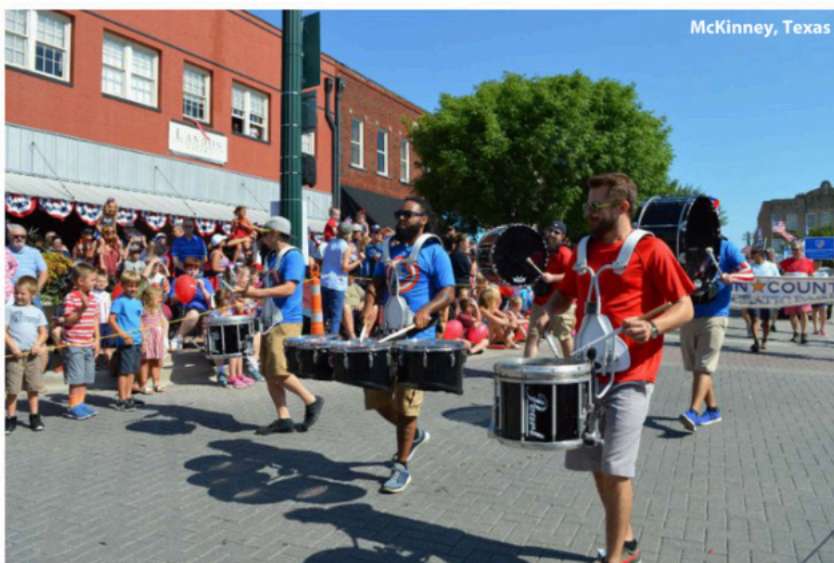


walking tours of the historic downtown, led by our historic preservation officer. Despite it raining most of the time, these walking tours were popular, with all attendees simply carrying umbrellas. We also have a small six-seat downtown-area shuttle that helps move people around the square and it got quite a bit of use."

Catherine Sak, executive director of the Texas Downtown's Association, said, "We've received very positive feedback and people seemed to really enjoy their time in McKinney," after hosting the drive-in event there, adding that McKinney offers "an amazing downtown and community."

The 81st Annual NAACP Texas State Convention was attended by approximately 150 attendees, according to Guerra. "We hosted an opening-night dinner with a welcome proclamation and address by the mayor, as well other brief talks by other local officials," she said. "Their opening event was at one of our historic downtown venues, Gather, in Downtown McKinney. The owner/main comic at the downtown Comedy Arena served as the emcee for the evening. We also utilized our McKinney Performing Arts Center, housed in our historic Collin County Courthouse in the center of our square. There are multiple meeting spaces in that building along with local art filling the walls of the lobby/open areas, making it a very unique and homey place to host break-outs."

**Off-Site Adventure:** "When it comes to 'off-site adventures,' we regularly offer differ-



McKinney, Texas

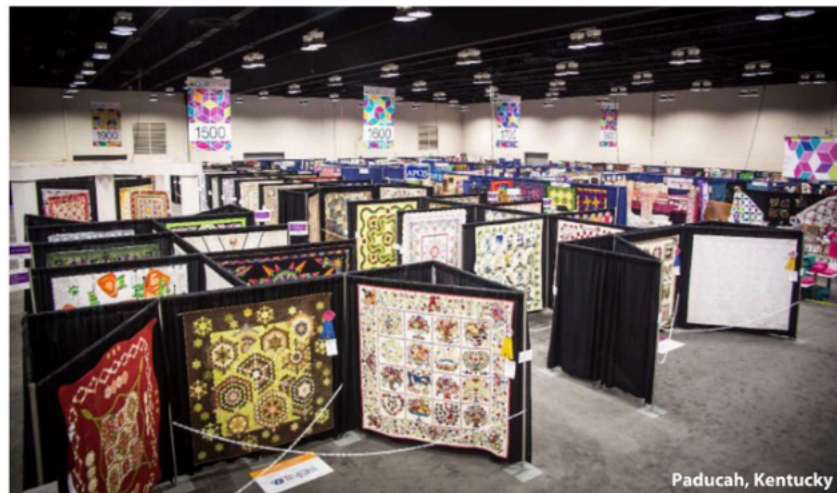
ent types of things to meeting attendees, be it a night at our comedy club or a private class (for team building) with the comedy club staff/team," Guerra said. "We also have two escape room companies in McKinney and have used both for corporate retreats and/or small meetings as either team building or as a fun planned evening activity. Our Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary has an unusual and very rustic zip-line and ropes course that they offer for team building. We also have two food tour companies that work closely with us to offer meeting planners with either the full-

length tour [2 – 3 hours] or a mini brunch or happy-hour tour. Another fun activity we've offered – and held – is a night at one of our fun and unusual craft breweries. They are great to work with and allow groups to bring in any food they want. They have big TVs, so groups can have watch parties and they can have presentations, thanks to A/V equipment and a stage."

### PADUCAH, KENTUCKY

"Getting to Paducah is an easy drive from many larger metropolitan areas," said Laura Oswald, director of marketing for the Paducah CVB. "Upon arrival, Paducah is easily navigable for event attendees. There are also many meeting facilities, off-site venues and local attractions that boast walkability, particularly in the Historic Downtown area along the Ohio River. In addition to the easy drive to Paducah, Paducah's Schroeder Expo Center features drive-in-capable meeting space. This makes it an ideal space with ample square footage to present expansive exhibitions, car shows or even a fleet of small airplanes."

**Drive-in Event:** Paducah recently hosted the 78th annual running of the National Retriever Club (NRC) Championships at the West Kentucky Wildlife Management Area, according to Oswald. "The organizers worked with the



Paducah, Kentucky

Paducah CVB, venues and other community partners to select accommodations that were convenient to the main venue, the Paducah McCracken County Convention & Expo Center and area amenities, restaurants, relevant shopping destinations and more to portray ease of navigation through Paducah."

The organizers of the event were drawn to Paducah for its drivability and venues. Mitch Patterson, president of the NRC, said, "The event has taken place near St. Louis for many years but we've been able to bring the competition to Paducah because of the area's great amenities, including the West Kentucky Wildlife Management Area. Adding to a venue that is very conducive to our sport, the friendliness of the people of Paducah make this a perfect destination to host this year's national championships."

### VALDOSTA, GEORGIA

"Conveniently located directly off Interstate 75, Valdosta is one of the most accessible cities between Atlanta and Orlando," said Sandra Roose, vice president and director of conference center sales at the Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center & Tourism Authority. Surrounded by lakes and panoramic views, the area is a paradise for thrill-seekers and offers excellent hiking, biking and kayaking. For those seeking a faster pace, Rush to Wild Adventures Theme Park features thrilling roller coasters, hundreds of exotic animals and all-star concerts. The 47,000-square-foot Rainwater Conference Center offers free parking and free Wi-Fi with a plethora of affordable lodging choices nearby to create a well-rounded experience for visitors. "This is an excellent regional destination for family reunions to enjoy activities, banquet space and travel convenience," Roose said.

**Drive-in Event:** "United Healthcare recently held [its] Provider Information Expo at the Rainwater Conference Center in Valdosta," said Roose. "The center was chosen because of its convenient location, notable banquet catering and adjacent hotels, including the Fairfield Inn and Suites, Marriott and Hampton Inn & Suites. Event organizers were also able to enjoy a night of tasty seafood at a local restaurant, The Salty Snapper, before the big event. The center just



Valdosta, Georgia

held the Merry Market Christmas vendor show and hundreds of drive-in guests enjoyed a week-end of holiday shopping."

### MOORESVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

It's known as Race City and what better place to take a drive? "From historic plantations to auto racing shops and museums to a Mississippi-style paddleboat, Mooresville has wonderfully eclectic venues for your small-market meetings," said Cathy Carpenter, director of sales for the Mooresville CVB, adding that it's the perfect destination for driving in to your meeting.

"Centrally located in North Carolina, 20 miles due north of Charlotte, located on North Carolina's largest lake offering 520 miles of shoreline, Mooresville is a diversified combination of small-town Southern charm and modern technology," she said. "Combined with unique fun attractions, a beautiful lake and first-class dining options, you'll see why Mooresville is the place to meet."

**Drive-in Event:** Performance Food Group has hosted repeat sales meetings with its corporate office just 1.5 hours away, according to Carpenter.

### GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

"The meeting sites in Greenville are worth the drive," said David Montgomery, vice president of sales for VisitGreenvilleSC. "When meeting-goers aren't parked in one of 8,000 city parking

spaces, they can easily explore one of several scenic state parks within a one-hour drive of downtown. What's even better? On-street parking in downtown is free [with a time limit] as is the first hour in city garages. An all-day stay is no more than \$7.50 in any downtown parking garage. Of course, the heart of downtown Greenville features several attractions within walking distance, from the picturesque Falls Park on the Reedy, featuring a one-of-a-kind floating pedestrian bridge, to museums, galleries, theaters and shopping – not to mention more than 110 locally owned restaurants."

**Drive-in Event:** The BIMRS 2018 Conference, held at the Hyatt Regency Greenville in downtown Greenville, was a huge success and much of that success was due to the drivability of the destination for attendees. "Greenville made a great destination for the BIMRS 2018 Conference due to the convenient drive-in access for many of our East coast attendees," said Sheri Hamilton of Hamilton & Association Events. "The beautiful downtown Greenville area provided our attendees an opportunity to conveniently park their car at the Greenville Hyatt Hotel while attending the conference and enjoying the restaurants and entertainment in the downtown area. This easy walking accessibility was also a favorite of our other attendees, many international, as there was no hassle with transportation in order to enjoy the many beautiful sights and features of Greenville." ■