



# VISIT KNOXVILLE

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## DESTINATION MARKETING & EVENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES REPORT

**OCTOBER 1 - DECEMBER 31, 2022**





January 13, 2023

The second quarter of FY2022–2023 saw the conclusion the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1982 World's Fair celebrations, with the installation of **Informational Markers at World's Fair Park**, a **Closing Dinner** at the Foundry, and receiving the **Tourism Trailblazer Award**, recognizing Visit Knoxville for a successful execution of the Kick-Off Celebration in May.

The end of 2022 marked another momentous occasion as we celebrated **Visit Knoxville's 10-year anniversary**! It's been an honor and a privilege to promote Knoxville and Knox County over the past decade, and we're just getting started.

There's so much more we accomplished this quarter, and I hope you'll enjoy reading about all the ways we promote this *nature-loving-adventure-seeking-artsy-kinda-town*. As always, we credit these successes, and additional ones detailed in this report, to the strong relationships we maintain with our tourism partners.

On behalf of Visit Knoxville, I proudly submit the October 1 – December 31, 2022 report for Destination Marketing and Event Management Services for Knoxville and Knox County.

Sincerely,

Kim Bumpas, CDME, CMP  
President, Visit Knoxville

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# HIGHLIGHTS SUMMARY

The following summary details select highlights for October 1 – December 31, 2022, the second quarter of fiscal year 2022–2023. These highlights can be used as a quick reference when talking about the activity and progress of Visit Knoxville (VK).

- **Partnering with the University of Tennessee (UT) Athletic Department on Market Square Madness** – This event was held on October 13 to promote the upcoming seasons for both the Men’s & Women’s Basketball teams. The Visit Knoxville Sports Commission (VKSC) set a half court of VK’s sport court and a basketball goal in the middle of Market Square on which both teams showcased their skills, signed autographs, and introduced each of the players on their roster to the hundreds of fans in attendance.



*“Thank you all again so much for helping us host a great event. The court was perfect for this and wouldn’t have been possible without you all so again THANK YOU!”*

*– Jess Roseberry, Director of Fan Experience, University of Tennessee*

- **Hosting the premiere of *Memento Mori*** – The Visit Knoxville Film Office hosted a red-carpet premiere on October 13 at Regal Riviera of *Memento Mori*, a feature film successfully recruited by the Film Office and filmed in Knoxville in the fall of 2021. The movie stars Shane West (*A Walk to Remember*), Levin Rambin (*Hunger Games*), Jake McLaughlin (*Quantico*), and Dee Wallace (*E.T.*). The movie screened at the downtown Regal Riviera theater to a packed house. Shane West was in attendance as well as the producers and director of the film. The movie tells the story of a couple that flee to the hills of Tennessee as a planet-killing asteroid approaches earth. *Memento Mori* should be released in 2023.



*“We are hoping that ‘Memento Mori’ will be the first of many. We had a wonderful experience working with Curt Willis (Director of the Visit Knoxville Film Office) and everyone in Knoxville and Knox County. The State of Tennessee (which provided tax rebate incentives for the project) really stepped up, as well.”*

*– Brian Conley, CEO of Conley Entertainment Group*

- Partnering with the City of Knoxville and Knoxville History Project to Install Informational Markers at World's Fair Park** – A total of eight colorful informational markers were placed to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the 1982 World's Fair. They tell a few of the many stories of places and events that took place throughout the footprint of the Fair – from the Foundry to Second Creek Greenway. Passersby can enjoy the markers at their own leisure, as they are not in numerical order, but do tell an encompassing story of the Fair. The self-guided tour of the markers has been added to the [Tours page](#) on the VK website. Information about the 1982 World's Fair can be found at [worldsfairknoxville.com](http://worldsfairknoxville.com).



- Hosting the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1982 World's Fair Closing Dinner and Live Auction** – VK concluded the six-month anniversary celebrations with an event on October 28 at the Foundry (which served as the Strohaus during the 1982 World's Fair).

The VK Team developed the vision for the evening which mimicked in many ways the dinner enjoyed 40 years ago. The Convention Services Team incorporated the gold, red, and black colors throughout the elevated décor and floral arrangements, with themed collateral designed by the Marketing Team, including invitations, programs, lists of auction items, bidder numbers, menus, and table sponsor displays. The Visitor Services Team provided a merchandise table including custom commemorative 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary items. Memorabilia from the 1982 World's Fair was also on display and available to take home for a donation.



The evening was filled with a menu reminiscent of the one served in 1982, complete with the Starburst, the signature cocktail served back then. Guests were treated to memories from original World's Fair committee members and employees.





deliver the items won. Attendees received a custom thank you message for commemorating the anniversary with us this year. The evening was a true celebration of the world coming to Knoxville 40 years ago!

The live auction included 18 packages and a select amount of 1982 World's Fair limited edition Sunsphere statues. During the auction, VK coordinated to display items, track winning bids, and check-out and



*“The job you and your organization did to recognize this anniversary was by far the most significant and positive actions that have happened in Knoxville since the Fair ended. Great job Friday and since May...thank you on behalf of a lot of folks who had worked very hard to present the event for the world 40 years ago.”*

*– Bo Roberts, President and Chief Executive Officer, 1982 World's Fair*

- **Hosting the Tennessee Society of Association Executives (TNSAE) Annual Boot Camp & Trade Show** – Knoxville had a first-time opportunity to host and attend this event November 3–December 1. This group consists of associations from across the state who rotate their events annually. The Boot Camp was held at the Knoxville Convention Center (KCC), followed by a welcome reception hosted by VK at the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame (WBHOF). VK welcomed the group at the luncheon, followed by the trade show with opportunity for exhibitors and planners to network between educational sessions.



- **Launching the Downtown Knoxville Audio Walking Tour** – VK launched an audio tour powered by the VoiceMap app. This tour uses GPS to play audio automatically at the right time and place. Once the app is downloaded, visitors can purchase this one-hour tour for \$5.99 by searching Knoxville or scanning the QR code displayed in the Visitors Center. The tour is also listed on the VK website beneath self-guided tours.

- **Hosting the TTM International PR FAM** – VK partnered with the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD) along with their partners in the UK on November 13. Attendees included **James March**, a freelance writer who was recently published in **Nat Geo Traveller**; **Kim Carr**, a feature writer for **Reach PLC** (one of Britain’s biggest newspaper groups with publications including national titles such as the Daily Mirror, Daily Star, the Daily Express, and other regional titles); **Hannah Stephenson**, a writer with PA Media (syndicate with regional titles across the UK); and **Rashmi Narayan**, a freelance writer focused on culinary, whiskey, and outdoors. Their multi-destination Tennessee visit included a full day in Knoxville. Their itinerary started with a visit to the Sunsphere, a guided downtown walking tour followed by a driving tour, with dinner and live music at Ale’ Rae’s to round out their experience. The following has since been published:



- **Hannah Stephenson** has had an article published in **Irish News**
- **James March** has had an article published in **Love Exploring**

- **Hosting the Travel South International Post FAM** – VK partnered with TDTD to host on November 30. Travel South USA is the official regional destination marketing organization of the Southern USA, and the Travel South International Showcase is a tourism professional conference that was held in Louisville this year. TDTD brought 14 conference attendees (from the UK, France, Italy, Brazil, Australia, Germany, and more) to several destinations in East Tennessee. Their Knoxville visit included live music with the WDVX Blue Plate Special, lunch at Babalu and a tour of Maple Hall, tours of the Tennessee Theatre and the East Tennessee History Center, followed by a visit to the Sunsphere and driving tour to Ijams Nature Center. The group toasted their visit to Knoxville with a pint at Alliance Brewing Co. before departing to Sevierville.



*“I wanted to thank you again for hosting our group in Knoxville and for being such passionate guides for us...We all had a WONDERFUL time. I look forward to working with you and promoting Knoxville to the German-speaking markets.”*

– *Nora Kutsche, Lieb Management*



- **Receiving the Tourism Trailblazer Award** – The Middle East Tennessee Tourism Council (METTC) presented its Excellence in Tourism Awards on December 1 at Jewelry Television. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the East Tennessee Region State Legislators Hospitality Luncheon that is sponsored annually by METTC, the Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association, and VK. The luncheon is an opportunity for the state and local elected officials of the 16-county region to hear about tourism’s positive economic impact in their respective areas.

The Tourism Trailblazer Award was presented to VK for its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1982 World’s Fair Kick Off Celebration. This award is not given annually but is reserved for an event that is truly unique, or a once-in-a lifetime occurrence. This is only the third time the award has been given.



VK took the lead in creating the festival because it literally meant “the world” to a variety of people. For locals who still take immense pride in what was accomplished, it was a pat



on the back, a chance to re-live the fun, and a reminder of why World’s Fair Park is still relevant. Guests came from all over, sporting their faded Fair name badges and vintage t-shirts. They were reminded that our beloved Sunsphere stands alongside the Eiffel Tower and Seattle’s Space Needle as treasured, one-of-a-kind structures created specifically for World’s Fairs, and of the importance of

understanding and appreciating the many cultures that are still woven into the fabric of East Tennessee. In short, the community came together to make this festival happen the same way it did 40 years ago. And it, too, was a success.

- **Hosting the 2022 Amateur Athletic Union Cross Country National Championships** – Knoxville played host to the best youth cross-country runners throughout the country on December 2–4, marking Knoxville’s fourth time hosting this elite event. Nearly 1,500 athletes from 36 states completed a challenging two-mile course throughout Victor Ashe Park. The VKSC assisted with venue selection and worked directly with the event director leading up to and during the event. Athletes were welcomed via the Visitors Center Reader Board as they arrived in Knoxville. VKSC processed and stored event





equipment, uniforms, and awards leading up to the event and delivered all assets to the venue prior to registration start. The VKSC served onsite at registration and throughout the competition, assisting with event management as needed. All hotel sourcing and reservation management was managed by VK Housing, including athlete, coach, spectator, and staff room blocks. A custom reservation site with tournament branding was provided. Helpful visitor information and local attraction discounts were distributed to athletes, including exclusive access to VK's discounted Dollywood ticket partnership. VKSC highlighted the event on social media with extensive video footage throughout the weekend.



***“I would like to take this opportunity to say thanks to Visit Knoxville for their help and support in hosting the AAU Cross Country National Championship. Their expertise and willingness to support our efforts to provide positive competitive opportunities for our youth was exceptional.”***  
– Charles Oliver, AAU Track & Field National Chairman

- **Hosting Tour de Lights with Bike Walk Knoxville** – VK was proud to host this event once again on December 10. Tour de Lights is a fun, free, family friendly holiday bike ride and participants are encouraged to get in the holiday spirit by decorating themselves and their bikes. The event engages neighborhoods and businesses, along with others who come out to view the festivities. The ride began at Suttree Landing Park and concluded in Market Square where participants were treated to hot chocolate and cookies provided by Mast General Store and Three Rivers Market. VK managed a retail booth on site to sell special event designed t-shirts and locally made Knoxville merchandise.



## SALES SUMMARY

- **Trade Shows** – The VK Sales Team attended five trade shows this quarter\*:
  - **Connect Faith Southeast (October 3–5)** – VK attended the Connect Faith Southeast 2022 in Little Rock, AR. VK had 23 appointments with planners about bringing their events to Knoxville in future years.
  - **Amateur Athletic Union National Convention (October 18–23)** – VKSC attended AAU National Convention in Orlando, FL. VKSC had meetings with AAU Athletics, AAU Volleyball, AAU Basketball, AAU Baseball and AAU Wrestling about bringing their events to Knoxville in future years.
  - **TEAMS Conference (October 24–27)** – VKSC attended the TEAMS Conference in Oklahoma City, OK. VKSC had 24 appointments with rights holders about bringing their events to Knoxville in future years.
  - **US Sports Congress (December 4–7)** – VKSC attended US Sports Congress in Richmond, VA. VKSC had 21 appointments with rights holders about bringing their events to Knoxville in future years.

*\*Additional show referenced in Highlights Summary – TNSAE*

VK tracks each sales activity and monitors results throughout the fiscal year. For FYE23, VK received four RFPs resulting from 2Q trade show attendance.

- **Site Visits** – The VK Sales Team hosted four site visits during 2Q:
  - **USA Diving** – VKSC hosted the USA Diving Site Selection Committee for the 2024 Olympic Trials and toured the Marriott, Neyland Stadium, Sunsphere, and Allan Jones Aquatic Center, with a reception at Saloon 16. Knoxville has made the final list of two destinations. Host city will be notified in January with an announcement to follow.





- **Cumberland Presbyterian Church** – VK hosted planner from Cumberland Presbyterian Church for their 2024 General Assembly Convention and toured the Hilton, Marriott, and Crowne Plaza. They liked the walkability of the hotels to Market Square.



- **Sports Inc.** – VK hosted planners from Sports Inc. for the 2023 Annual Conference. The planners toured the Hilton, Marriott, and the KCC. They were very impressed with both properties for their smaller conference and felt their larger event would fit great at the KCC.

- **Tennessee Department**

**of Veteran Services** – VK hosted planners from the Tennessee Department of Veteran Services for their 2023 Annual Training Conference. The group toured the Cumberland House, Hilton, and KCC. They were very impressed with the space at the KCC.



- **Scouting Trips** – VK performed one scouting trip during 2Q:
  - **USA Diving** – VKSC attended the USA Diving Winter Nationals in West Virginia in December. VKSC is pursuing the 2023 USA Diving Winter Nationals to be held in Knoxville.

# CONVENTION & SPORTS SERVICES SUMMARY

The **Visit Knoxville Convention & Sports Services Team** provides services for conventions, trade shows, sporting events, and festivals utilizing a consultative approach based on the unique needs, specific goals, and attendee interests of each group. This enhances the overall planner and attendee experience with a focus on services designed to add value, maximize group efforts to grow attendance, and retain group business. Refer to the Business Held & Services Provided Report included at the end of the report for additional details for each convention and meeting.

The Convention & Sports Services Team supported 71 events/meetings, 13 festivals, and provided a total of 92 partner referrals. All 92 partner referrals were related to events/meetings and festivals that were supported this quarter. Team Knoxville Volunteers were utilized at two events this quarter, for a total of 21.5 hours provided as a no-cost, service-added benefit to local events.

## 2Q Goals:

- **Explore and secure new planner welcome gift offerings for site and pre-planning visits** – Custom Knoxville candles, Fall in KNOX, from local Maker, 865 Candle Co. were ordered and secured to be given to planners during visits. These candles also include Visit Knox and Knox Sports stickers for branding purposes.
- **Obtain banners with current Visit Knoxville branding and website to be utilized at events and local festivals** – New banners were designed and received in-house to be utilized at the Tennessee Valley Fair.
- **Manage and execute all logistics and programming of the Closing Dinner for the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the 1982 World's Fair, as well as provide Thank You to all partners involved** – A successful event was planned and executed on Friday, October 28 at the Foundry. See the Highlights Summary for additional details.
- **Complete Event Services Professional Association (ESPA) Foundational Training** – Sr. Manager of Convention Services completed training on December 16.



## *Highlighted Events (additional items referenced in the Highlights Summary):*

- The **Rubber Division of the American Chemical Society** hosted their **International Elastomer Conference** at the KCC **October 10–13** with over 1,800 attendees representing



23 countries. Planning began in 2019 for the event, which was originally scheduled in 2020. When the event was cancelled, assistance was provided with moving dates to 2022 and securing venue space and hotel rooms. Several site visits and pre-planning visits were hosted to determine needs.

The planner requested Knoxville photos and visitor materials to be used for promotion and enhancement on the event website. VK Housing provided full event housing services for all attendees, staff, and VIPs across 10 host hotels. Services included contract assistance, a customized reservation website, reservation and group rooming list management, customer service assistance, and post event reconciliation and reporting. Off-site venue and partner referrals were provided for board dinners, vendor off-site functions and service providers. Connections were made with Knox County and surrounding school systems to offer students opportunities to attend STEM sessions during the conference.



VK organized and invited all participating hotels to attend a pre-conference meeting to receive essential information and key cards for attendees. At the opening session and welcome reception, Mayor Jacobs welcomed attendees to Knoxville. A custom KNOX magnet was created as well as pole banners hung around downtown to welcome attendees. VK staffed a Knoxville Information Table on-site and provided QR codes for digital materials as well as hard copies of Visitors Guides, Downtown Maps, Downtown Dining & Trolley Maps, Experience Knoxville Savings Passes and VK branded plastic bags. The group was also welcomed via a custom message on the Visitors Center Reader Board and VK TV loops at various locations in town.

***“I had to jump into my new role as Conference Director with the Rubber Division just two months prior to Conference move in. The entire Knoxville Team provided me with support, guidance, and new friendships. It takes a Team to pull off a successful conference and I am proud to say that the Rubber Division and Knoxville did it! Thank you, Knoxville Team!”***

***– Melanie Avdeyev, Conference Director, Rubber Division of the American Chemical Society***

- The VKSC welcomed the **2022 Battle in Rocky Top** the weekend of **November 18–20, 2022**. This premier post season youth football tournament drew over 400 teams from 22



different states. Thousands of athletes of varying grades and skill levels competed across 18 different local venues, including John Tarleton Park, Tommy Schumpert Park, Knoxville Catholic High School, and Webb School of Knoxville. Tournament registration and athlete weigh-ins kicked off at West Town Mall. In addition to supporting the event via a provided partnership to the tournament, the VKSC offered services and assistance to meet a variety of event needs. The VKSC team loaned out event equipment in the

form of three tables and a pop-up tent and facilitated the pick-up and delivery for all items at John Tarleton Park. The VKSC provided helpful links to highlight all that Knoxville has to offer, including discounts to local partners and attractions, Visitors Guide information, Downtown Maps, and a family friendly weekend guide. The tournament was heavily promoted via VKSC social media channels leading up to the event and throughout the weekend. VKSC welcomed athletes and their families with a custom message on the Visitors Center Reader Board.



Note: The 2022 American Bantam Association National Meet scheduled for December at Chilhowee Park was cancelled due to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza.

#### **Additional planner quotes from 2Q meetings and events:**

*“Knoxville provided our conference with the resources, entertainment, and atmosphere, making it a memorable event for all. We saw smiles all weekend and positive comments about the event and about Knoxville. The information provided was appreciated by the out-of-town attendees and the referrals were helpful in making our event successful.”*

– Sophia Conerly, Planner, *Ninety-Nines: International Women Pilots Southeast Section Fall Meeting*

*“We have held our USAC Regional Mountain Bike Races for two years in a row in Knoxville and have had an amazing experience working with the Visit Knoxville Team. Parker has been wonderful to work with and we plan to host additional events in Knoxville in 2023.”*

– David Moore, Owner & Race Promoter, *Go Nuts Biking*

*“VKSC is very supportive and helpful. Caleb’s direct support is part of the reason that our event was a success. We would like to work with your organization again for our future events.”*

– Jude Lam, President, *Knoxville Table Tennis Club*



## Team Knoxville Volunteers

A total of 21.5 hours provided by 4 volunteers as a no-cost, service-added benefit to the following:

- Assisted with preparing welcome bags, greeting, checking in, and answering attendee questions for a total of 12 hours during the Energy Technology and Environmental Business Association Annual Business Opportunities Conference, October 3–5.
- Served as information table assistants for a total of 9.5 hours during the International Elastomer Conference, October 10–12.



Participated in the following events to recruit additional volunteers:

- October 20 – UT Homecoming Volunteer Fair.



## Additional 2Q Activity:

- **Pre-planning visits:**
  - **Bassmaster Classic Pre-Planning Visit – December 5** – Met with planner, local distributor, and local brewery to discuss details and logistics of Opening Party to be held in World's Fair Park.
  - **Shed Builders Expo Pre-Planning Visit – December 12–13** – Hosted planner and toured KCC and Marriott to determine event details. Visited various off-site venues as options for networking functions.
- **Festival and partnership and support included** HoLa Festival, the Knoxville Downtown Sertoma Club's "Remember the Strohaus" Oktoberfest event, Foothills Craft Guild Annual Fine Craft Show, Greek Fest, Veterans Day Parade, Christmas in Chilhowee, Fantasy of Trees, Holidays on Ice, Celebration of Lights, Light Up Lakeshore, WIVK Christmas Parade, and New Year's Eve at the Sunsphere.
- Conducted pre-planning calls and/or meetings for Grooves in the Garden, Southeast Crime Stoppers for 2023 Conference, Bike Boat Brew & Bark
- Attended Knoxville Founders Day Luncheon at East Tennessee Historical Society
- Attended the Knoxville Chamber Endeavor Summit
- Collaborated with Make Music Knoxville to record a song for the Christmas Cart event
- Attended the Alliance for Better Nonprofits Volunteer Manager Networking Hour
- Participated in the following webinars and virtual events:
  - SimpleView – Stay on Time & On-Task with Valuable Trigger Traces
  - ESPA Leaders Webinar – *Fired-Up! Culture*



# MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS SUMMARY

The **Visit Knoxville Marketing Team** produces, approves and places regional, national, and international advertising and social media promoting Knoxville to leisure travelers, conference and event planners, sports events planners and film and television production companies. Creative is based around the *nature-loving-adventure-seeking-artsy-kind-of-town* campaign directing to [visitknoxville.com](http://visitknoxville.com). The Team also recruits and partners with journalists and influencers to share Knoxville's narratives.

## 2Q Goals:

- **Launch new Insta Knox mobile pass** – Knoxville is known for its iconic Sunsphere skyline, Neyland Stadium, and the historic Tennessee Theatre. But there are far more spots to discover, enjoy and capture all over town. The Insta Knox Passport provides locals and visitors alike with some favorites, allowing explorers to share their photos or save them for their own memories, and the ability to “check in” for prizes along the way.

This mobile-exclusive passport is a collection of curated attractions, retailers, restaurants and more and offers deals and discounts to redeem.

There is no app to download. The pass can be saved to any phone's home screen for easy one-tap access. When visiting a location, simply check in and record visits to count towards a prize. The Insta Knox Passport can be downloaded at [Instaknox.com](http://Instaknox.com).



- **Host at least three journalists/influencers for editorial content development** – VK hosted eight journalists along with 12 tour operator/tourism professionals and assisted an additional four journalists. Please reference the Highlights Summary and Journalist Assistance sections of this report for details.
- **Partner with Knoxville History Project on World's Fair Park walking tour (in commemoration of 40th Anniversary of the 1982 World's Fair)** – The self-guided walking tour consists of eight markers. Please reference the Highlights Summary of this report for details.
- **Produce reimagined Knoxville Visitors Guide** – The fresh, new look includes additional content, beautiful photography and layouts, a wraparound cover photo, and neighborhood guides. Visitors will enjoy feature stories highlighting outdoor adventure, pet-friendly places, live music, local makers, and Knoxville's brewery scene.

The publication will be available later this month and distributed to high traffic locations including McGhee Tyson Airport, Tennessee State Welcome Centers, Knox County hotels and attractions, and UT. Additionally, it is shared at trade shows, sporting events and festivals, and mailed in response to visitor requests.



***Progress Notes (additional items may be referenced in the Highlights Summary):***

- VK's Marketing Team continues to work closely with VK Sales and Services Teams to create customized **creative materials**. Materials are referenced throughout this report.
- VK continues to utilize its **e-newsletter**, **Community Corner**, and **VK Network** messaging to communicate events and activities to visitors and the community. To stay in the loop, [sign up](#) for the e-newsletter and/or VK Blog.
  - **2Q E-newsletters**
    - **Experience Winter in Knoxville** – This edition highlighted winter hikes, mountain biking, birdwatching, the new Insta Knox mobile pass, Knoxville Ice Bears, Tennessee Riverboat, the new *Lights! Camera! East Tennessee!* exhibition at the East Tennessee History Center, First Friday, live music, Regal Celebration of Lights, Tour de Lights, and the WIVK Christmas Parade.
    - **12 Days of Christmas in Knoxville** – This edition highlighted Holidays on Ice, the Peppermint Trail, the Elf on the Shelf® Scavenger Hunt, the Clayton Holiday Concert, the Nutcracker Ballet, Tales from the Tavern at Marble Springs, Zoo Lights, Holiday Festival of Lights at the Cove at Concord Park, Three Rivers Rambler's Christmas Lantern Express, A Christmas Carol at Clarence Brown Theatre, Christkindlesmarkt at Schulz Bräu Brewing Company, a Swinging Christmas with the Knoxville Jazz Orchestra, and a bonus mention of New Year's Eve at The Sunsphere.

Current open rate for the e-newsletter is 40%\*

*\*Simpleview reports an average open rate of 27.78% for the tourism industry.*

- The **Community Corner** is a newsletter that is produced and distributed weekly by the Visitor Services Team to help keep local partners and establishments aware of the upcoming events that may impact or encourage their business, as well as



share information about local events and happenings. A total of 13 Community Corner newsletters were produced in 2Q.

- VK continues to promote tourism partners via the **VK Network**, a loop of partner videos running in 20+ high-traffic areas throughout Knox County.
- The VK **website** continues to perform incredibly well, amassing a total of 925,402 pageviews in 2Q. Additionally:
  - Average length of session was 1 minute 33 seconds
  - Pages per session was 1.82
  - Number of clicks to partner sites from VK website was 45,973
  - Top three metros generating traffic were Nashville, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C.
  - 397 pageviews to sign up for the e-newsletter

In this quarter, VK created new pages for the website as well as regularly updated content on various pages throughout the site which also feeds into the VK app, keeping everything fresh and up to date. For 2Q, the VK app had 401 downloads with a total of 1,680 sessions. The average engagement time per session spent on the app was 2 minutes 27seconds.

The **VK Online Event Calendar** is managed by the Visitor Services Team. In 2Q, 294 events were added to the calendar.

- VK promotes local partners in the **VK Blog** with a mix of contributors in addition to VK staff. Current partner writers include Jack Neely of Knoxville History Project, The Maker City, Arts & Culture Alliance organizations, and Legacy Parks. Read [more](#) and [subscribe](#). Post highlights include:

- [Guide to Zoo Knoxville](#)
- [Guide to Knoxville for Readers](#)
- [Guide to Christmas in Knoxville](#)



- VK's **social media channels** serve as key elements in VK's marketing mix, focused on directing traffic to blog posts and other sections of the VK website, sharing tourism partner information, and engaging with the community. Highlights include:
  - Promoting various events, exhibits, and attractions including several Halloween celebrations, the Día de Los Muertos exhibit at the McClung Museum, Christmas in the City, and more.

- Instagram story series including promotion of Tour de Lights, several Maker markets, a Knoxville Botanical Garden & Arboretum feature, and more.
- **Additional Partner Promotion & Involvement** – VK continues to provide support to our tourism partners. Highlights include:



- Celebrating the 24th year of Maple Lane Farms' Corn Maze by partnering on a Sunsphere maze to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the 1982 World's Fair.



- Partnering with the Historic House Museums of Knoxville on PastPorts.  
*"In many many ways Knoxville is rockin' because of you guys and all that you do to attract people's attention to this amazing place."*  
*– David E. Hearn, Executive Director, Blount Mansion Association*
- Partnering on the Tennessee Theatre's Broadway season (includes ad placement in playbills).
- Partnering with/speaking at Introduction Knoxville's "Quality of Life" session highlighting a variety of tourism partners and experiences (annual partnership includes three sessions in October, February, and May).
- Serving on the Tennessee Tourism Committee (TTC). TTC met virtually on December 15. The Committee's new leadership team was introduced. The Committee also received updates on marketing, outreach, communications, Songwriters' Week, sales, and a wrap-up of 2022. The President of Visit Knoxville remains Chair of the Research Committee at the state level.
- VK continues to **track marketing efforts** that contribute to hotel bookings and website traffic via ADARA and Arrivalist. According to ADARA, digital marketing in 2Q contributed to 2,705 hotel bookings. These numbers will continue to increase up to 60 days post-campaign. Additionally, organic website traffic in 2Q contributed to 3,873 hotel bookings. VK continues to pull insights from our Arrivalist partnership: For 2022 through December, the top ten origin Designated Market Areas (DMA) of overnight visitors for the period by volume are listed on the following page. These markets stayed an average of 1.9 nights. \*

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. Nashville        | 6. Greenville/Spartanburg/Asheville/Anderson |
| 2. Atlanta          | 7. Charlotte                                 |
| 3. Tri-Cities–TN–VA | 8. Washington, D.C.                          |
| 4. Chattanooga      | 9. Knoxville**                               |
| 5. Memphis          | 10. Chicago                                  |

*\*It is important to note that we are still inside the travel window, which means travelers exposed to ads in December may not have traveled yet, which may influence the top markets.*

*\*\*The Knoxville DMA consists of 22 counties within East Tennessee and Southeast Kentucky.*

*Note: Stay-lift is currently being updated by Arrivalist to bring their data in line with new privacy guidelines.*

The 2Q VK Tourism Dashboard will be available to view alongside the 2Q Highlights Report on Friday, January 27 on the [VK website](#).

## Journalist & Influencer Visits and Assistance:

- VK hosted **Glenda Booth**, a freelance writer targeting an article for **The Beacon Newspapers**, a Washington D.C. based publication. VK arranged visits and tours for the Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame, the Sunsphere, and Marble Springs State Historic Site.
- VK assisted THE TENNESSEAN with **Diana Marks**, an influencer, and **Chelsea Smith**, an influencer and photographer with Urban Bay Photography. VK arranged visits to the Sunsphere and provided itinerary suggestions. Diana and Chelsea have since posted to [@dianamarksofficial](#) and [@chesleaericasmith](#) on Instagram.
- VK assisted THE TENNESSEAN with **Julie Sagoskin** of **Park Magazine**, a New York-based luxury lifestyle publication, and **Hayden Walker** of **Austin Food Magazine**. VK assisted with tastings at Knox Brew Tours and PostModern Spirits, a Candlelight Tour at Historic Westwood, and customized itinerary recommendations for each writer.
- VK partnered with TDTD to host **Bri Maloney**, an influencer based in Nashville. VK provided recommendations for a holiday visit, including exploring the Peppermint Trail and Holidays on Ice. She has since posted stories to [@travelwithbreezyy](#) on Instagram.

## Publication Updates from Previous Visits:

- **Cathy Martin** has had an article published in [SouthPark Magazine](#).
- **Catherine Smith** has had two articles in **USA Today 10 Best**, awarding Pretentious Beer Co. in the [Best New Brewery](#) category and Gypsy Circus in the [Best Cidery](#) category.



- **Jeff Cohen** has had an article published in **Sophisticated Living Indianapolis**.
- **Emily Donohue** has had an article published in **Lexington Living Magazine**.
- **Sandra Wickert** has had two articles published on **tracksandthecity.de**: 48 Stunden in Knoxville, Tennessee: Sehenswürdigkeiten & Tipps für ein Wochenende and 22 Tennessee-Fakten, die du bestimmt noch nicht kanntest. She has also posted stories and reels to @tracksandthecity on Instagram.
- **Anja Müller** has had two articles published on **goontravel.de**: Tennessee Volunteers: American Football in Knoxville erleben and 12 Dinge die du unbedingt in Knoxville Tennessee machen solltest. She has also posted stories to @goontravel.de on Instagram.

## Media:

- **Media Assistance Provided** – VK has standing appearances on WDVX, WBIR, and WATE. Additional assistance (content, photography, itinerary suggestions, quotes, interviews, partner referrals, etc.) was provided to the following:

Knoxville News Sentinel, TDTD, AAA Living Magazine, SouthPark Magazine, UT Center for Global Engagement, Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine, UT College of Veterinary Medicine, Pride Journeys, American Water Works Association, Office of Tennessee First Lady Maria Lee, T.T.S. Media, Tennessee Whiskey Trail, TIME Magazine, Bourbon+, Landscape Architect, Better Homes & Gardens, and various freelancers.

Published pieces (both earned and paid placement) include:

- *Pride Journeys – Winter Wonderland*
  - *Pubclub.com*
  - *Pride Journeys – New Year's Eve*
  - *StephanieGalt.com*
- **Earned/Unpaid Media Report** – Earned media is publicity gained through non-advertising news stories. Stories written by VK hosted travel writers are included. Values and advertising equivalency (\$) determined by Cision.
    - Total Number of Placements – 175
    - Total Publicity Value for Earned Media – \$335,667

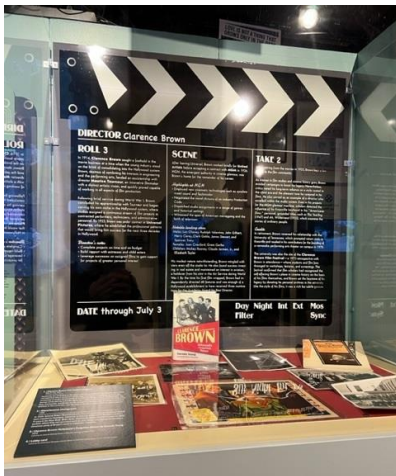
## VISIT KNOXVILLE FILM OFFICE

The Visit Knoxville Film Office actively promotes Knoxville and Knox County as a premiere filming location. Recruiting motion media companies through the marketing of locations, accommodations, services, crew, and talent fosters the creation of jobs in the area, stimulates business opportunities, and generates exposure. The VK Film Office also mediates the permitting process between federal, state, and local agencies and the film industry.

The second quarter was a very productive season, as the VK Film Office provided assistance to local production companies such as Jupiter Entertainment, Draft Agency, and Radio Systems Corporation by aiding in permits, location needs, and city services for projects including crime reality television shows, commercials, and marketing campaigns. The television shows air on networks like Discovery ID, Oxygen, and The Weather Channel.

In October, the VK Film Office hosted a red-carpet premiere of *Memento Mori*. Please see Highlights Summary for details.

Also in October, the feature film *Grounded* wrapped principal photography. The film was recruited by the VK Film Office. The Film Office provided location scouting services as well as assistance with permits, city services, lodging needs, and incentives. *Grounded* filmed



for nearly a month and had the largest budget of any film shot in Knoxville since *October Sky*. The project stars Robert Taylor (*Longmire*), Adam Bartley (*Night Sky*), and Radha Mitchell (*Run Hide Fight*). It tells the true story of a man and his quest for purpose after losing the first two loves of his life.



This quarter, the Film Office partnered with the East Tennessee History Center on their new feature exhibition *Lights! Camera! East Tennessee!* telling the history of film in East Tennessee. The Film Office provided artifacts from films we successfully recruited to Knoxville, as well as interviews included in a video display. The exhibit opened November 19 and runs through July 3, 2023.

In December, the Film Office announced a partnership with Public Cinema on the production of a new Film Festival. FILM FEST KNOX will take place fall 2023 in downtown Knoxville and will include feature film blocks as well as short film programming, workshops, and other film competitions. Further details to be announced early 2023.

## VISITOR SERVICES SUMMARY

The **Visitor Services Team** serves as the face of Visit Knoxville welcoming and assisting visitors and locals at the Visit Knoxville Visitors Center located at 301 S. Gay Street and the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Observation Deck of the Sunsphere at World's Fair Park. The Team works with more than 80 local Makers to provide a variety of quality retail items in the Gift Shops at both locations.

Guests to the Visitors Center were invited to pick up Elf on the Shelf® Passports, explore the Downtown Knoxville Peppermint Trail, and purchase locally made gifts. The VK Gift Shops completed over \$61,000 in sales in 2Q. Since reopening in February 2022, the Sunsphere has welcomed over 48,000 guests from all 50 states and 37 different countries.

### 2Q Goals:

- **Host 2 Gotta Know Knoxville (GKK) sessions** – GKK closed out the season with four classes hosted in 2Q, registering 33 attendees for the downtown walking tour (free for hospitality members).
- **Receive at least 3 new local items into inventory in the VK Visitors Center Gift Shop** – During 2Q, six new makers were added, resulting in over twenty new products.

### *Progress Notes (additional items may be referenced in the Highlights Summary):*

- **Visitors Center Traffic** – Over 8,700 guests were greeted in person. Top 10 states (in addition to Tennessee) of visitors checking into the Visitors Center were:
  - Florida
  - North Carolina
  - Texas
  - New York
  - California
  - Illinois
  - Ohio
  - Pennsylvania
  - Michigan
  - Virginia
- **Visit Knoxville Gift Shop** – VK's Visitors Center and Sunsphere Gift Shops completed over \$61,000 in sales during 2Q, averaging close to \$700 for daily sales. The Visitor Services Team continues to support Knoxville's Maker community and artists with over 80 existing partnerships. In addition to the Visitors Center and Sunsphere, these products can also be found at VK retail booths at community events and festivals. This quarter, VK merchandise was sold at HoLa Festival, Sertoma Club





Oktoberfest, the 1982 World's Fair 40th Anniversary Dinner, Celebration of Lights, and Tour De Lights. These off-site retail booths grossed over \$5,500 in sales.

- **Special Events & Partnerships** – This holiday season, VK partnered with the Downtown Knoxville Alliance on an annual favorite, the Elf on the Shelf® Scavenger Hunt. The



Visitors Center along with Mast General Store were selected to be two locations to hand out Elf on the Shelf® Adventure Passports and stamps. This made our resident Scout Elf, Volly Knox, a very popular elf.

The Visitors Center and Sunsphere were also stops on the Downtown Knoxville Peppermint Trail. Participants use the Peppermint Trail Pass to collect points/check-ins for stickers and other mementos of their adventures. This year, the Visitors Center Gift Shop offered White Chocolate Peppermint Toffee from Towns Toffee; Peppermint Tea/Hot Chocolate; Peppermint-scented Bath Bombs, Snowflake Soaps, and Sugar Scrub from English Rose Farms; Peppermint-Themed Mason Jar Mugs filled with treats; and Market Square Candy Cane Tree Christmas Cards by Bruce McCamish Photography. The Sunsphere Gift Shop, new to the trail, handed out custom Peppermint Trail Sunsphere stickers to all participants.



- The **Visitors Center Reader Board** located on the face of the building provides messages which are procured and maintained monthly. This includes welcomes for visiting groups, local announcements, and upcoming events. During 2Q, 60 custom welcome messages and highlighted events were featured.

- **The Sunsphere** continued to stay busy, picking up speed closer to the holidays. Since reopening in February 2022, we have welcomed over 48,000 guests from all 50 states and 37 countries, including Slovakia, Morocco, and Ireland. Ticket sales benefit the Sunsphere Fund, and in the spirit of holiday giving, Sunsphere donations were accepted and displayed on our Christmas tree.



The Observation Deck has seen an influx in private group bookings, hosting eight organizations during 2Q, resulting in over 200 attendees. For efficient private tour booking, a JotForm with FAQs has been created for inquiries displayed on the VK website.

Additional Sunsphere retail items have been added including new keychains and magnets by Meghan McCrary, Sunsphere Dog Treats by June Bug, and a sweatshirt version of our most popular t-shirt design.

On November 18, VK's 10-year Anniversary was celebrated on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Observation Deck of the Sunsphere, hosted by the VK Team with local partners in attendance. The traditional anniversary gift for 10 years is made of tin or aluminum, representing both durability and flexibility. Local Maker, Burgin's Garage, made custom Knoxville skyline ornaments as takeaway gifts for attendees.



**Sunsphere Tours** – During 2Q, the Sunsphere hosted: Diamond Tours, West Haven Elementary, Hardin Valley High School, TN Chapter American Public Works Association, Keep Knoxville Beautiful, USA Diving, East TN Meeting Professionals, and the Travel South International FAM.

**Sunsphere Fund Donations** – On October 19, a press conference was held on the Sunsphere's 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Observation Deck that highlighted a charitable donation from the Big Kahuna Wing Festival. Founder, Matthew Beeler, presented a check for \$55,000 which benefited The Empty Stocking Fund, East TN Children's Hospital, The Boys and Girls Club, and the Sunsphere Fund, among others. The goal of the Sunsphere Fund is to enhance the structure for the enjoyment of groups and individuals for generations to come. Donations are accepted in person at the Visitors Center/Sunsphere retail locations, or through PayPal for any amount.



- **Visitors Guide Distribution** is a key focus. Top 10 states requesting Visitors Guides:
  - Florida
  - Tennessee
  - Ohio
  - North Carolina
  - Illinois
  - Texas
  - California
  - New York
  - Michigan
  - Pennsylvania

During this quarter, there were 2,005 pageviews to the View Digital Visitors Guide page. VK distributed 835 printed guides based on online/phone requests.

Bulk Visitors Guide requests come from a multitude of places (e.g., events, local groups, weddings, state welcome centers, regional distribution, etc.). In 2Q, a total of 76,704 Visitors Guides were distributed via outlets including the following:

- 6,960 through State Welcome Centers
  - 11,175 through brochure racks within the region, including attractions and hotels.
  - 58,569 distributed through other locations including the Visitors Center, satellite centers, UT, and airport.
- **Visitor Information Centers** located within attractions, shops, and restaurants throughout Knoxville are supplied with visitor materials such as Visitors Guides, maps, and attraction brochures. VK connects with these partners monthly to gather input about resource needs and requests. VK provides and maintains visitor materials for displays at the Sunsphere, Knoxville Museum of Art, THE TENNESSEAN Hotel, KCC, Tommy Trent's, Outdoor Knoxville, The Pinnacle at Turkey Creek, Tennessee Theatre, Knox Brew Hub, UT Visitors Center, World's Fair Park Security Office, and the Farragut Community Center.
  - **VK Concierge Program** is a way for VK to engage our hotel properties, bring any new or updated information, and provide additional awareness of VK and its offerings, all through personal direct contact with a VK staff member. While the visits are planned quarterly, each VK Concierge relationship varies in the frequency of additional visits, based on need/request from our industry partners.



During this quarter's visits, VK celebrated the holidays. Each member of the concierge team provided their assigned properties with a tub of candy canes with a holiday greeting from VK attached, two 2022 Holiday At A Glance flyers, two Knoxville Calendar of Events flyers, 20 Downtown Knoxville Peppermint Trail/Elf on the Shelf® flyers, and an invitation to join VK in celebration of our 10-year Anniversary. VK continues to receive wonderful feedback on this program and can see the return on our efforts through increased participation and engagement from our industry partners.

- Additional **distribution materials** include:
  - **3,860** Downtown Pad Maps
  - **2,863** Dining/Trolley Maps
  - **7,987** UT Visitor Guides



- **Brochure additions** allow the Visitors Center to stay up to date with available attractions and activities. This quarter, additions include:

- Tree of Life Spa
- Knoxville Opera Company
- Knoxville Jazz Orchestra
- UT Self-Guided Campus Tour
- Freedom Boat Club
- Explore Oak Ridge
- Morristown Outdoor Adventure Guide
- Norris Trails Guide
- Smoky Mountain Railroad
- Escape Game Knoxville
- Old City Med Spa
- Downtown Shopping
- Apartment Guides



- **Local Donations** – VK’s Visitors Center Gift Shop promotes its Makers and supports the Knoxville community by creating personalized gift bags and baskets showcasing locally-made merchandise for philanthropic fundraisers, special events, and non-profit organizations. During 2Q, over a dozen gift basket donation requests were fulfilled, including Rocky Horror Picture Show, Wesley House, 4H Club, and UT ACUI Regional Conference.



- **VK loaned assets** (e.g., radios, coolers, ice chests, tables, tents, etc.) to Personal Best Racing (PBR), AMBC Fall Festival, Battle in Rocky Top, Hot to Trot hosted by Fleet Feet, Old North Knoxville Neighborhood Association, and Production Assistant Workshop with UTK Cinema Studies.

## Partner Projects & Special Initiatives:

- **WDVX Radio** – VK partners with radio station WDVX (89.9fm) which broadcasts live from the Visitors Center. Programs include Blue Plate Special, KidStuff Live, and First Friday’s Taps N Tunes. This quarter a total of 2,686 people attended these events. Of those polled, the geographical attendance breakdown was as follows:
  - 2,029 Knox County
  - 276 Regional
  - 381 Out of Region – International guests included those from Scotland, England, Germany, Brazil, Canada, Lebanon, Portugal, and The Netherlands.

**Taps N Tunes** – In addition to live music, First Fridays at the Visitors Center feature a “Maker Moment”. Local Makers are interviewed on-air during the show and given the opportunity to sell merchandise. 2Q Makers include:

- **October** – Jason Payne of Smoky Mountain Spice Factory
- **November** – Chad Burgin of Burgin’s Garage
- **December** – Lisa Kelechava of Joy to the World Collectibles

VK continues to carry local and domestic beer for Taps N Tunes through partnership with Knox Brew Hub.



- **K-Town Connect** – The K-Town Connect Ambassadors have applied best practices to enhance growth and development in downtown Knoxville. Ambassadors are dedicated daily to the mission of making Knoxville a great place to live and visit. In 2Q, Ambassadors have achieved the following:

- Hospitality assistance: This includes but is not limited to helping others use parking meters, suggesting places to eat or shop, and answering questions about events, etc. Assisted 1,039 people.
- Graffiti/Sticker/Bill Removal: Graffiti, stickers, or bills on a public fixture do not remain up for long. Ambassadors removed 355 of these.
- Litter collection: Teamwork makes the dream work. Ambassadors assisted with picking up 2,311 pieces of litter around downtown.
- Welfare check: Rain or shine, the Ambassador program checks on the vulnerable populations throughout the day. During 2Q, 319 individuals were approached to ensure their well-being. Referrals and further assistance are provided as needed.
- Directions Provided: Ambassadors helped 473 people get where they need to be.
- Scooter relocation: Ambassadors have moved 603 scooters to a safe location.



The K-Town Connect team is a fantastic source of information and assistance in the downtown footprint. When you see their friendly team, feel free to ask for directions on where to park, eat, and have fun. The K-Town Connect Ambassador Program operates daily from 7a.m. to 3:30p.m.