelers

Tourism Economics' platform Symphony provides an overview of the length of stay of our visitors' top origin states and **Designated Market Area (DMA)**. These numbers reflect not only overnight hotel visitors but also those who stay with friends and family and at other types of overnight accommodations.



2.1 days
Avg Length of Stay



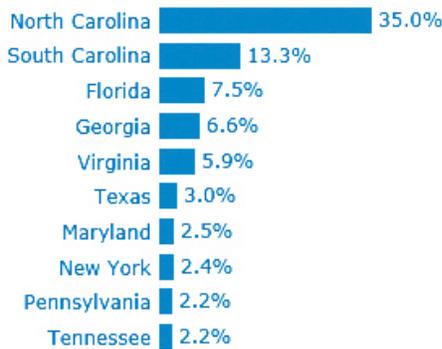
78.0%
Overnight



70.2%
Repeat

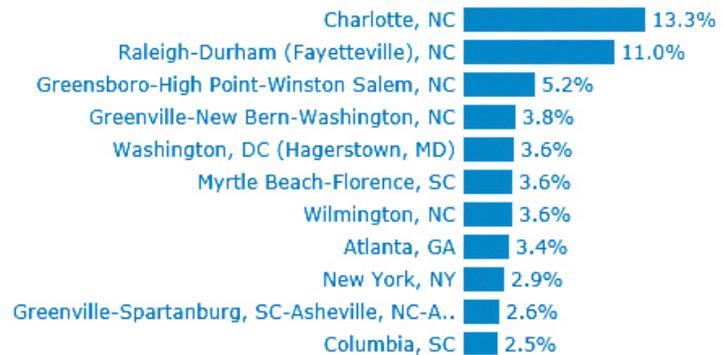
Top Visitor Origin States

% share of total



Top Visitor Origin DMAs

% share of total



Visitor/Traveler Origination



From All Over

Understanding who and where our travelers come from helps us strategically target future visitors, ensuring the local economy continues to grow.

Mobile data analytics show a clear majority of visitors live along the East Coast, but can come from across the U.S., as far away as California and Washington state.



**Nationally Renowned
Zipline Park**

ZipQuest Waterfall & Treetop Adventure was named one of the Top 10 ZipLines in the United States by **Newsweek**.

Newsweek

Awards & Accolades!

Life unfolds with gracious hospitality, unforgettable adventures, and deep-rooted history here in Fayetteville. From soaring through treetops at an award-winning zipline to strolling serene botanical trails, our dynamic city invites visitors and locals to experience something extraordinary. Dive into a multicultural arts scene, honor America's heroes, and taste global flavors—all in a community that continues winning hearts and awards alike. Here's just a snapshot of the kind of praise our All-American City receives on a daily basis.

Lower Cost Of Living For Locals

Fayetteville, a three-time All-American City, ranks 53rd in the Top 100 metro areas with the lowest cost of living. - **Niche**



Black-Owned Business Friendly City

Fayetteville has the 2nd-largest percentage of Black-owned businesses in the country, just behind Atlanta. With 10.1% of its businesses black owned, Fayetteville far outpaced the national average of 3.3% - **Lending Tree**



Super Nice Places To Hang Out

Dirtbag Ales was recognized in 2020 as the Nicest Place in North Carolina for its community support work, especially with the military. - **Reader's Digest**



A Far-Superior Bakery Right In Our Backyard

Superior Bakery was ranked The Best Donut Shop in NC and #11 on a list of Top 100 Places for Croissants in the U.S. - **Yelp**



Our Partners

Our success wouldn't be possible without the help of our partner organizations. We'd like to thank them for their vital input and guidance on everything from marketing strategy and audience targeting to database software and social media marketing. Thank you to all of our partners who helped us reach and exceed many of our goals this fiscal year.



Adams & Knight - a Digital Management company that secured over 1 million impressions of our ads across a range of digital platforms. Our contract with Adams & Knight ended June 30, 2025 as these efforts are brought in-house.



CoStar provided monthly updates on hotel occupancy, average daily rates, and REV/PAR for Cumberland County, a competitive set of destinations, and North Carolina.



H2R Market Research completed several studies for Distinctly Fayetteville. You'll find these results on our website at distinctlyfayettevillenc.com/research/.



Learn Tourism worked closely with our team to set up the Can Do Tourism academy, a free program for hospitality workers to learn about our community.



Lou Hammond Group – a Public Relations agency that specializes in travel and tourism. Their efforts resulted in our annual impressions growing nearly 1000% in FY25.



Simpleview/ Granicus currently hosts our CRM database which helps track all our partner information, leads, booked business and other relevant metrics. They also host our website.



Tourism Economics' "Symphony" platform provides visitor insight, including their length of stay and places visited.





Marketing Our Destination



VisitNC Travel Guide

DistiNctly Fayetteville coordinated an extensive photo shoot at Fayetteville's own **Zipquest Waterfall & Treetop Adventure Park**. **Visit North Carolina** chose the zipline as the featured attraction in the statewide travel and tourism organization's all-important **2025 North Carolina Travel Guide** which is dispersed internationally.



Paid Media



Leisure Campaign

With our 24/25 leisure marketing campaigns, DistiNctly Fayetteville leaned into the Can Do Carolinas community brand and highlighted the wonderful things to see and do in Cumberland County, our distinct destination. Our evergreen leisure ads targeted our key markets, driving visitation to our website for further engagement and accommodation outreach..



Campaign Results

Paid Media Impressions: 109,206,379
(38% increase from previous fiscal year)

DistiNctlyFayettevilleNC.com Visits

Visitors: 744,744 (43% increase from previous fiscal year)

Partner website views: 221,520

Clicks to partner websites: 63,643



Social Media Meetings and Sports Campaigns

Targeted ad placements in print and digital publications expose event planners and rights-holders to our community's hidden assets. We bolstered our efforts by launching a paid social media campaign this spring to expand our reach among targeted audiences further. Our primary goal was to promote Cumberland County as a meeting and sports event destination..

LinkedIn Campaign Results

Campaign Reach: Nearly 1.5 million people

Clicks Generated: 33,000

Click Through Rate (CTR): 2.26%

(3-5 times greater than industry CTR rate of 0.4-0.65%)



Owned Media

Email Marketing

DistiNctly Fayetteville relaunched its email marketing efforts in the 24/25 fiscal year. The program included two separate email campaigns. The first is a monthly leisure campaign for anyone who signs up to receive the monthly emails about things to see and do.



A second campaign, distributed quarterly to industry partners, helped update them on DistiNctly Fayetteville's work and community news. During the fiscal year, DistiNctly Fayetteville added more than 2,000 people to the distribution list. We continually review the list to remove anyone who has not engaged with our newsletter in 6 months. This helped maintain an open rate of approximately 60% throughout the year.

Email Campaign Results

Total Campaigns: 20

Total Emails Delivered: 102,184

Total Emails Opened: 58,062

Open Rate: 57% ---> (23% above industry benchmark)

Industry Open Rate: 34%

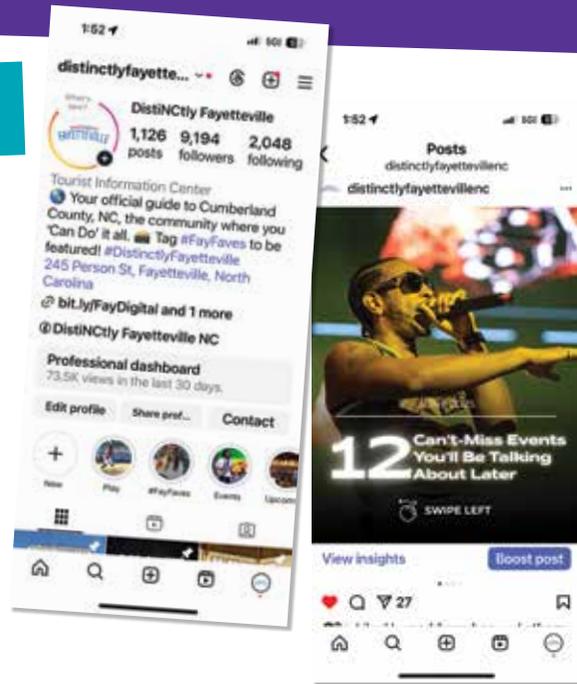
Click Through Rate: 2% ---> (135% above industry benchmark!)

Industry Click Through Rate: 0.85%



Organic Social Media

In the last fiscal year, we saw a tremendous increase in impressions and engagement with our organic social media. While we typically have a mix of visitors and locals on our social channels, a majority of Facebook followers are local. This enables us to ensure that both visitors and locals are informed about community events. With nearly 40% of our overnight visitors staying with friends and family, we must keep our residents (our community ambassadors) in the know about community happenings.



Organic Social Media Results

Generated Impressions: 2,430,812 --> (211% increase over previous fiscal year!)

User Engagement: 137,399 --> (172% increase over previous fiscal year!)

Earned Media

DistiNctly Fayetteville worked with **Lou Hammond Group** to secure publicity for Cumberland County. Lou Hammond Group is a large public relations firm that specializes in working in the travel industry. Thanks to this partnership, Greater Fayetteville has been featured in Women's Day, AARP, Convention South, and other outlets.. Thanks to this new partnership, circulation numbers have **increased nearly 2250%!**

PR Partnership Results

Monthly Circulation Growth
41,502,733 -----> 821,944,683



Selling Our Destination

Sports & Sales Department Major Milestones

Key Sales Figures

Group Leads: 103 // Definite Bookings: 51

Room Nights: 12,347 --> (161% increase over previous fiscal year!)

Group Economic Impact: \$6,530,776



* Development of new Sports Commission – FCSC



* Tradeshows Attended:

- > NC Sports Association
- > Compete Sports Diversity
- > Sports ETA Symposium
- > Sports ETA Women's Summit
- > Washington Travel & Adventure Leisure Show
- > NYC Travel & Adventure Leisure Show
- > T.E.A.M.S.
- > Association Executives of North Carolina
- > EMERGE Religious Conference
- > American Bus Association
- > S.P.O.R.T.S. Relationship Conference
- > Connect Sports/Connect Marketplace
- > Small Market Meetings
- > National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals
- > Religious Conference Management Association
- > Christian Meetings & Conventions Association
- > Military Reunion Network



* Key Bookings:

- > Jehovah's Witness – July/Aug 2025 – 4,800 Room Nights
- > Spartan Race – May 2025 – 5,300 Room Nights

* Hosted for Site Inspections & Fam Tours

- > Senior Softball Association
- > WSL Softball
- > College Exposure
- > NC Flag Football
- > Lyan Lewis Foundation (Flag football, basketball, pickleball)
- > End Zone 7v7
- > Ohio Valley Volleyball Association
- > D1 Nation
- > AWFL (American Women's Football League)
- > United States Tennis Association
- > Conference Direct
- > Arrowhead Conferences & Events
- > HelmsBriscoe

Certifications & Ongoing Training

Professional certifications and certified employees build trust and credibility among clients and partners, ensure employees follow established industry standards and best practices, and help employees and organizations gain a competitive advantage within their industry. Here are some of the certifications and achievements Distinctly Fayetteville and its employees have achieved:



DMAP

DESTINATION MARKETING
ACCREDITATION PROGRAM
DESTINATION MARKETING
ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

DistiNtly Fayetteville has once again earned global recognition through the prestigious **Destination Marketing Accreditation Program** through **Destinations International**. This achievement confirms that the organization meets the highest standards in destination marketing and management. Fewer than 250 organizations worldwide hold this distinction, and DistiNtly Fayetteville has proudly maintained its accreditation since 2012.



CDME

Certified
Destination
Management
Executive

The **Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME)** is the highest honor in destination marketing and management—held by fewer than 500 professionals worldwide. Three leaders at DistiNtly Fayetteville proudly carry this elite credential, showcasing their strategic vision and leadership in today's fast-changing tourism industry.



PDM

Professional
in Destination
Management

Destinations International relaunched the **Professional in Destination Management (PDM)** program in 2021 to provide emerging professionals with essential training in destination organization management through a curriculum developed by industry experts. In FY 2025, five members of our team successfully completed the program, further strengthening our organization's expertise and leadership.




SOUTHEAST
TOURISM SOCIETY

Nearly 1,500 travel professionals in the South have completed the STS Marketing College and earned their **Travel Marketing Professional (TMP)** Certification. Over one week each year for three years, students engage in courses covering marketing techniques across the tourism industry, taught by expert professors with hands-on experience and up-to-date insights.

Three members of the DistiNtly Fayetteville team completed the program and earned their TMP certification in FY 2025.

 **CERTIFIED**
CGMP
GOVERNMENT MEETING PROFESSIONAL

The **Certified Government Meeting Professional (CGMP)** designation is designed for planners and suppliers whose work is governed by federal rules and regulations. Earning the CGMP represents the highest credential available specifically for government meeting professionals. Widely recognized in the hospitality industry, many government contracts now require planners to hold this certification. Our Convention Sales Manager has proudly earned CGMP certification..

In addition to tourism-specific certifications, our team has pursued other professional development and job-specific training, including:

- * **Licensing as a drone operator**
- * **Inbound Marketing and Content Marketing Certification from HubSpot Academy**
- * **Google Analytics Certification**

Visitor Engagement

Welcome Center

We're always happy to meet locals and visitors alike to personally help them in their exploration and research of Fayetteville and the surrounding communities. And if you're still far away, then that's OK too. We provide the public with a variety of online and printed resources to help them get started with their research. Here's what our Downtown Fayetteville Welcome Center staff have provided over the past year!



Visitor Assistance Provided

Welcome Center visitors: 9,211

Destination Guides distributed: 7,421

Passport Guides distributed from (Feb - June 2025): 5,282



Can Do Tourism Academy

The Can Do Tourism Academy is an ambassador program designed to impact the community through the tourism sector positively. It's free, online, and open to all. It includes 37 comprehensive lessons intended primarily to empower front-line workers at hotels, attractions,

restaurants, and retailers with in-depth knowledge of Cumberland County tourism. The goal is to help increase awareness and dialogue about travel and tourism within the local community.



Academy Enrollment & Completion Data

AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

ASTONISHINGLY
FAYETTEVILLE
WELCOME CENTER



Community Support

Volunteer Hours

As a community-focused organization, DistiNctly Fayetteville takes pride in giving back to good causes. There's no better way to do it than volunteering. We set a **goal of 120 person-hours** for last year. We surpassed that goal far and away with **138 hours total**, and we couldn't be more proud of our team members!



Hurricane Helene Disaster Relief Efforts

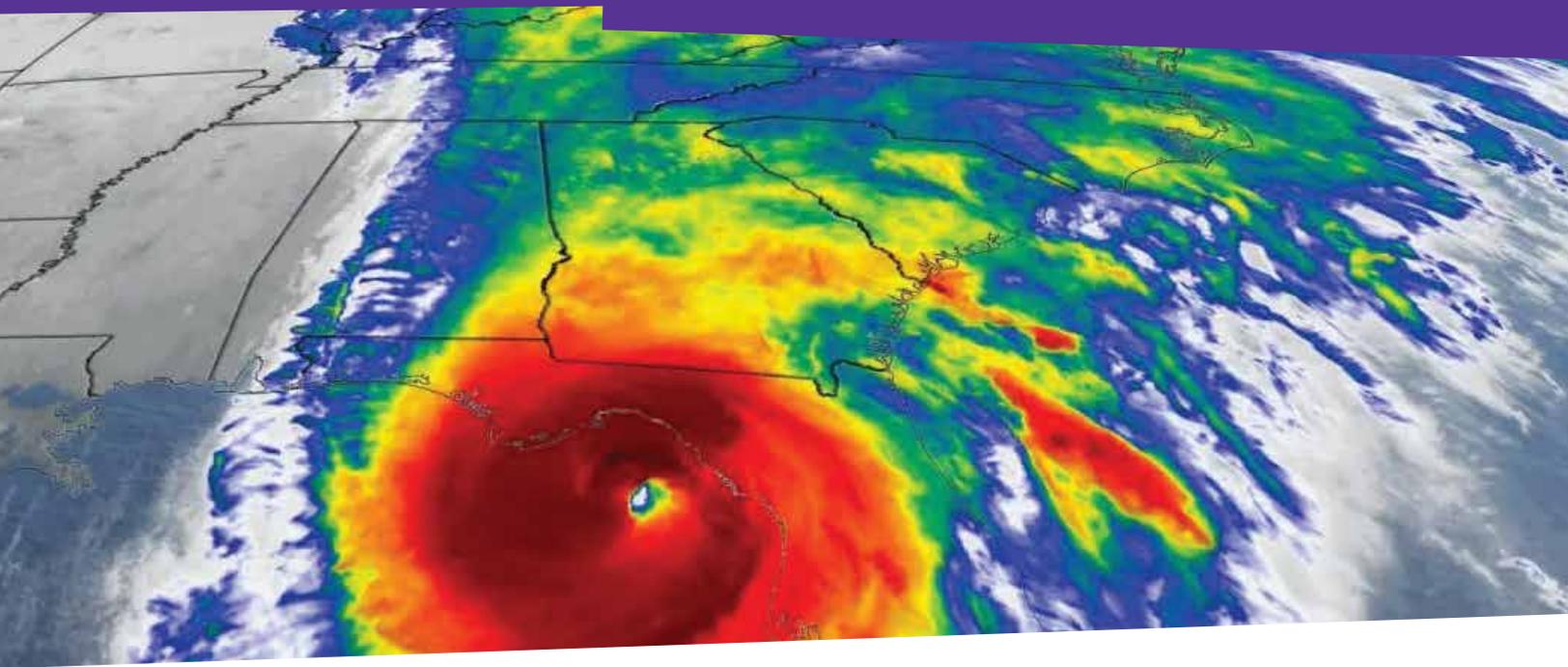
Background

In the wake of Hurricane Helene, which devastated communities in Western North Carolina, our organization took swift action to assist those affected by the disaster. Recognizing the urgent need for resources, we launched a comprehensive Disaster Response initiative to mobilize support and provide much-needed supplies to the impacted areas.

Facebook Supply Drive

The cornerstone of our response was an engaging Facebook drive designed to rally our community and gather essential supplies. Through targeted social media outreach, we connected with individuals eager to make a difference, ultimately collecting a substantial amount of donations. The reach and influence of our efforts were amplified through engaging content that encouraged people to contribute actively.





Community Engagement and Toy Drive

As the holiday season approached, our efforts shifted to bringing joy to the children affected by the catastrophe. We organized a profoundly successful Christmas Toy Drive. It culminated in the distribution of toys to 92 children in the region. This initiative not only provided immediate relief but also fostered a sense of hope and normalcy during a challenging time.

Ongoing Community Support

Due to the overwhelming needs identified in Western North Carolina, Distinctly Fayetteville was committed to an ongoing collection of supplies for victims of Hurricane Helene. We set up a convenient drop-off point at 245 Person Street, ensuring continuous support and efficient transport of resources to organizations actively involved in relief efforts. This arrangement was in place for 3 months, after which we transitioned to ongoing support through Balm Gilead to transport any donations to the WNC. We were able to supply 23 truckloads of items, three semi-truckloads from partnerships with police organizations as far away as Ohio, and six cargo vans of water.

Conclusion

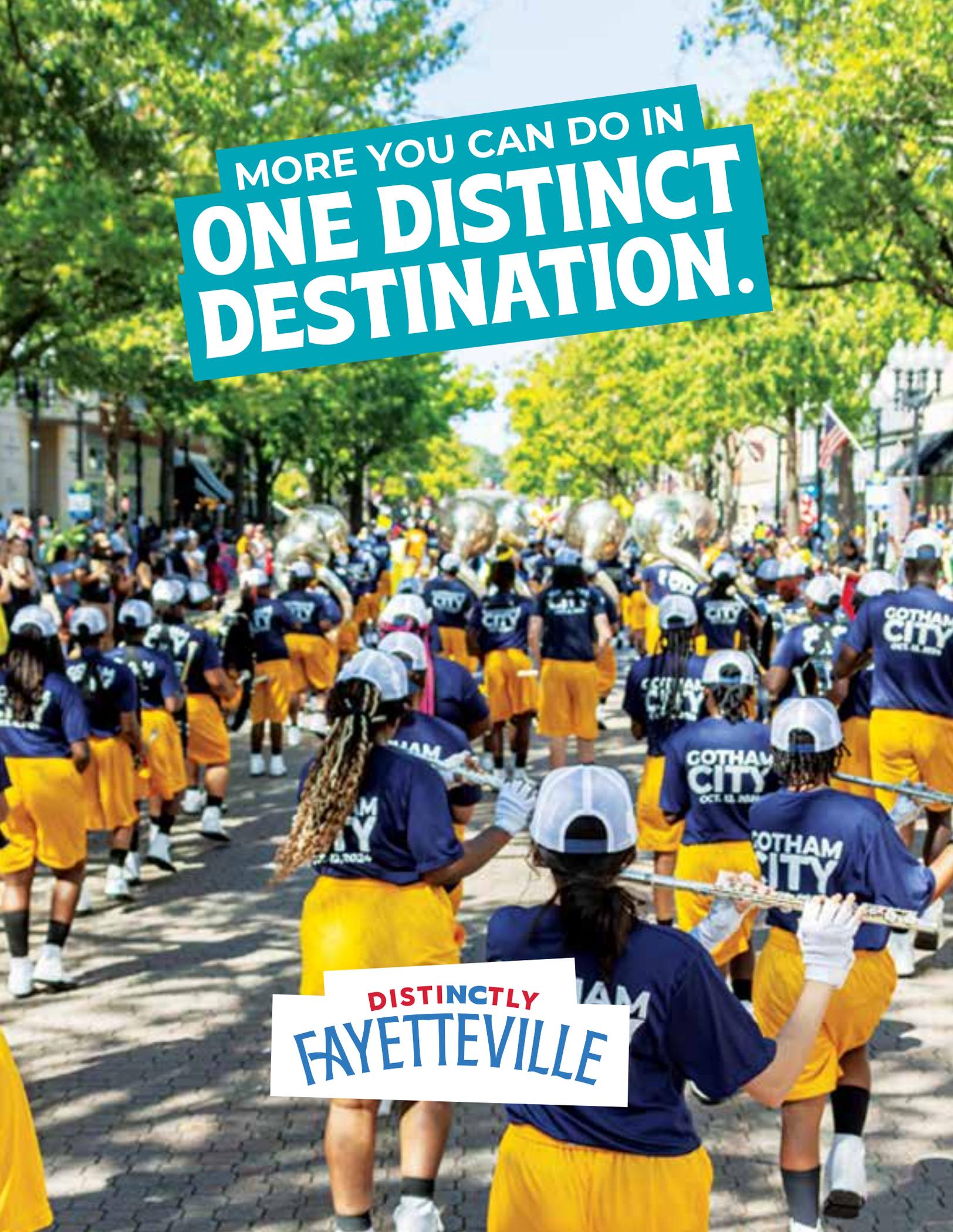
Our Disaster Response project exemplifies the power of community-driven initiatives in providing rapid, meaningful assistance during times of crisis. The extraordinary generosity shown during these efforts highlights the spirit of solidarity and compassion that defines our mission. We remain dedicated to supporting affected communities and facilitating recovery through collective action and sustained support.

Call to Action

We invite community members and partners to continue supporting this critical mission by contributing supplies or volunteering at Balm Gilead to categorize supplies for distribution through our partners in WNC. (Off-Road Outreach NC/ Veterans Services of the Carolinas/ Samaritan Purse) Together, we can make a lasting positive impact and help rebuild lives in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.



MORE YOU CAN DO IN
**ONE DISTINCT
DESTINATION.**



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