

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Discover ! **KALAMAZOO®**

INTRODUCTION

Resilience and positivity enabled Discover Kalamazoo to persevere through a very challenging year in 2020. The tourism and hospitality industries were among the hardest hit in the pandemic, but the team quickly economized and prioritized resources.

By shifting focus to outdoor activities in our advertising and promotional materials, Discover Kalamazoo was able to attract adventurous leisure travelers to our area. In the sports, meetings and events markets, the team worked with planners to maintain strong relationships and re-plan events for future years, ensuring that Kalamazoo can recover quickly starting in 2021 and beyond.

While our marketing efforts are usually focused on potential visitors, in 2020 we also worked to promote local restaurants, attractions and events to Kalamazoo County residents. We made this shift because we recognize the importance of vibrant local businesses to serve the needs of tourists when they are ready to return in full force.

Despite the difficult year, Discover Kalamazoo emerged poised to take advantage of pent-up demand in 2021.

Jane Ghosh
President & CEO

OUR VALUES

WE ARE OUTSTANDING AMBASSADORS

We are passionately proud of our community, and we represent it with operational excellence.

WE EMBRACE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

We commit to equity because we understand that equity is the foundation of diversity and inclusion and we recognize that we can't be outstanding ambassadors without it. We are creating an organization that reflects the diversity of our community and visitors to ensure all are valued and welcomed.

WE EXUDE CONTAGIOUS POSITIVITY

Our cups are always half full. We act with positive intent and assume others do, too.

WE HAVE A GROWTH MINDSET

We are curious and courageous. We empower ourselves and each other to try new things and we are not afraid to fail.

WE ACT WITH INTEGRITY AND EMPATHY

We are honest, transparent, and ethical. We care about our team's wellbeing. We treat people with dignity and respect.

2020 DISCOVER KALAMAZOO STAFF

Jennie Cook

Vice President of Administration & Operations

Jane Ghosh

President & CEO

Brian Persky

Director of Sports Event Development

Ashley Peruchietti, CMP

Destination Services Manager

Alyssa Seedorff

Digital Communications Manager

Madysen Stoneman

Sports Event Development Manager

Craig Vaughan

Finance Manager

Dana Wagner

Director of Marketing & Communications

T.J. Waldofsky

Interim President & CEO

2020 AIRPORT STAFF

Kim Davison

Information Specialist

Darlene Flachier

Information Specialist

Mary Kinney

Airport Information Desk Supervisor

Jennie Ko

Information Specialist

Joyce Kuppler

Information Specialist

Mary Schardt

Information Specialist

Christine Wilkins

Information Specialist

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dave Beysiegel (Treasurer)

The Moors Golf Club

Tracy Hall

Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners

Clarence Lloyd

Consumers Credit Union

Bill McElhone (Immediate Past Chair)

Kalamazoo Valley Museum

Bob Miller

Western Michigan University

Cheryl Pickett

Kalamazoo Marathon at Borgess Run for the Health of It

Tim Rayman

Greenleaf Hospitality Group

Vicky Thinnes (Secretary)

Millennium Restaurant Group

T.J. Waldofsky (Chair)

Discover Kalamazoo

Andy Widner (Vice Chair)

Spirit of Kalamazoo



2020 ADVISORY COUNCIL

Kim Aldrich

Kalamazoo College

Kristen Chesak

Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo

Shelly Clafin

Bell's Brewery

Kay Clark

Jaqua Realtors, Inc.

Andy Dominianni

WWMT-CBS Newschannel 3

Deb Droppers

Kalamazoo Experiential Learning
Center

Richard Ford

Portage City Council

Andrew Haan

Kalamazoo Downtown Partnership

Jeanne Hess

Kalamazoo City Commission

Ron Howard

Radiant Church

Jackie Koney

Vicksburg Mill Project

John Liberty

West Michigan Beer Tours

Lisa Panich

Kalamazoo Nature Center

Rob Pennock

Miller Auditorium

David Rachowicz

Kalamazoo County Parks & Expo
Center

Matt Schuster

Public Media Network

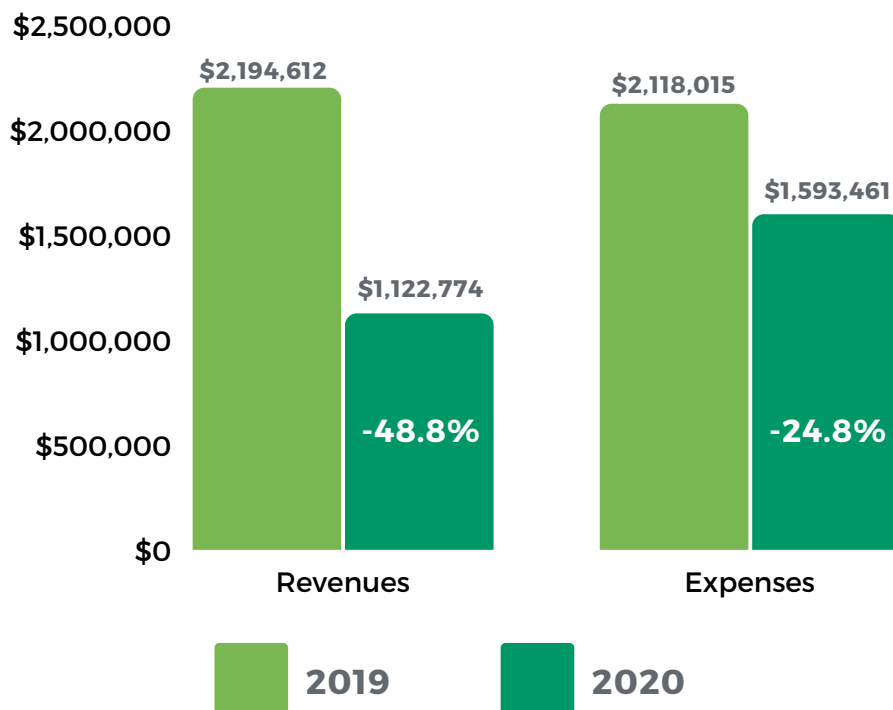
Troy Thrash

Air Zoo

Amanda Woodin

Kalamazoo/Battle Creek
International Airport

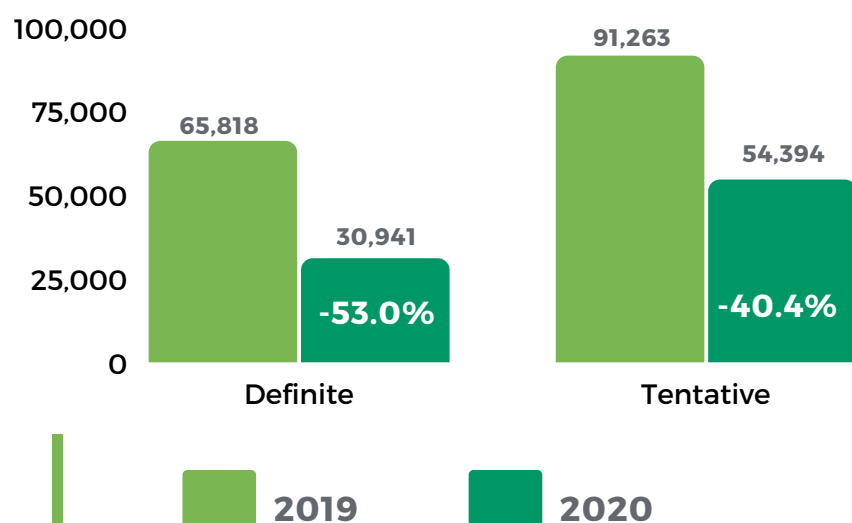
FINANCIALS



A NOTE ON RESERVE FUNDING

The source of nearly all of Discover Kalamazoo's revenue is accommodation taxes on overnight lodging stays which declined significantly during the pandemic. Thanks to the foresight and prudence of Discover Kalamazoo leadership and board members years ago, the organization was fortunate to have a significant cash reserve to draw on to maintain critical staffing and functions. As a result of operational continuity, Discover Kalamazoo was able to help Kalamazoo County visitation recover faster than most communities in Michigan.

ROOM NIGHTS



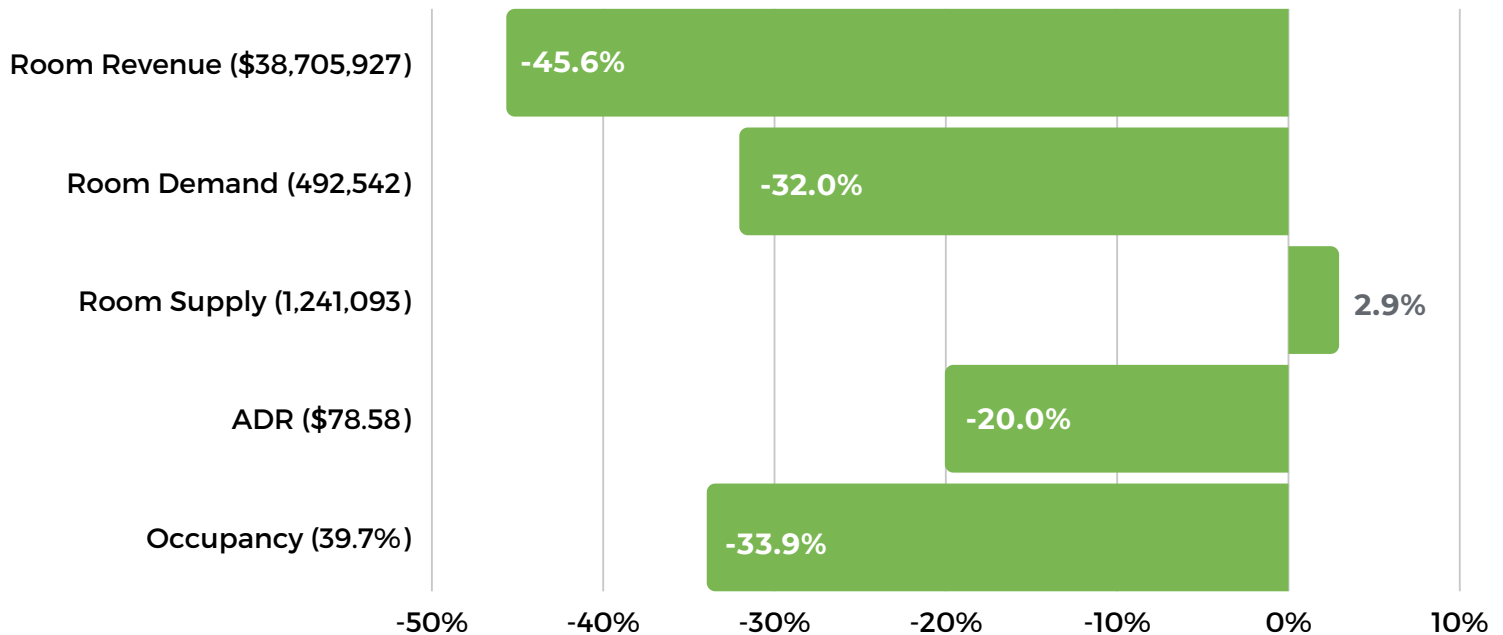
Definite:
Future room nights confirmed as definite

Tentative:
Future room nights distributed as tentative leads

2020 HOTEL TREND REPORT

Growth percentage vs. 2019

Source: STR, Inc.



A NOTE ON ROOM SUPPLY

Hotel occupancy took a steep drop in Kalamazoo County in March of 2020 as leisure, business and group visitors cancelled plans due to the pandemic. April marked the low point of our year with occupancy rates of only 24%. Metrics improved through the summer as travelers enjoyed the outdoor activities on offer in Kalamazoo County, but then fell again as Michigan entered the worst months of the pandemic in the winter. Fortunately, hotel developers recognized the short-term nature of the downturn and continued to invest in new properties in Kalamazoo County. This set us up for success for recovery in 2021 ahead of our peer group.



MARKETING

263,062

**TOTAL
WEBSITE
VISITORS
(-18.0% YOY)**

257,413

**UNIQUE
WEBSITE
VISITORS
(-18.2% YOY)**



64,250 FOLLOWERS

+1,155 FROM 2019



26,533 FOLLOWERS

+331 FROM 2019



12,911 FOLLOWERS




-20 FROM 2019

MOST VISITED PAGES ON SITE

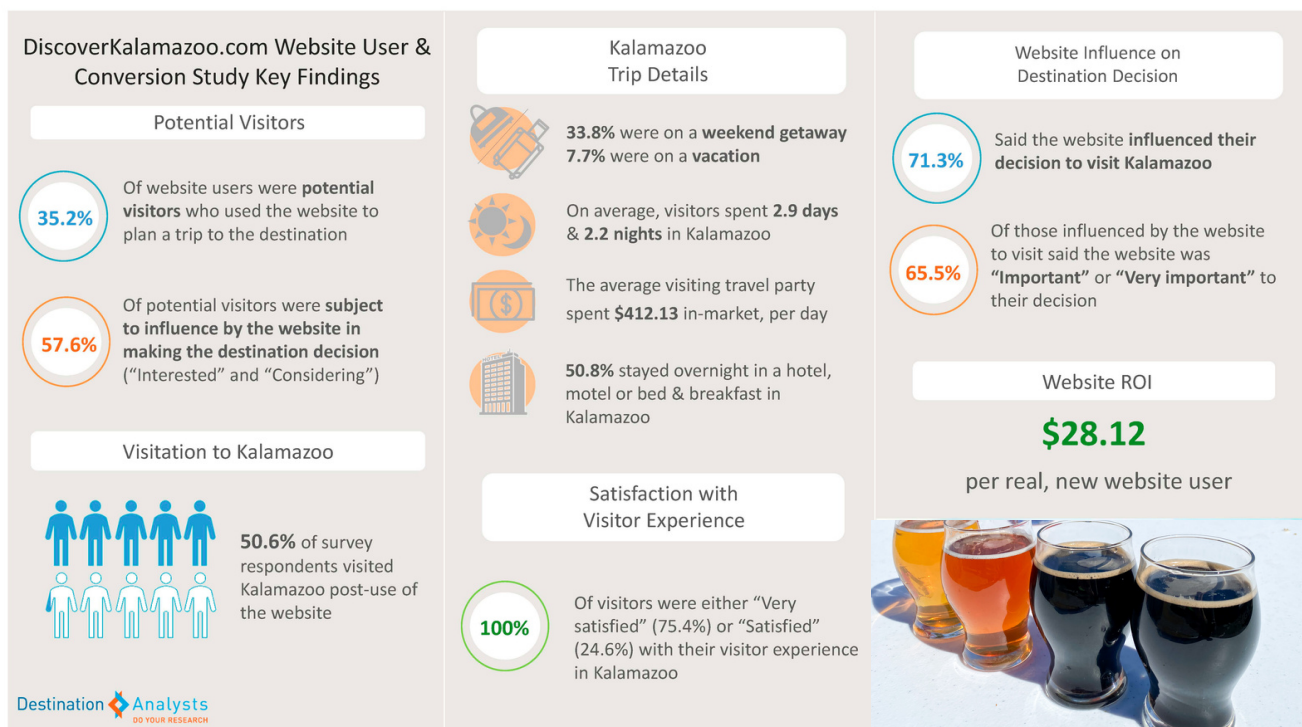
- [EVENTS](#)
- [TRAILS](#)
- [HIDDEN GEM RESTAURANTS](#)
- [6 GREAT BEACHES NEAR KALAMAZOO](#)
- [269 COOL THINGS TO DO](#)
- [BLACK OWNED BUSINESSES](#)
- [TOP 10 THINGS TO DO DOWNTOWN](#)

DESTINATIONS ANALYSTS SURVEYS

Research conducted on social media marketing ROI from April - June 2020

			
Audience Size:	63,891	27,000	12,800
Incremental trips to Kalamazoo generated by social media marketing (March 2019-February 2020):	3,002 trips	1,172 trips	169 trips
Average number of days in-market on incremental trips:	2.4 days	1.5 days	2.4 days
Average visitor spending per-day on incremental trips:	\$244.20	\$210.00	\$277.60
Total visitor spending on incremental trips:	\$1,759,500	\$369,237	\$112,731
Additional days spent in-market on trips extended by social media marketing:	5,541 days	5,137 days	404 days
Total visitor spending on trips extended by respective social media marketing:	\$31,627	\$108,734	\$8,962
Total visitor spending impact of respective social media marketing:	\$1,791,127	\$477,971	\$121,693
Total visitor spending impact per respective social media follower:	\$28.03	\$17.70	\$9.51

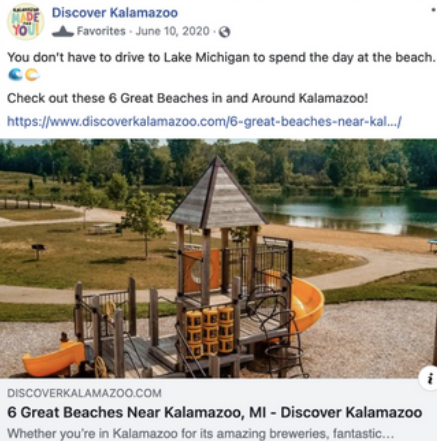
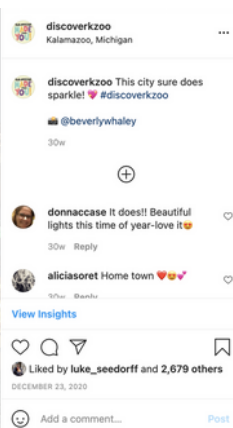
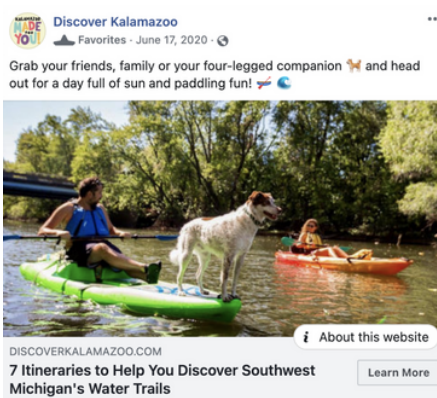
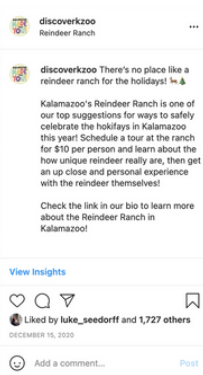
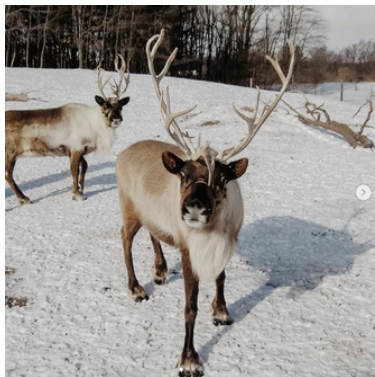
Research conducted on the website ROI from January 2019 - September 2020



DIGITAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

- Paid Search
 - 50.6K impressions (down 1.9% YOY) and 5.7K clicks (up 130% YOY)
 - Kalamazoo general search 20.07% CTR
 - Kalamazoo outdoors search 8.69% CTR
 - Kalamazoo craft beer search 4.97% CTR
- Summer Comeback Campaign (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest)
 - 20,600 link clicks
 - 1.9M impressions
 - Reached 189,000 users
 - 17,938 landing page views and 27,358 website page views
 - Averaged just 40 cents per click across all the campaigns
 - Most engaged audiences were 36% Grand Rapids/Kalamazoo, 30% Chicago, and 22% Detroit
 - Trails blog had lowest CPC and one of the highest click through rates

BEST PERFORMING SOCIAL POSTS




- Created in June with a task force representing a variety of areas in the tourism/hospitality industry (attractions, breweries, hotels, museums, restaurants, stadiums/venues, parks and rec)
- The goal was to create a fun, energetic campaign, with a unifying message
- Worked with local artist, Mike Klok of Stuffed Brain Studio
- First rolled out to businesses and our local residents, sharing the t-shirt contest and postcards, printed materials and decals, then went on to include targeted ads to our drive market

429
PHOTOS
SUBMITTED

With weekly winners drawn for a free t-shirt which drove traffic to The Spirit of Kalamazoo for pickup

33
POSTCARDS
SENT

That loved ones sent across the country to states including Wisconsin, Ohio, Texas, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Florida, Washington, Maryland, New Jersey

- **Digital marketing campaign: (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest)**
 - **3.2 million impressions**
 - **35,000+ link clicks**
 - **643,600 reach**
 - **Over 10,000 engagements (shares, reactions, comments, saves)**
 - **Boosted overall traffic on the site so that it was just down 8% YOY**
 - **Averaged \$0.44 per link click an 1.08% CTR (global travel average was 0.9% CTR)**
 - **Audiences that engaged with the ads:**
 - **53% Grand Rapids/Kalamazoo**
 - **15% Detroit, 13% Chicago, 4% South Bend**
- 

An clickable map with itinerary ideas for every part of the county was created and can be found at KzooMadeForYou.com



UNIQUE CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS

- Creation of VirtualKzoo.com
 - Coloring pages, virtual puzzles, socially distanced wall crawl adventures or driving tours, virtual tours of museums and attractions, arts and DIY at home, Kalamazoo music playlist, good news stories and more
- Virtual Trivia Nights
 - Developed two virtual trivia nights from this that gave the opportunity to highlight different partners and attractions; the first one in May had over 130 participants
 - This coincided with National Travel and Tourism Week at the beginning of May, so we held the trivia event and promoted take out options and area itineraries for people to get inspired
- Creation of [Homegrown & Handcrafted](#) content
 - Highlights our local makers scene with feature videos and interviews of three local makers/artisans/entrepreneurs with the goal of more to come
- Completion and distribution of Bike Trail Maps

INDUSTRY PARTNER MARKETING

- Pure Michigan
 - Coordinated two trips with Michigan Under the Radar and Dave Lorenz which highlighted traveling safely in Michigan and featured the Gilmore Car Museum, Air Zoo, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, and Theo and Stacy's
- West Michigan Tourism Association
 - Submission and coverage of our area events, attractions, happenings
 - Give a Craft listing on their beer map
 - Downtown feature in their Carefree Travel Guide
- Travel Mindset and Black Girl Digital
 - Worked on a diversity and equity audit and strategy for our website and social media that started implementation in Q3



MEETINGS & EVENTS

23

**GROUPS
HOSTED IN
KALAMAZOO**

7,350

ROOM NIGHTS

- MI Brewers Guild
- Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay Transgender Asexual College Conference
- MI Society of Professional Surveyors
- Midwest RADfest

59

**GROUPS & EVENTS
AFFECTED BY
COVID**

GROUPS THAT RE-BOOKED

- NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL MOCK TRIAL CHAMPIONSHIPS
- CLASSIC MANDOLIN SOCIETY
- PROFESSIONAL FRATERNITY ASSOCIATION
- MI COUNCIL OF SQUARE & ROUND DANCERS

MEETING SALES ACTIVITY

- Michigan Society of Government Meeting Professionals Monthly meetings
- Destination Michigan Lunch n' Learn
- Destination Michigan Showcase
- Michigan District Optimists Site Visit
- Destination Michigan Site Visit
- Michigan Society of Association Executives Golf Outing
- Meeting Professionals International MI December Signature Series
- Destination Midwest
- Professional Fraternity Association Virtual Annual conference
- Holiday gift blitz in Lansing to meeting professionals

PARTNER OUTREACH

- Lodging Sales Partner Meetings (in person and virtual)
- Hotel/Partner visits (Spring and Fall)
- Thank you video to hotel essential workers
- Helped re-establish the Greater Kalamazoo Lodging Association

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

- Event Services Professional Association
- Destinations International Conference
- Safe Meetings MI Conference
- American Society of Association Executives Conference
- Michigan Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus Annual Conference
- Art Hop location featuring RADfest
- Outfront training for hospitality partners for the Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay Transgender Asexual College Conference (MBLGTACC)

This training provided knowledge about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) and cultural competency, with the goal of learning a common language, terms and definitions related to sexual orientation and gender identity. The training discussed best practices and helped develop an individual action plan on how to assist staff in creating an inclusive environment.

SPORTS EVENTS

21

EVENTS
HOSTED

6,000+
ATHLETES

\$4.8M

DIRECT
ECONOMIC
IMPACT

28,000+
TENTATIVE ROOM NIGHTS

17,000+
DEFINITE ROOM NIGHTS

EDUCATION EVENTS

50
ATTENDEES

Night of Networking with the Kalamazoo Wings and WMU Sports Management Program hosted by Greenleaf Hospitality Group & Discover Kalamazoo Sports at Wings Event Center with a mix between WMU Sports Management students and Sports Professionals from the Kalamazoo region. (February 2020)

40
ATTENDEES

Maintaining a Successful Customer Experience Through COVID-19 with Erin Chamberlain, Marketing & Development Manager at the Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame and Museum and Managing Partner of the Kalamazoo Growlers, Brian Colopy. (November 2020)

RESCHEDULED EVENTS FOR 2021 & BEYOND

- Mid-American Conference Gymnastics Championships
- USA Hockey Youth Tier II 14U National Championships
- National Solo Dance Finals

DISCOVER KALAMAZOO SPORTS DONATES 2,000+ DRAWSTRING BAGS TO LOCAL YOUTH IN COLLABORATION WITH KPS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Kalamazoo was set to host some marquee sports events in 2020, including the 2020 USA Hockey Youth Tier II 14U National Championships, 2020 MAC Gymnastics Championship, 2020 MAC Track & Field Championship, and the 2020 National Solo Dance Finals along with many other events that bring visitors to our region. In anticipation of hosting these events, Discover Kalamazoo Sports provided customized drawstring bags for all participating athletes for them to take home.

A few months passed, more events cancelled, and many Kalamazoo area schools announced virtual learning for the Fall. Being the sports enthusiasts that we are, it made us wonder, *How are these students going to stay active without a mandatory physical education class?* And then it hit us, we need to create an opportunity for these students to stay active.

After putting a few feelers out to local elementary schools, it occurred to us that we had just the right amount to donate all our remaining drawstring bags in stock to five local elementary schools in the area.

We immediately acted by sending a mass e-mail out to our partners and were able to fill the bags with donations from local businesses in no time!



SPORTS CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS

- Launch of the Discover Kalamazoo Sports brand in 2020
- Launched the "Why Story" series as an opportunity to share the #WhyStory behind each one of our sports event partners. In 2020, the [Kalamazoo Curling Club](#) and the [Kalamazoo Optimist Hockey Association](#) were featured.
- Top Performing Blogs:
 - [Meet The Mother Daughter Duos of the Kalamazoo Roller Derby Teams](#)
 - [5 Reasons You Should Host Your Next Sports Event In Kalamazoo](#)
 - [9 Golf Courses To Play Today In and Around Greater Kalamazoo](#)
 - [6 Disc Golf Courses To Play Today In Greater Kalamazoo](#)
 - [6 Backyard Games You Can Enjoy At Home](#)
 - [5 Ways to Stay Active, Support Local, and Enjoy Kalamazoo This Winter](#)
- Launched "Until the Next Whistle" campaign in 2020 to spread hope and excitement for the return of sports

TESTIMONIALS

"We couldn't be any happier with Wings Event Center and Discover Kalamazoo. They have gone above and beyond expectations, and are always willing to help with any detail. It is a great feeling to know that you and your event are wanted and supported in the community. Wings Event Center and Discover Kalamazoo rolled out the welcome mat, and have made us feel at home ever since."

-Dan Hutcheson, Assistant Director, Michigan High School Athletic Association

"Discover Kalamazoo have been tremendous to work with. Their professional experience helps event organizers with all facets in the planning and development of an event. Highly recommend hosting events in Kalamazoo as they will go above and beyond to make your customer experience world class."

-Jon Globke, Legacy Global Sports

TEAM VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

- MLK DAY OF SERVICE AT AACORN
- HELPING AT JUNETEENTH BLM MURAL PROJECT
- MI CARES TRAIL CLEANUP
- TURKEY DRIVE WITH NEKTON INVESTMENTS

PLANNING FOR 2021

2021 will mark the beginning of recovery for Discover Kalamazoo. Most of our visitors are leisure travelers who arrive via car, and these are the types of trips expected to return to pre-pandemic levels most quickly. Business trips and large group meetings, however, will remain depressed until 2023 according to industry forecasts. Tourism in Kalamazoo County will face challenges, including the talent shortage in the hospitality industry. However, given our unique attractions and events and our abundant outdoor recreation opportunities, we are confident that tourism in Kalamazoo County will rebound from the pandemic faster than the country as a whole.

GOAL:

Establish a path to restore visitor spending to 2019 levels by 2023

\$504M

2019 ANNUAL
VISITOR SPENDING