

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2022**



Discover ! **KALAMAZOO**[®]

INTRODUCTION

As we entered 2022, we were faced with the challenge of surpassing the remarkable achievements of the previous year. Little did we know at the time of publishing our 2021 annual report that in 2021 we had reached an all-time high in visitor spending and Kalamazoo County visitor spending grew the 2nd fastest of the 83 counties in Michigan. While we are still awaiting the official figures for 2022 visitor spending, we can confidently say that 2022 proved to be an even more exceptional year than its predecessor.

Visits to Kalamazoo County from individuals residing and working at least 50 miles away increased by an impressive 5% compared to 2021. In 2022, we hit an all-time high for hotel & motel revenue in Kalamazoo County. We generated a significantly higher number of leads for meetings and events, and even delivered small growth in definite room nights booked.

Collaboration has been at the heart of our endeavors, and we have achieved great milestones through partnerships. Together with the County, the City of Kalamazoo, Southwest Michigan First, and Western Michigan University we embarked on a journey to develop a compelling "unique selling proposition" for Kalamazoo County. Engaging with 342 stakeholders, residents, and visitors, we successfully identified a winning positioning, and along the way we were delighted to be reminded of the tremendous pride and optimism our community possesses. This collective effort will help attract even more visitors – and potential future residents – going forward.

Additionally, in collaboration with Southwest Michigan First, we made significant strides in the development of the downtown Event Center. By co-leading 15 stakeholder group sessions in 2022, we helped ensure that the event center design will align with the needs and aspirations of our community and other user groups. This exciting project will provide an exceptional venue for a wide range of events.

As we witness the remarkable growth and development taking place in Kalamazoo County, including the Event Center, we have reorganized and expanded our business development team. This strategic move ensures that we possess the necessary resources to attract and serve new events coming to our community.

In 2022 Discover Kalamazoo was awarded an American Rescue Plan grant from the County. This grant is primarily being used to increase visitation from multicultural visitors, with a particular focus on Black visitors, Hispanic visitors, LGBTQ+ visitors, and visitors with disabilities. Our approach extends beyond marketing efforts; we are committed to providing an inclusive and exceptional experience to these communities when they choose to explore our region. By fostering diversity and inclusivity, we not only enrich the experiences of our visitors but also contribute to the growth and well-being of Kalamazoo County residents.

Thank you for your continued support as we embark on an exciting journey towards a thriving future for Kalamazoo County.

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.

2022 DISCOVER KALAMAZOO STAFF

Jennie Cook

Vice President of Administration & Operations

Madysen Doyle

Senior Manager, Sports Event Development

Jane Ghosh

President & CEO

Mallory Hernandez

Administration & Operations Coordinator

Brian Persky, STS, SDLT

Director of Sports Event Development

Ashley Peruchietti, CMP

Meeting Services Manager

Kirsten Rock

Director of Meeting Sales

Alyssa Seedorff

Senior Manager of Content Development & Strategy

Amber Thompson

Partner Engagement Coordinator

Viviana Vidal

Meeting Sales Coordinator

Dana Wagner

Director of Marketing & Communications

DESTINATION SERVICES SPECIALISTS

Esther Cetina

BryAnne Haas

Nora Hafez

Jennie Ko

Sa'Vjon Tamlin

INTERNS

Jaimie Frake- Sports Events

Madison Kadlec- Marketing

Samantha Moss- Meeting Sales

2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dave Beysiegel (Treasurer)

The Moors Golf Club

Jeff Breneman

Western Michigan University

Craig Davies

Radisson Plaza Hotel & Suites

Jane Ghosh

Discover Kalamazoo

John Liberty

West Michigan Beer Tours

Clarence Lloyd (Chair)

The Chamber at Southwest Michigan First

Veronica McKissack

Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners

Anant (Andy) Patel

Candlewood Suites

Vicky Thinner (Past Chair)

Millennium Restaurant Group

Troy Thrash (Secretary)

Air Zoo Aerospace and Science Museum

Joy Underwood (Vice Chair)

Staybridge Suites



2022 ADVISORY COUNCIL

Lisa Brayton

Portage City Council

Bill McElhone

Kalamazoo Valley Museum

Kristen Chesak

Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo

Kenny Nichols

Henry Ford College

Deb Droppers

Kalamazoo Experiential Learning
Center

Lisa Panich

Kalamazoo Nature Center

Cherri Emery

Cherri's Chocol'art

Rob Pennock

Miller Auditorium

Ken Fischang, CHME, CMP, CTA

Gilmore Car Museum

David Rachowicz

Kalamazoo County Parks & Expo
Center

Jeanne Hess

Kalamazoo City Commission

Sterling Riethman

Bell's Brewery

Stephanie Hinman

Kalamazoo State Theatre

Brad Schmitz

Hilton Garden Inn

Bill Johnson

Gull Lake View Golf Course

Matt Schuster

Public Media Network

Mike Klok

Stuffed Brain Studio

Carla Sones

Southwest Michigan First

Jackie Koney

Vicksburg Mill Project

Pierre van der Westhuizen

The Gilmore

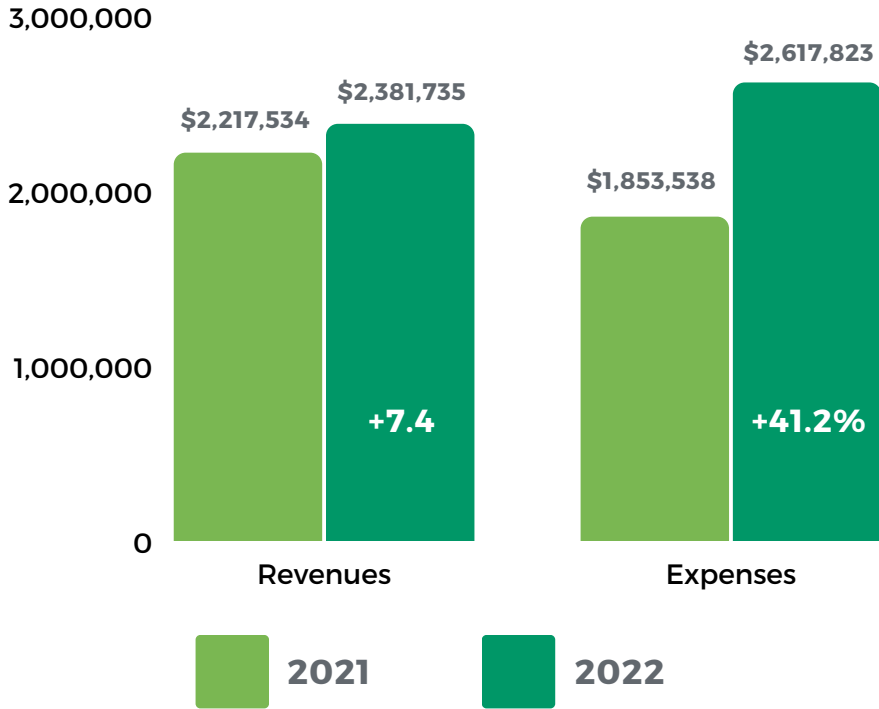
Dani Lewis

Black Arts and Cultural Center

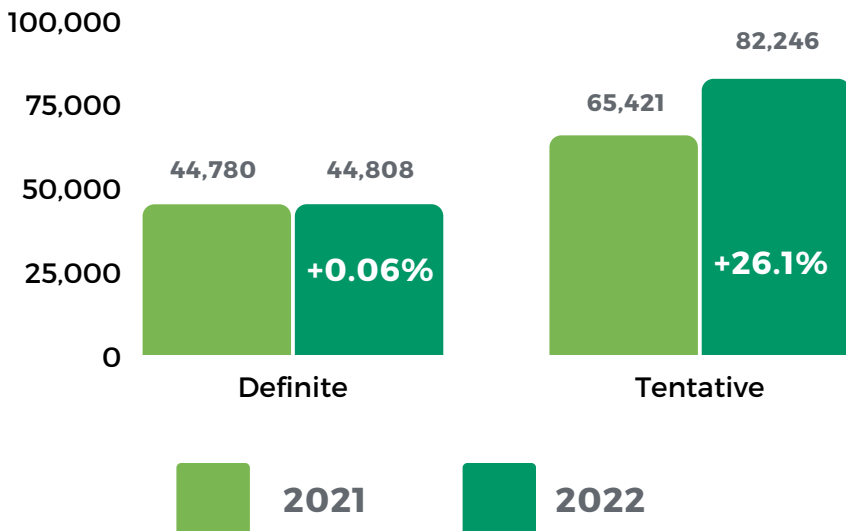
Craig Williams

Kalamazoo/Battle Creek
International Airport

FINANCIALS



ROOM NIGHTS



Definite:
Future room nights confirmed as definite

Tentative:
Future room nights distributed as tentative leads

2022 HOTEL TREND REPORT

Growth percentage vs. 2021

Source: STR, Inc.



MARKETING

678,904

**TOTAL WEBSITE
SESSIONS
(+60.3% YOY)**

554,544

**UNIQUE
WEBSITE
VISITORS
(+57.5% YOY)**



71,250 FOLLOWERS

+2,576 FROM 2021



33,561 FOLLOWERS

+1,142 FROM 2021



12,527 FOLLOWERS

-273 FROM 2021



486 FOLLOWERS

MOST VISITED PAGES ON SITE AND PAGEVIEWS

- **PLAN YOUR TRIP** (98,978)
- **EVENTS** (66,217)
- **TRAILS** (16,801)
- **ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT** (10,780)
- **MUSEUMS & ATTRACTIONS** (9,870)
- **OUTDOORS & RECREATION** (9,260)
- **HIDDEN GEM RESTAURANTS** (9,199)
- **GIVE A CRAFT BEER TRAIL** (7,833)

TARGET AUDIENCES

Discover Kalamazoo has focused marketing on areas more than 30 miles outside of Kalamazoo. Chicago and Detroit are our top two sources of visitors.

51,584

WEBSITE VISITORS FROM CHICAGO (+97.4% YOY)

26,388

WEBSITE VISITORS FROM DETROIT (+34.2% YOY)

PAID DIGITAL MEDIA

- Paid Search
 - 1,602,839 impressions
 - 157,556 clicks
 - 9.83% click through rate
- Social Media Ads
 - 19,374,815 impressions
 - 150,249 clicks
 - 0.8% click through rate

BEST PERFORMING SOCIAL POSTS

From Michigan with Love Blog collaboration

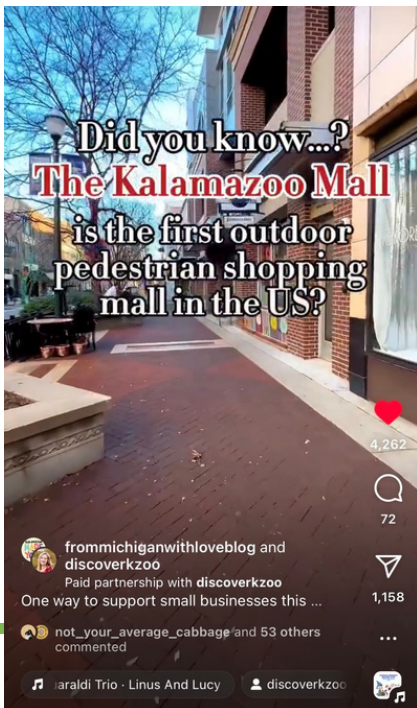
- 5,694 total engagements
- 85,811 reached

From Michigan with Love Blog collaboration

- 5,260 total engagements
- 85,483 reached

Vintage in the Zoo giveaway collaboration

- 1,928 total engagements
- 31,671 reached
- Over 600 comments



MARKETING HIGHLIGHTS

- **Launch of the new Discover Kalamazoo website**
 - We began this process in the fall of 2021 with a new website developer, Simpleview, and the all new website was launched in August 2022.
 - The site is fully integrated with our current CRM and has many new features that we wanted like a map publisher, trip builder, venue comparison for meetings/events, and integration of Threshold 360 virtual tours.
 - The website also allowed us to build two microsites for meetings and sports so we can better serve planners.
- **Research process to develop a unique selling proposition for Kalamazoo County**
 - Over the course of 2022, Discover Kalamazoo collaborated with key community organizations on a research process to identify a unique selling proposition (USP) for Kalamazoo, a positioning that would help the Kalamazoo region to be known for something that represents and resonates with all our community and becomes part of our identity.
 - Representatives from the City of Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County Government, Southwest Michigan First, and Western Michigan University were part of the core committee that hired Consumer Dynamics to develop and execute the research process in identifying the unique selling proposition.
 - A total of 342 people participated in the process through stakeholder interviews, insight interviews with residents, visitors, and small and large businesses, community roundtables, breakthrough sessions, and a quantitative survey with 252 respondents. The process ensured that a broad mix of people were included with city and county residents, potential visitors, recent visitors, and representatives from key organizations all from different backgrounds, ethnicities, races, genders, and ages.
 - The research findings were shared with the core committee in December 2022 and meetings with other community stakeholders would be held in early 2023.
 - The next phase in 2023 will focus on the creative development in bringing the new messaging to life in marketing campaigns attracting leisure visitors.

TRAVEL INFLUENCERS AND CONTENT CREATORS

- Cernys' Journeys
 - https://cernysjourneys.com/united-states/cool_kalamazoo/
 - Sara and her family stopped by our booth at the Chicago Travel and Adventure Show in February 2022 and we helped to plan a last minute spring break trip for them in March.
- Afro.Beer.Chick
 - <https://afrobeerchick.com/blog/discoverkalamazoo>
 - Chalonda visited in July 2022 and covered the beer and cocktail scene in Kalamazoo will checking out a West Michigan Beer Tour and visiting some of the new breweries in the area.
- The Chicago Couple
 - <https://thechicagocouple.com/2022/09/06/artsy-and-foodie-weekend-in-kalamazoo-michigan/>
 - Jacquie and Ryan are a Chicago area couple that visited Kalamazoo in July 2022 to cover museums, art, food, and live theatre.
- From Michigan with Love Blog
 - <https://frommichiganwithloveblog.com/family-holiday-getaway-to-kalamazoo/>
 - Jackie and her family visited Kalamazoo in November 2022 to experience holiday fun with Small Business Saturday, Bronson Park Tree Lighting, Santa's Workshop, and explore the Air Zoo and Reindeer Ranch.



Jacquie and Ryan at the Barn Theatre



Chalonda at Bell's Eccentric Cafe

MEETINGS & EVENTS



56

**EVENTS
HOSTED**

17,787

ROOM NIGHTS

\$4.43M

**ECONOMIC
IMPACT**

***REPORTING
AT 95%**

EVENTS HOSTED IN 2022

- Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals (ANREP) Professional Development Conference
- 2022 United Soybean Board Meeting
- Checker Car Club of America Convention 100th Anniversary
- Professional Fraternity Association Annual Conference
- School Nutrition Association of Michigan Annual Conference and Exhibit Show

TRADE SHOWS AND CONFERENCES

- Connect Spring Marketplace – San Juan, PR (May 2022)
- Connect Marketplace – Detroit, MI (August 2022)
- Professional Fraternity Association (PFA) Annual Convention – Kalamazoo, MI (September 2022)
- Small Market Meetings Summit – Wichita, KS (September 2022)
- IMEX America – Las Vegas, NV (October 2022)
- Association Forum Holiday Showcase – Chicago, IL (December 2022)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

- Event Services Professional Association (ESPA) Annual Conference – Pittsburgh, PA (January, 2022)
- Michigan Society of Government Meeting Professionals (MiSGMP) Annual Education Conference – Grand Rapids, MI (March 2022)
- Michigan Society of Association Executives (MSAE) Annual Conference – Bay City, MI (August 2022)
- Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Great Lakes Education Summit – Lake Geneva, WI (November 2022)

MEETING SALES ACTIVITY

- Destination Michigan Lunch and Learn – Okemos, MI
- Destination Michigan sales missions – Lansing, MI
- Destination Michigan Showcase – Lansing, MI
- MI Meeting Expo – Traverse City, MI
- Taste of MI – Grand Rapids, MI
- MSAE 2022 Spring Golf Outing - Frankenmuth, MI
- Michigan MPI December Signature Series – Okemos, MI
- Connect Marketplace FAM Tour – Kalamazoo , MI

NOTABLE EVENT

PROFESSIONAL FRATERNITY ASSOCIATION

One of our favorite conferences from 2022 was the Professional Fraternity Association because we were able to get creative and create an offsite reception for the group. We hosted a ‘Taste of Kalamazoo’ reception at the Foundry featuring a few of the tastes, smells and experiences people can receive when in Kalamazoo. Here is the program for the evening:



We hope you enjoy your evening discovering a sampling of some of the tastes, flavors, sights and sounds of Kalamazoo!

Cocktails

Provided by Lil Bird mobile bar & catering

Dinner

Choose 1 item from each food truck

Gorilla Gourmet *use blue ticket* Killer Tacos on Michigan made corn tortillas with signature slaw served with side of chips and salsa Mini Monstro quesadilla stuffed with house blend of 3 melted cheeses and slaw in a flour tortilla served with side of chips and salsa	Teresa’s Kitchen *use orange ticket* All options have your choice of chicken, beef, steak, or vegetarian Tamale Plate 3 tamales with side of rice and beans Taco Plate American or Mexican style served with side of rice and beans Burrito Plate served with side of rice and beans
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Dessert Bar

Floats provided by Spirit of Kalamazoo and Rocket Fizz
Chocolate and Caramels provided by Cherri’s Chocol’art
Popcorn provided by Pop City Popcorn

Sand Candle Making

use white ticket
Make your own sand candle from Kalamazoo Candle Company

Live Music

Larry Lewis duo

Movie Showings (inside in the workshop space)

MainStreets: Kalamazoo episode
6:30 pm | 7:30 pm | 8:30 pm



"The staff at Discover Kalamazoo was knowledgeable and creative. The ideas and events they organized for our group were so unique and fun, our members truly enjoyed it so much, and it set the bar higher for our host locations in the next few years. The Discover Kalamazoo team was great to work with!"

-Event Planner with the Professional Fraternity Association

TESTIMONIALS

I have 3 events around the country that I am the Event Director for during the year. I must admit the team at Discover Kalamazoo is the easiest and best to work with compared to the other city CVB's I work with.

- Will Seibel, National Street Rod Association Nationals North.

The Discover Kalamazoo team provided great support to our committee and event services team. They were very involved from the very early stages of planning and continued to support us through the conclusion of the conference. Their willingness to provide sponsorship, local connections and materials was valuable to all attendees and made the conference a great success!

- Ashley Schweiterman, Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals

Discover Kalamazoo is a fantastic asset to the city. The team is knowledgeable, creative, and friendly! Their ideas and support helped make our event successful and memorable.

- Sami Chau, MI Public Health Institute

The Discover Kalamazoo team have been positive and supportive partners throughout our planning process. It is always advantageous to have go-to partners on which we can rely!

- Erin McLaughlin, Great Lakes Electric Meter School

The Discover Kalamazoo team is an outstanding resource in my event planning. I utilize their skills in blocking hotel rooms for our visitors to securing event volunteers. They truly help my organization put on the best event possible.

- Nicole Sedlecky, United Kennel Club (UKC) Premier Nationals Dog Show

The team at Discover Kalamazoo were gems to work with. They assisted us as we prepared to host our conference for the first time here in Kalamazoo! Their assistance made the preparation smooth with brochures and passes that encouraged folks coming in for the conference to get out and explore Kalamazoo. I cannot say thank you enough for their assistance in making our event so successful!

-Kelly K. CASA Director Kalamazoo County

Discover! KALAMAZOO SPORTS™

60+

EVENTS
HOSTED

36,000+

ATHLETES

\$28.7M

ECONOMIC
IMPACT

*NEW ALL TIME
RECORD*

41,263

TENTATIVE ROOM NIGHTS

27,021

DEFINITE ROOM NIGHTS



MAJOR EVENTS HOSTED

- **Midwest & Pacific Coast Synchronized Sectional Championships hosted by the Greater Kalamazoo Skating Association at Wings Event Center, January 25 - 29**
 - Nearly 2,500 athletes, coaches, and various event personnel
 - 2,800 room nights realized
 - Estimated direct economic impact of \$3,688,772
- **USA Hockey Youth Tier II 14U National Championships at Wings Event Center and Wings West, March 30 - April 4**
 - Nearly 1,300 athletes, coaches, and various event personnel
 - 3,100 hotel room nights realized
 - Estimated direct economic impact of \$2,059,177
- **USTA Boys' 18 & 16 National Championships at Kalamazoo College Stowe Stadium, August 5 - 14**
 - Nearly 600 athletes, coaches, and various event personnel
 - 830 hotel room nights realized
 - Estimated direct economic impact of \$1,357,589
- **National Collegiate Roller Hockey Association National Championships at Wings Event Center, April 6 - 10**
 - Nearly 650 athletes, coaches, and various event personnel
 - 530 room nights realized
 - Estimated direct economic impact of \$811,840
- **MHSAA Team Wrestling Finals hosted by the Michigan High School Athletic Association at Wings Event Center, February 25 - 26**
 - Nearly 900 athletes, coaches, and various event personnel
 - 500+ hotel room nights realized
 - Estimated direct economic impact of \$557,557



TRADE SHOWS AND CONFERENCES

- Pure Michigan Sports Sales Blitz – Colorado Springs, CO (February 15-16)
- Sports ETA Symposium – Fort Worth, TX (May 2-6)
- Connect Sports – Detroit, MI (August 8-11)
- S.P.O.R.T.S. The Relationship Conference – Savannah, GA (September 19-22)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Civitas National TID Summit (virtual)
- Sports ETA 4S Summit – Sarasota, FL (October 11-13)

DISCOVER KALAMAZOO SPORTS GOLF OUTING

- 22 foursomes/88 golfers (10% increase over 2021)
- \$7,000+ net revenue (40% increase over 2021)

RESEARCH

CONTRACTED WITH CONVENTION, SPORTS & LEISURE (CSL) TO KICK-OFF AN AMATEUR & YOUTH SPORTS FACILITY STUDY IN FALL OF 2022.

DESTINATION SERVICES & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

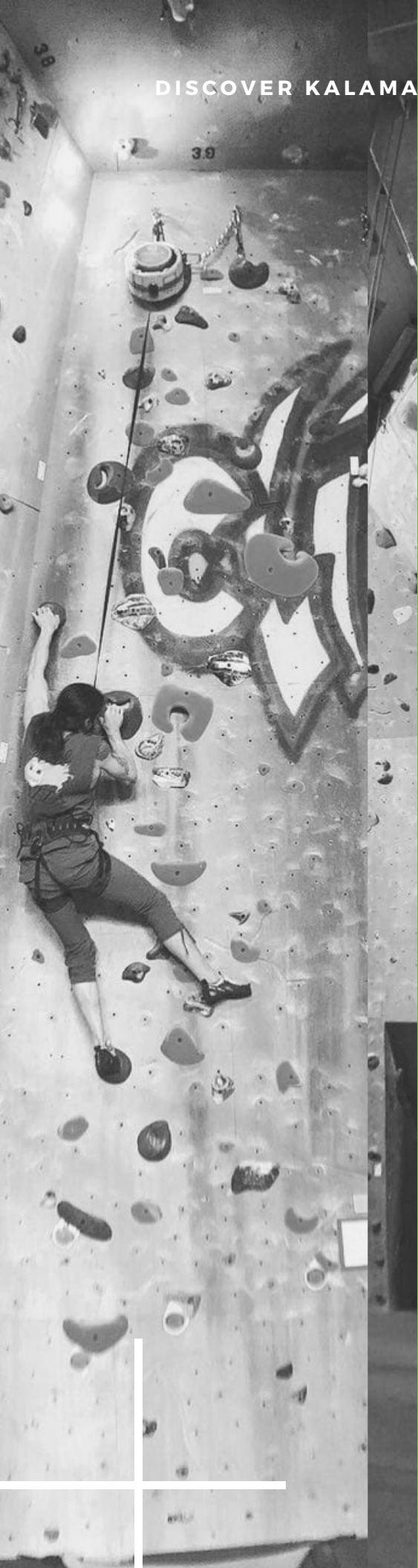
53 Events Served Including:

MAMUN Conference
KP Futsal
Great Lakes Rotary PETS
Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA)
2022 USA Hockey Youth Tier II 14U National Championship
National Roller Hockey Volunteering
Collegiate Dodgeball National Championships
American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS) Michigan
MI Assn of County Veteran Counselors
Zeigler Kalamazoo Marathon
Kalamazoo Crusader Cup
MSMS House of Delegates
State of MI Dept of Military and Veterans Affairs
Mock Trial
MI NENA/APCO Public Safety Telecommunications Annual Conference
AKC Apple Blossom Cluster
ANREP Professional Development Conference
UKC Premiere Nationals
American Legion Dept. of MI Annual Convention
MCACN Muscle Car Show
Dokidokon
Latitude 42 Pickleball Fever In The Zoo Tournament
Plymouth Owners Car Club
CMHA Clubhouse Conference
MDO International Annual Convention
PGA Jr. League Regional Championship
National Street Rods Association
Cadillac-LaSalle Fall Festival
GLCEC
USTA
GLEMS
Congress of Motorcars
Michigan Autism Conference
SBAM Building Bridges
SNAM Annual Conference and Exhibit Show

108

**INTERACTIONS AT
THE KALAMAZOO
BATTLE CREEK
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT**

**A NEW PROGRAM, THE DISCOVER
KALAMAZOO TOURISM ACADEMY, BEGAN
DEVELOPMENT IN THE FALL OF 2022.**



TEAM VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

- **MLK DAY OF SERVICE AT GILMORE CAR MUSEUM**
- **KALAMAZOO RIVER VALLEY TRAIL CLEANUP FOR MI CARES FOR TOURISM**
- **YOUTH DAY AT BLACK ARTS FESTIVAL**
- **INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY OF SERVICE PAINTING AT MILHAM PARK**

2023 AND BEYOND

Since we learned that we delivered our 2023 visitor spending objective two years ahead of schedule, our focus has been on executing brilliantly while we work to define our next long term goal. Just like last year, we continue to face headwinds of big “greatest of all trips” competing for vacation days and vacation budgets with casual road trip destinations like Kalamazoo County. The near-constant fear of recession forces us to remain agile with our planning, even while we know that Kalamazoo County is an affordable destination that should win even if travelers are forced to “trade down” in a poor economic climate.

We will benefit in 2023 and beyond from the foundations we built in 2022. Our new, unified positioning will help us have powerful creative to drive leisure visits. Our business development team is already out identifying incremental business we can win with the new downtown Event Center. And our new multi-cultural strategy and the funding behind it -- thanks to the American Rescue Plan grant from the County -- will help us grow across all aspects of our business. We recognize the indispensable role played by our local partners in delivering exceptional front-line hospitality to our visitors. We look forward to a bright future together.