



# KNOXVILLE

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DESTINATION MARKETING &  
EVENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES REPORT  
**JANUARY 1 - MARCH 31, 2024**





April 15, 2024

The beginning of a new year brought many exciting announcements, awards, and events to Knoxville. In January, we hosted our annual **Visitors Guide Party** at the Visitors Center, with a sneak peek of the *Welcome to Barxville, A Knoxville Dogumentary*. Hank, the lovable Golden and star of the show was even in attendance. The **Barxville marketing campaign** also took home an Excellence in Tourism Award from the Middle East Tourism Council: 2023 Best Advertising/Marketing Campaign.

February saw the return of **Tennessee Songwriters Week**, an event that continues to grow in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development. This year's Showcase at the Bijou Theatre highlighted a number of incredible musicians from our region.

At the end of the quarter in March, we announced that construction on the **Sunsphere Welcome Center** is soon to begin. We could not be more excited about this development and look forward to sharing updates throughout the year!

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 January 1 – March 31, 2024 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 January 1 – March 31, 2024, the second quarter of fiscal year 2023–2024. These highlights can be used as a quick reference when talking about the activity and progress of Visit Knoxville (VK).

- **Hosting the Visitors Guide Party** – The 2024 Visitors Guide was released at the annual Visitors Guide Party on January 26 at Visit Knoxville. This year, in addition to welcoming partners and recognizing Team Knoxville Volunteers, we offered a sneak peek of *Welcome to Barxville, a Knoxville Dogumentary* (detailed further in this report). To the delight of many guests, Hank, the star of the film and “cover model” for the guide, made a special appearance. The party also served as an open house providing guests the opportunity to tour the VK office,



mingle with staff, and enjoy sips

and snacks provided by Bissel Catering. The 2024 Visitors Guide is available for pick up at the Visitors Center as well as numerous locations throughout the region, including Tennessee State Welcome Centers. To request a copy and/or view the online version, go to [Visit Knoxville | Visitors Guide](#).



- **Partnering with the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development on the Knoxville Songwriters Showcase at the Bijou – part of Tennessee Songwriters Week** – On February 19, in celebration of Tennessee Songwriters Week, the second of seven rounds of finalists competed at the Bijou Theatre in the Knoxville Songwriters Showcase, presented by Visit Knoxville and the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD). The showcase is promoted as an opportunity to “celebrate the craft that put Tennessee on the map: songwriting.”

Knoxville based Jacc Moran, singer and main songwriter of the band Run 40, won the night with his original song “Gasp.” Run 40's debut EP, *High Water*, is set to be released this year. Moran advanced from Boyd’s Jig & Reel, the site of qualifying rounds that also included Knoxville’s Scruffy City Hall, The Maple Room at Maple Hall, and Schulz Bräu Brewing along with Museum Center at Five Points in Cleveland, Oakey’s Sports Grill in Oak Ridge, and Gather Coffee Lounge in Oneida.



Moran and the other six finalists from across the state earned the opportunity to perform at The Bluebird Cafe during a private event in March with music industry professionals,

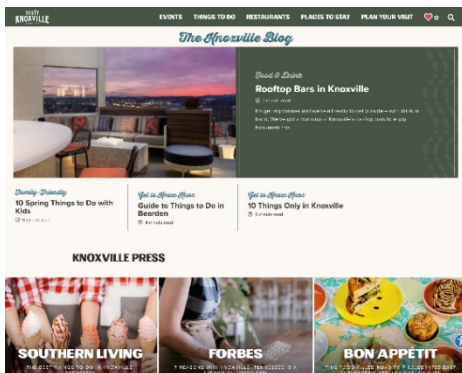
a branded commemorative Taylor guitar, a two-night stay in Nashville, a \$100 gift card for travel, and a one-year membership to Nashville Songwriters Association International (NSAI).

Another popular songwriter and performer, Evie Andrus, hosted the event. The fiddler and vocalist released her first album “Evie’s Great Adventure” in 2022. 2023 Tennessee Songwriters Week Knoxville finalist Melanie LaFoy had a special performance at the event. Her band, nightjar, is set to release a debut album in the coming months, as well as perform at festivals and events during the spring and summer. Past Knoxville showcase winners Travis Bigwood and the Lonesome Doves also performed.

*“I love having this event here with us. I really do think it touches the core of what we do here.”*  
 – Nathan McGhee,  
 General Manager, Bijou Theatre



- **Publishing website revision** – A website refresh was completed in 3Q. With planning and hard work, VK’s online presence has a fresh new look that captures the essence of the brand.



Modern, visually appealing fonts were incorporated to enhance readability and align with VK's brand identity. These fonts make the content more engaging and ensure a seamless browsing experience. The color palette has been updated to reflect VK's evolving brand personality. Vibrant hues and subtle shades have been selected to evoke emotion and create a cohesive visual experience. The reskin features a clean aesthetic that puts the



focus squarely on content. With streamlined layouts and intuitive navigation, visitors can find information effortlessly. One exciting addition to the site is the incorporation of illustrations by local artist Paris Woodhull. The artwork adds a touch of authenticity and showcases VK's commitment to supporting local talent and celebrating our community. Lastly, paw prints have been incorporated into listings for pet-friendly businesses and hotels, aligning with the Visit Barxville messaging.



- **Host 2nd Annual Knoxville All Festival Meeting & Lunch in conjunction with Knoxville Police Department** – Hosted meeting on March 5 with 12 local festivals/events



represented as well as the City of Knoxville Special Events Office and Public Building Authority. Discussed event safety, new processes for hiring off-duty officers, COK Special Events permitting, and VK assets (Placer.ai, Team Knox Volunteers, VK event calendar, and loaned assets).

- **Releasing *Welcome to Barxville, A Knoxville Dogumentary*** – To build on the pet-friendly ad campaign VK launched in February 2023, VK released *Welcome to Barxville, A Knoxville Dogumentary* in February 2024. The goal: to make Knoxville, Tennessee known as the most dog-friendly destination in the world with a travel documentary specifically made for dogs. The concept developed from a collection of data including one study noting approximately 78% of Americans who have pets choose to bring them along on their vacations.



Spotting this trend, VK partnered with Moonhouse, a production company founded by Ben Moon, to create a short film uniquely designed to appeal to pets' visual and auditory senses. To ensure an immersive experience for dogs, the film's color grade was adjusted to enhance yellows and blues, making it visually appealing to canine companions. But what truly sets *Welcome to Barxville, A*

*Knoxville Dogumentary* apart is the strategic placement of sound effects throughout the

film. These carefully chosen sounds were designed to pique pets' interest and keep them engaged throughout the viewing experience.

The film, which features the voices of Peyton Manning, Drew and Ellie Holcomb, and former members of the University of Tennessee Women's Athletics Program, showcases Knoxville's abundant pet-friendly offerings, providing a unique travel experience for both pets and their owners. The Dogumentary content has received enthusiastic feedback from brand partners, participants, and dog lovers on social media.

Marketing for the film included Welcome to Barxville branded press kits mailed to 25+ national media outlets, paid placement, and influencer campaigns. To date, the campaign is outperforming benchmarks across all paid channels, including an incredible video completion rate of 62% (the benchmark for 30-second YouTube videos is 20%). Influencer-boosted exposure for the film has generated significant engagement and reached new audiences.

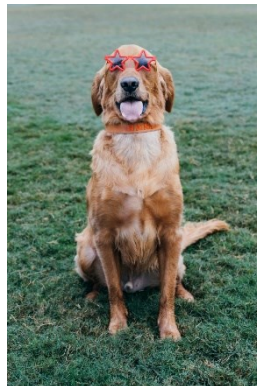
Additional data for *Welcome to Barxville, A Knoxville Dogumentary*:

- 19.8 million earned media impressions
- 164.3 million press release impressions
- A PR Value of \$1,096,880+

To date, according to tracking through Adara, dog-friendly media including the marketing launched in February 2023 and dogumentary marketing launched in February 2024 has generated:

- 7,671 hotel bookings
- 286 flight bookings
- An estimated 12,335 travelers equating to 1.6 travelers per booking
- ADR average of \$126.92
- Average stay of 1.9 nights
- Revenues totaling \$1.83 million

To catch the full tail-wagging adventure and learn more about our nature-loving-adventure-seeking-belly-scratching-kinda-town, visit [visit visitbarxville.com](https://www.visitbarxville.com).



# SALES SUMMARY

- **Trade Shows** – The VK Sales Team attended two trade shows during 3Q:

- **Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA) (January 9–11)** – VK Convention Sales along with KCC attended RCMA in San Antonio, TX. VK had 29 appointments with groups about bringing their events to Knoxville in future years.
- **Rendezvous South (February 26–28)** – VK Convention Sales along with KCC attended Rendezvous South in Spartanburg, SC. VK had 20 appointments with groups about bringing their events to Knoxville in future years.



VK tracks each sales activity and monitors results throughout the fiscal year. For FYE24, VK received six RFPs resulting from 3Q trade show attendance.

- **Site Visits** – The VK Sales Team hosted six site visits during 3Q:

- **Arbor Day Foundation** – VK conducted a one-day site visit with the group and toured the KCC and most of the downtown hotels. The group had not been to Knoxville in a couple of years and was very impressed with the growth of the city.
- **Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA)** – VK hosted four

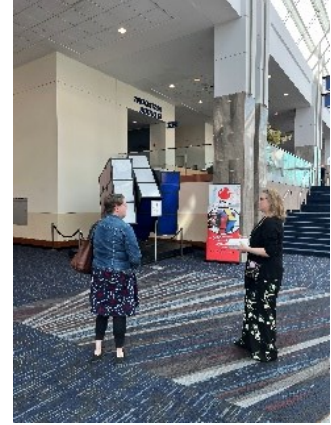


representatives from TSSAA, two from Varsity and two from Premier with hopes of securing TSSAA Cheer and Dance Championships. The group toured the KCC, WFEH, and the Marriott.

- **Kenilworth Media (S.P.O.R.T.S. – The Relationship Conference)** – VK conducted a two-day site visit with two group representatives. The WBHOF, Maple Hall, Yee-Haw Brewing, and the site of the new baseball stadium were toured for potential venues for their opening and closing parties. A University of Tennessee Men’s Basketball game against Kentucky was also attended during their site visit.
- **National Association of Education Foundations** – VK conducted a one-day site visit with the group and toured the Marriott, Hilton, and KCC. Knoxville is the frontrunner for the group.



- **Presbyterian Church in America** – VK conducted a one-day site visit with a group representative and toured the Marriott, Hilton, Crowne Plaza, and KCC. The representative was originally from Knoxville and recently moved back to the area. She was very impressed with KCC and the downtown area. She also expressed interest in touring the Embassy Suites, Cumberland House, and Hyatt Place at a later date.
- **Solution Tree** – VK conducted a two-day site visit with the Assistant Director of Events for the group, and toured KCC which they said was a perfect fit for their event. Additionally, the Marriott, Hilton, Cumberland House, and Crowne Plaza were toured. They also loved the walkability of downtown.



- **Sales Blitzes** – The VK Sales Team performed two sales blitzes during 3Q:

- **Sarasota, FL** – VK joined nine other destinations in hosting 14 event rights holders including Perfect Game and Amateur Athletic Union at an Atlanta Braves spring training game. The group rented a suite for the attendees.
- **Nashville, TN** – VK conducted a two-day sales blitz in Nashville and met with TSSAA, Tennessee PGA, and Tennessee Golf Association about bringing more events to Knoxville in the next few years.



- **Scouting Trips** – The VK Sales Team performed one scouting trip during 3Q.

- **B.A.S.S.** – VK met with B.A.S.S. CEO and senior staff to discuss opportunities to bring the Bassmaster Classic back to Knoxville in the near future.

# 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 72 events/meetings, six festivals, and provided a total of 37 partner referrals. Of the 37 partner referrals, 35 were related to the 78 events/meetings and festivals that were supported this quarter. Team Knoxville Volunteers shared and participated in two events and shared five partner opportunities this quarter, recruiting volunteers as a no-cost, service-added benefit to local events.

## 3Q Goals:

- **Attend the Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA) 2024 Annual Conference in Indianapolis for continuing education and networking opportunities** – Attended conference January 18–21 for networking opportunities, continuing education, and learning the newest trends in Convention Services.
- **Recognize Team Knoxville Volunteers and honor the top Volunteer of the Year at the Annual Visitors Guide Launch Party** – Honored all Team Knoxville Volunteers’ 2023 accomplishments with an infographic display that showcased featured highlighted events, total hours, total volunteers, and volunteer photos. Awarded the top two volunteers of 2023, Amanda Smartt and Rachel Buchholz, each with a gift basket. See Highlights Summary for additional details.
- **Host 2nd Annual Knoxville All Festival Meeting & Lunch in conjunction with Knoxville Police Department** – Hosted meeting on March 5 with 12 local festivals/events. See Highlights Summary for additional details.



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

- The **Annual National Convention** of the **Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS)** was held from February 1–3. VK was pleased to lead the organization on a site visit to hotels and venues, ensuring they aligned with ACHS's requirements. VK played a pivotal role in securing accommodations and meeting venues during the sales phase, facilitating thorough property visits and venue communications regarding contracts.

During the Convention Services discussion, the planners were provided resources including the creative Ultimate Attendee Checklist, Visitor Information Link, and Convention Services Sheet. Pre-planning calls were organized, and VK worked closely with the planner to evaluate the scope of needs.



After thorough discussions, it was agreed that establishing a welcome table adjacent to the registration area would benefit attendees by providing them with essential information, manned by VK staff and stocked with a variety of resources. This setup allowed VK's Sales Director specializing in the Fraternal market to network with other organizations, promoting Knoxville as an ideal destination for their respective conferences.

VK extended a warm welcome to the group through a custom message displayed on the Visitors Center Reader Board, the VK TV Network at various downtown locations, and the delivery of a personalized gift to the Cumberland House for the organization's President. During the opening session, VK had the pleasure of formally welcoming the group, highlighting the attractions and activities available in Knoxville during their stay. To showcase the city's picturesque waterfront, VK organized a lunch cruise aboard the Tennessee Riverboat, complete with round-trip motorcoach transportation, ensuring an unforgettable experience for all participants.



***“We had a blast in Knoxville, and we loved our riverboat excursion. Thanks so much for arranging that, for attending the conference, and for the great goody basket we got to give away!”***

***– Lara Q. Noah, Vice President, ACHS Board of Directors and Executive Director of Alpha Chi National College Honor Society***



- The **2024 K2 Presidents’ Day Bash** proved to be a successful weekend as it welcomed more than 270 teams to the KCC and WFEH on February 17–19, continuing the tournament’s growth trajectory. The VKSC, in collaboration with All Convention & Expo Services, Northview Labor, and Heavy Haul LLC, efficiently managed the planning, setup, and tear down of 31 volleyball courts and net systems. VKSC ensured seamless operations by providing court numbers, score flip charts, and branded table covers for ticketing stations and tournament desks. Additionally, directional signage was provided to guide participants throughout the venue. Athletes



and attendees were welcomed with a personalized touch, including a volleyball magnet placed on the iconic KNOX letters, custom digital displays on the marquee screens, and a warm greeting on the Visitors Center Reader Board. VKSC offered visitor information and local discounts through an information table and QR code access. VKSC managed a block of official host hotels via the VK Housing System, featuring a



customized reservation site specifically tailored for the tournament. Event staff hotel accommodations were secured and managed as an added service for the tournament director. The event was promoted on VKSC social media channels, and the Team ensured smooth operations by checking in on the tournament throughout.



- **For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST)** returned to Knoxville for the **2024 Smoky Mountain Regional Robotics Challenge** at the Knoxville Civic Coliseum, held March 3–6. A total of 33 teams competed in this regional tournament, including eight teams from Knoxville high schools. Teams competed for awards and a qualifying spot in the FIRST Championship. By participating in FIRST, students are eligible to apply for college scholarships to further their careers in the STEM industry.



The event kicked off with load-in and practice matches on Sunday and Monday, with qualification matches and awards on Tuesday and Wednesday. Throughout the event, teams hosted exhibition spaces to serve as home base for repairs and updates to the competing robots which also allowed for easy networking between teams from different states in the region. Participating students learn teamwork, problem-solving, safety, branding, fundraising, as well as skills in engineering.

VK provided a welcome table for participants and spectators upon entry into the event stocked with visitor information, as well as giveaways including Knoxville stickers and lapel pins. The VK logo was shown in key areas throughout the venue and digital visitor resources were linked on the event website ahead of the event. A custom message was displayed on the Visitors Center Reader Board to provide a warm welcome.



*“Amazing customer service from start to finish.”*

*– Christy Crouse, Regional Director, FIRST Smoky Mountain Regional Robotics Challenge*

- The VKSC Team collaborated with Tennessee Miracle Basketball to orchestrate the **2024 Tennessee Miracle Spring Classic**. Held from **March 22–24** at the KCC, the tournament saw an impressive turnout of over 250 teams. Prior to the tournament, VKSC engaged in several pre-planning calls with tournament staff to finalize logistical details. VKSC managed all hotel sourcing, contracting, and reservation services. A custom online reservation platform was designed to assist teams with the booking process. Alongside partners All Convention & Expo Services and Northview Labor, VKSC planned and implemented the setup and teardown of 15 basketball courts. Trailer delivery and removal were also overseen by VKSC in collaboration with partner Heavy Haul LLC.



In addition to logistical support, VKSC aided by offering contacts for athletic trainers, court number signage for each court, and the use of radios for the convenience of tournament staff. Throughout the venue, directional signage was placed to ensure smooth navigation, complemented by custom digital displays for the indoor and outdoor marquee signs at the KCC. A message welcoming teams to Knoxville was presented on the Visitors Center Reader Board and a visitor information table offered Visitors Guides and digital resources for attendees. VK remained available throughout the weekend to serve the tournament’s needs.

*“Choosing to work with Visit Knoxville has been a great experience allowing us to concentrate on bringing more teams to Knoxville to participate in tournaments second to none!! The staff is great, the venue is awesome with all courts at one location, centrally located so teams never have to move. This year we are on track to have a record*

*year after hosting 253 teams last weekend. I am so thankful for the TN Miracle and Visit Knoxville partnership!!”*

*– Brenda Huff, Tournament Director, Tennessee Miracle*

#### **Additional planner quotes from 3Q Meetings and Events:**

*“The Applied Sport Management Association has been holding an annual conference for more than 15 years. This year's event in Knoxville was the largest ever conference for the organization. We had guests attend from across the country, and Knoxville was an excellent location for the event!”*

*– Adam Love, Associate Professor, Applied Sport Management Association Conference*

*“Our experience with Pearl was amazing! She took us all around Knoxville before we booked our event and through several hotels! We only met with Christina once, but she was amazing and very understanding to all our feedback! Highly recommend working with her!”*

*– Tanya Lee, Conference Coordinator, Denise Amber Lee Foundation Be the Difference*

*“Thank you, Christina, for all your hard work! We appreciate it!”*

*– Anecia Whitehead, Fundraising Chair, 2024 SAVMA Symposium LMU-CVM*

#### **Team Knoxville Volunteers**

A total of 69 hours were provided by 14 volunteers as a no-cost, service-added benefit to the following local events:

- January 10–13 – TYR Pro Swim Series
  - Team Knox assisted with registration, parking, hospitality, and USADA chaperoning for a total of 48 hours by eight volunteers.
- February 19 – Tennessee ProStart Invitational
  - Team Knox judged/kept time for the culinary competition for a total of 21 hours by six volunteers.

Team Knoxville participated in the following additional activities:

- Honored all volunteers with an infographic at the Annual Visitors Guide Launch Party. Awarded the top two volunteers of 2023 with a gift basket from the Visitors Center.
- Recruited volunteers for upcoming event Street Rod Nationals South, May 1–3.
- Participated in the Farragut Non-Profit Showcase on March 21.



- Shared partner volunteer opportunities, including:
  - March 2–3 – USA Ultimate Smoky Mountain Invite
  - March 9 – Spartan DEKA Fit
  - April 6–7 – Covenant Health Knoxville Marathon
  - April 13 – Holleroo
  - May 20–26 – Visit Knoxville Open



## Additional 3Q Activity:

- **Pre-planning Visits:**
  - **CrossFit® – February 14–15** – The planner was in town on behalf of CrossFit® and the Syndicate Crown. Met with hotels and venues for final arrangements for Syndicate Crown, which will take place at the Knoxville Coliseum in May.
  - **Mayors Innovation Project – February 26** – Hosted planners to see potential venues for meetings and off-site receptions for the August event. Visited Emporium Center, East Tennessee History Center, The Square Room, Jackson Terminal, and the Sunsphere. Planners also met with the City of Knoxville Mayor and staff regarding various policies, initiatives, and projects.
- **Festival and partnership support** included Chocolatefest, Dogwood House and Garden Show, Mardi Growl, Knox St. Patrick’s Parade, Knox Shamrock Fest & Lucky Kidney Run, and Big Ears Festival.
- **Conducted pre-planning calls and/or meetings** for Denise Amber Lee Foundation, SEC & Friends Summit, Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior 2024 Annual Conference, U.S. Olympic Team Trials – Diving, National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), Tennessee Miracle Spring Classic, North American Ease Semi-Final, Knoxville Indoor Pickleball Championship, and AAU 3-on-3 WBHOF Championship. Met with Bike Walk Knoxville for a post-event debrief meeting.
- Participated as a community judge in the Knox County Great Shake
- Attended the 2024 Governor’s Conference on Tourism Committee Meeting in Chattanooga
- **Participated in the following webinars and virtual events:**
  - ESPA – Powered Productivity: Super Tech Tools to Get Stuff Done
  - SimpleView – Women in Leadership: Breaking Barriers in the Tourism Industry
  - 7 Secrets of Public Speaking – with Lauren Ansley
  - ESPA – Transform Your Meetings & Events with Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools You Need NOW



# 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-kinda-town* campaign directing to [visitknoxville.com](http://visitknoxville.com). The Team also recruits and partners with journalists and influencers to share Knoxville's narratives.

## 3Q Goals:

- **Launch distribution of the 2024 Knoxville Visitors Guide** – Distribution of the 2024 Guide successfully launched in traditional fashion with the annual Visitors Guide Party. See Highlights Summary for additional details. View the guide [HERE](#).
- **Partner with the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development on the Knoxville Songwriters Showcase at the Bijou – part of Tennessee Songwriters Week** – In its sixth year, this annual event included more local partners than ever before, providing excellent exposure for all involved. See Highlights Summary for additional details.
- **Publish website revision with fresh fonts, updated colors and a clean look that incorporates locally produced illustrations** – A website refresh was completed in 3Q. See Highlights Summary for additional details.

## *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**. A highlight of this quarter included promotional materials for upcoming events including the U.S. Olympic Team Trials – Diving, Visit Knoxville Open, and the Spring Sales FAM (familiarization tour). Additional 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.
  - **3Q E-newsletters**
    - New Year, New Spots in Knoxville – This edition promoted new spots and shops waiting to welcome visitors including 71 South, Crafty Bastard Brewery Baker Creek, The Local Smokey, 865 Candle Company, The

Pirate Tavern, East by Orange Hat Brewing Company, French Fried Vintage, UT Creamery, Vintage Geek Museum, Zero/Zero Wine Bar, Fly by Night, and Bear Paw Bikes.

It's Festival Time in Tennessee – This edition promoted can't-miss annual spring events including Big Ears, Rossini, Dogwood Arts, Southern Skies and the new TN Whiskey Experience, Children's Festival of Reading, and a link to the full events calendar on the VK website.

*Current open rate for the e-newsletter is 39%\**

*\*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 3Q with an open rate of 35%.
- 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 1.5 million pageviews in 3Q. Each quarter, VK creates new pages for the website and regularly updates content throughout. Additionally:
  - Average length of session was 1 minute 04 seconds
  - Pages per session was 3.13
  - Number of clicks to partner sites from VK website was 89K
  - Top three metros generating traffic were Atlanta, Nashville, and Chicago
  - 1,807 pageviews to sign up for the e-newsletter

The **VK Online Event Calendar** is managed by the Visitor Services Team. In 3Q, 114 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:

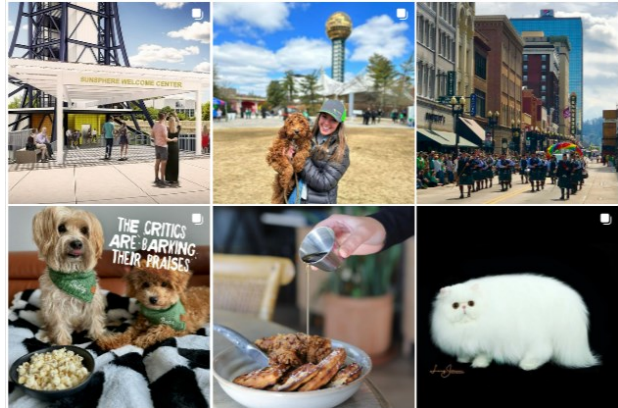




- [10 Things Only in Knoxville](#)
- [10 Spring Things to Do with Kids](#)
- [Rooftop Bars in Knoxville](#)
- VK's **social media channels** serve as key elements in VK's marketing mix, focused on directing traffic to blog posts and other sections of the VK website, sharing tourism partner information, and engaging with the community. Highlights include:

- Promoting various events, exhibits, and attractions including Knoxville's outdoors as seen in the snow, Tennessee Songwriters Week, various Valentine's Day specials, One Knox SC, Mardi Growl, St. Patrick's Day events, Tennessee Valley Cat Fanciers Spring Show, Big Ears Festival, and more.

- Instagram reels including campus in the snow in collaboration with UT, Knoxville's Art District in collaboration with Downtown Knoxville, and the "They Sang What They Lived: The Story of Carl and Pearl Butler" exhibit at the East Tennessee History Center.



- **Additional Partner Promotion & Involvement** – VK continues to provide support to our tourism partners. Highlights include:

- Partnering with WDVX on Tennessee Shines – a concert series at the Bijou Theatre highlighting up-and-coming artists and the magic of live radio from one of Knoxville's most historic and storied venues. Emi Sunshine hosted the February 7<sup>th</sup> event with guests Tyler Ramsey, Chatham Rabbits, and Sunny War.
- Partnering with the Tennessee RiverLine on "Paddle Tales." The Facing Waves episode has been picked up by PBS starting this spring. The episode showcases Knoxville beautifully. On YouTube, the episode has 19k views to date.
- Partnering on the Tennessee Theatre's Broadway season (includes ad placement in playbills *Wicked* and *Hadestown*).
- Partnering with the Middle East Tennessee Tourism Council (METTC) – VK continues to work closely with METTC through an appointed board member. The focus is on initiatives that include 9 Lakes of East Tennessee, the Long and Winding Road, the Tennessee River Valley Geotourism MapGuide and other initiatives to promote awareness of the 9 Lakes region including Knoxville information and materials.

This quarter METTC had booths at the Indianapolis Boat, Sport, and Travel Show; the Cincinnati CORA Bike and Trails Expo; and the Knoxville Man Show. Additionally, METTC's Executive Director secured videographers, photographers, and writers to develop additional marketing collateral for themed promotions. An ad has been placed in the American Road to promote drive trips, a summer vacation planning (video) campaign was completed on 3/17, and a billboard/print/digital campaign is in progress in Canada to promote motorcycle trips.

- ExploreTRV placed a print/digital ad in an insert of the Wall Street Journal - NY market. Knoxville was featured as content for coffee shops in Global Heroes, a print/digital ad in the 2024 Quimby's Cruising Guide with a pay-to-play in the ad calling out the ports of Lenoir City and Knoxville, featured partner in 2024 with Bassmaster (digital banners, video, and native content ), and working with international writers/receptors from England and Germany.
- Serving on the Tennessee Tourism Committee (TTC). TTC did not meet this quarter; the last meeting was during the Governor's Conference on Hospitality and Tourism held in Knoxville in September. 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 3Q contributed to 2,968 hotel bookings. These numbers will continue to increase up to 60 days post-campaign. Additionally, organic website traffic in 3Q contributed to 4,622 hotel bookings. VK continues to pull insights from our Arrivalist partnership: For 2024, the top ten origin Designated Market Areas (DMA) of overnight visitors for the period by volume are listed below. These markets stayed an average of 1.9 nights. \*

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. Nashville        | 6. Knoxville**                               |
| 2. Tri-Cities-TN-VA | 7. Charlotte                                 |
| 3. Atlanta          | 8. Greenville/Spartanburg/Asheville/Anderson |
| 4. Chicago          | 9. New York                                  |
| 5. Chattanooga      | 10. Los Angeles                              |

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

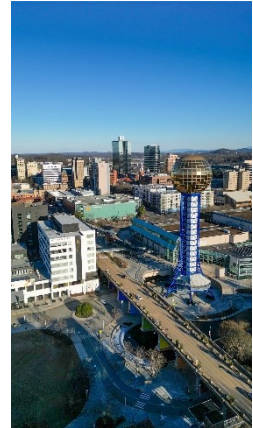
*\*\*The Knoxville DMA consists of 22 counties within East Tennessee and Southeast Kentucky.*

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

The 3Q VK Tourism Dashboard will be available to view alongside the 3Q Highlights Report on Friday, April 26 on the VK website.

## Journalist & Influencer Visits and Assistance:

- VK hosted **Connor and Morgan Ursin**, travel influencers of **@thenationalparktravelers** on Instagram. Their visit included hiking at Ijams Nature Center, activities at Ancient Lore Village, and a series of other recommendations for a “Knoxville Weekend Itinerary.” They have since posted on Instagram, Instagram Stories, and TikTok:
  - [Knoxville Tennessee Weekend Itinerary](#)
  - [Ancient Lore accommodations and activities](#)
- VK hosted **Courtney Quist**, influencer of **@courtneyquist\_** on Instagram, in partnership with TDTD. Her weekend visit included a make-your-own glass workshop with Pretentious Glass, a tour of Zoo Knoxville, and other Instagram-worthy stops such as Potchke Deli and Chivo. She has since posted two Reels on Instagram:
  - [Everything We Ate in Knoxville Tennessee](#)
  - [Glass Blowing Workshop at Pretentious Glass](#)



## Additional Marketing Activities:

- VK sponsored and spoke at the February Quality of Life session of **Introduction Knoxville**, highlighting how to experience Knoxville like a visitor.

## Publication Updates from Previous Visits:

- **Tim Wild** has had an article published in [Singletracks Magazine](#) and another article published in [Pedal Cover UK](#).

*“I had a lot of options for this U.S. riding trip. If I’m being honest, Knoxville wasn’t on my radar at first. But a trusted U.S. friend, who’s a lifelong rider, trail builder and photographer, insisted I come here. Great trails, great scene, great people. He’s right.”*  
– *Tim Wild, UK Based Travel Writer*





## Media:

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

Knoxville News Sentinel, TDTD, TTM, ConventionSouth Magazine, chewy.com, Fifty Grande, AAA, Prevue Meetings Magazine, Aimbridge, Style Blueprint, Voyageurs du Monde, AAA Living Magazine, and various freelancers.

Published pieces (both earned and paid placement) include:

- *Style Blueprint* – [23 New Boutique Hotels in the South](#)
  - *Love Exploring* – [The Most Underrated City in Every State](#)
  - *iHeart Radio* – [Tennessee Destination Named The “Most Underrated City” in the State](#)
  - *Wyandotte Daily* – [7 Top Things to Do in Knoxville 2024](#)
- **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 – 501
    - Total Publicity Value for Earned Media – \$927,631

## 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.

In the third quarter, the Visit Knoxville Film Office provided many different production companies with location scouting services, permit assistance and served as a liaison between city and federal governments for a variety of productions. Companies requesting services included many of our talented local production companies such as Jupiter Entertainment, Streetcar Entertainment, and PopFizz Productions. These productions included crime reality television, marketing campaigns, and archival content creation.

The Film Office was also busy assisting out-of-town production companies like Bclip Productions out of Asheville, North Carolina, and Scenic Road Entertainment from Kansas City, Missouri. The VK Film Office assisted with location scouting, permits, and permissions from federal agencies such as TWRA for the filming of marketing and content creation videos.

In January, the Film Office received the big news that, once again, *Moviemaker Magazine* named Knoxville as one of the “Best Places to Live and Work as a Moviemaker.” Knoxville came in at #6 for 2024, up one spot from the 2023 list. This marks the fourth time Knoxville has made the prestigious list.

In 3Q, the Film Office also began work with PopFizz productions on producing content for this year’s Film Fest Knox. The inaugural year of the festival was a great success, receiving glowing reviews from respected trade publications like *Filmmaker Magazine*, *The Film Stage*, and *In Review Online*, with the latter stating, “If future years maintain this pace and quality, Film Fest Knox stands to become one of the Southeast’s premier cinephile destinations and celebrations.” PopFizz will be creating content including a sizzle reel and commercial, including interviews with the founders of the festival as well as winners and jurors from last year.

The Film Office is also celebrating its 10th year, and in honor of that, work began in 3Q on the production of a new video promoting the work the office does and why producers should call Knoxville home for their next projects. Talented local filmmaker, Edy Recendez, will be working with the Film Office to produce the video, which will be used for marketing and live on the Film Office website.

# 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.

The third quarter brought big announcements from the Sunsphere, including new renderings of the Sunsphere Welcome Center entrance canopy (see below image in goals section). The Sunsphere, now completing its second full year as a paid attraction, won an Orchid Award from Keep Knoxville Beautiful in the Spruce Up category for the paint restoration (Phase I). Big Ears Festival performances and panel discussions were welcomed back to the WDVX stage, spring window art was painted, and Sunset at the Sunsphere hosted two sold-out Sunset at the Sunsphere events. The VK Gift Shops completed over \$46,000 in sales, welcoming new vendors, and curated Knoxville products.

## 3Q Goals:

- **Begin development stages of building the Sunsphere Welcome Center** – VK moved



forward with The Christman Company to serve as construction manager for the Welcome Center Project. The GMP contract was executed, permits secured, and demolition of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor level is slated to start at the beginning of April. A press release was issued on March 20 to highlight new photos of the entry canopy, announce the solar component with a partnership from Chroma Energy Group,

and communicate additional operations information while the structure is under construction. VK continues to work with the City of Knoxville, Knox County Government, the Public Building Authority, and McCarty Holsaple McCarty to bring this vision to life.

- **Work with the VK Marketing Team on reimagining the existing digital Community Corner** – The digital Community Corner has been transformed into a Weekend Events Newsletter to keep local partners and establishments aware of upcoming events that may impact their business. The previous layout limited the number of events able to be highlighted, while the new format allows for hyperlinked event listings, leading to more weekend events communicated. It is issued weekly to partners and will soon be opened for public signups.





- **Recruit New Products for the Visitors Center/Sunsphere Gift Shops** – During 3Q, five new vendors were introduced to the gift shops: Benoit Designs (etched beer glass), Luminance Creative (prints & magnets), The Dirty Guv'nahs (band t-shirts), KNOX Paper Scissors (stickers & greeting cards), and Melissa Hale Strings + Earth (guitar string earrings & keychains). Existing partnerships continued to grow, bringing in over 20 new items this quarter.



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

- **Visitors Center Traffic** – Over 6,300 guests were greeted in person. Top 10 states (in addition to Tennessee) of visitors checking into the Visitors Center were:
  - Illinois
  - Ohio
  - Texas
  - Florida
  - New York
  - North Carolina
  - Michigan
  - Virginia
  - Colorado
  - Minnesota
- **Visit Knoxville Gift Shops** – Visit Knoxville continues to support Knoxville’s Maker community and artists with over 80 existing partnerships. A few local/regional additions introduced this quarter include Knoxville Heart Magnet (Paris Woodhull), Tennessee Theatre Coffee Table Book & Keychain (TN Theatre), and Tennessee Trail Mix (Forage South).



dogumentary.

Local Artist, Amanda Smith, painted the Visitors Center front windows this quarter to display a green spring design, including our marketing tagline: a nature loving-adventure seeking-artsy kinda town. The window facing Summit Hill displays a new blue base Sunsphere as well as a dog to promote the Visit Barxville marketing campaign. Visitors can scan the QR code in the window to learn more about the

## THE SUNSPHERE OBSERVATION DECK



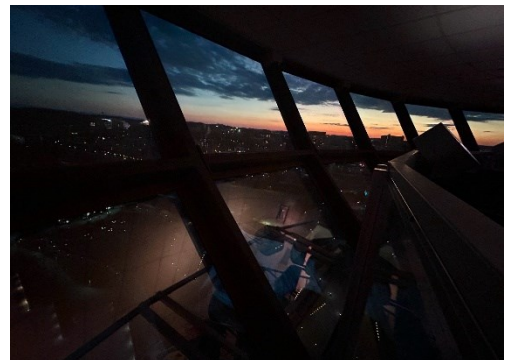
The Sunsphere Observation Deck & Visitors Center, managed by Visit Knoxville, is a paid historic attraction that was built for the 1982 World’s Fair. In 2022, Visit Knoxville reopened the Observation Deck as a paid attraction and established the Sunsphere Fund, a fund created to enhance the structure for the enjoyment of generations to come. Since reopening, the Sunsphere Observation Deck has welcomed over 116,000 guests from all 50 states and 56 countries, including Costa Rica, Iceland, and Slovakia. VK celebrated two years of the Sunsphere being open as a paid attraction during 3Q.

As referenced in the Visitor Services goals, the development stages of the Sunsphere Welcome Center have concluded, with demolition starting at the beginning of April. The new Welcome Center will establish a formal entryway to the attraction, transforming the visitor experience and servicing guests in a way the unique structure has never been able to before. Projects like these would not be possible without the Sunsphere Fund, with partnership and support from the City of Knoxville, Knox County Government, the Public Building Authority, East Tennessee Community Design Center, McCarty Holsaple McCarty, and The Christman Company.



Phase I, restoring the Sunsphere to its original blue color, was recognized by Keep Knoxville Beautiful, winning an Orchid Award in the Spruce Up category. This award recognizes maintenance and extra caretaking of existing buildings/structures. A request for the Sunsphere has been filed with the Historic Zoning Commission to acquire a Historic Overlay Status for the structure as construction/demolition begins.

Coinciding with daylight-saving time throughout the year, the First Friday event “Sunset at the Sunsphere” has been a popular experience on the Observation Deck. Two sunsets were hosted this quarter, with both sessions selling out. Attendees were able to mingle with featured Makers (February: Carve Bright, March: Owltopus) and enjoy refreshments from local partners (February: Status Dough, March: Proper Popcorn). The Sunsphere Observation Deck plans to continue to offer engaging experiences for the local community and visitors. Another marketing effort this quarter was having the Sunsphere featured on an Ingles Open Road Segment. Filming for the segment wrapped on March 28, and the episode is slated to go live in April.



As the weather warmed up, private tours of the Observation Deck increased in popularity with nine during 3Q, hosting over 200 attendees. Groups hosted include City of Knoxville Leadership, Knoxville Army recruiting Office, Burke Christian Tours, Westside Baptist Church, Lenior City High School, Farragut High School, Alpha Kappa Alpha Chapter, and Knoxville Head Start.

- **Special Events & Collaborations** – Big Ears made its return to the Visitors Center, along with other venues throughout Downtown Knoxville March 21–24. VK, in partnership with WDVX, had regularly scheduled programming for the Blue Plate Special, in addition to a series of panel discussions. Panelists included: Nate Chinen, Jlin, Kristin Hersh, Fred Frith, Alynda Segarra, Robin Holcomb, Sam Amidon, Ross Gay, Sam Stephenson, Billy Woods, Claire Rousay, Rhiannon Giddens, and Davone Tines.



During 3Q, the Visitor Services Team attended the UT Hospitality Career Fair at the UT Student Union. Staff handed out part-time applications for the Visitors Center/Sunsphere positions and internship packets for various VK opportunities. The Visitor Center Manager also presented to the East Tennessee Meeting Planners during 3Q, offering attendees a condensed Gotta Know

Knoxville session.

Love in is the air on the Sunsphere Observation Deck – during 3Q, there were four proposals, all successfully ending in engagements. VK refers proposal inquiries to Sunsphere Events; however, on occasion, the Observation Deck sees some spontaneous couples.





- **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 3Q, over a dozen gift basket donation requests were fulfilled, including STAR Bridles & Blue Jeans, Relay For Life, Alzheimer’s Association of Tennessee, and more.



- 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 3Q, 48 custom welcome messages and highlighted events were featured.
- VK **loaned assets** (e.g., radios, coolers, ice chests, tables, tents, etc.) to the St. Patrick’s Day Parade 2024 during 3Q.
- **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.

VK celebrated Valentine’s Day as well as the release of the 2024 Knoxville Visitors Guide during this quarter’s concierge visits. Each member of the concierge team provided their assigned properties with a bag of Valentine’s Day-themed chocolate candy, two tabbed 2024 Knoxville Visitors Guides, a box (50) of 2024 Knoxville Visitors Guides, two 2024 Knoxville Calendar of Events flyers, and two flyers highlighting VK Visitor Services and the Sunsphere Observation Deck. 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.

- **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, Farragut Community Center, and Bear Paw Bikes. The 2024 Visitors Guide was produced during 3Q and has been stocked at all satellite locations.

- **Brochure additions** allow the Visitors Center to stay up to date with available attractions and activities. This quarter eight new brochures were added:

- Loudon County
- Greeneville, Tennessee
- Johnson City
- Tennessee Railroad
- NE Tennessee
- Bristol
- Big Ears Schedule
- 2024 Knoxville Visitors Guide



- **Visitors Guide Distribution** is a key focus. Top 10 states requesting Visitors Guides:

- |                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| ○ Tennessee      | ○ New York |
| ○ North Carolina | ○ Indiana  |
| ○ Florida        | ○ Georgia  |
| ○ Ohio           | ○ Kentucky |
| ○ Illinois       | ○ Michigan |

During this quarter, there were 3,535 pageviews to the View Digital Visitors Guide page. VK distributed 4,097 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 3Q, a total of 40,627 Visitors Guides were distributed via outlets including the following:

- 7,250 through State Welcome Centers
- 9,942 through brochure racks within the region, including attractions and hotels.
- 23,435 distributed through other locations including the Visitors Center, satellite centers, UT, and airport.

- Additional **distribution materials** include:

- **2,618** Downtown & Dining Pad Maps
- **2,175** Trolley & Interstate Maps
- **14,775** UT Visitor Guides

## Ongoing 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 3,129 people attended these events. Of those polled, the geographical attendance breakdown was as follows:

- 2,277 Knox County
- 330 Regional
- 522 Out of Region – International guests included those from Chile, France, Columbia, Scotland, Bulgaria, Canada, Australia, Japan, Mexico, and Norway.



**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. 3Q Makers include:

- **January** – Molly Rose English of English Rose Farms
- **February** – Frog Juice Kombucha
- **March** – Mellisa Hale of Earth + Strings

- **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 3Q, 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 3,281 people.
- Graffiti/Sticker/Bill Removal: Graffiti, stickers, or bills on a public fixture do not remain up for long. Ambassadors removed 633 of these.
- Litter collection: Teamwork makes the dream work. Ambassadors assisted with picking up 9,217 pieces of litter around downtown.
- Welfare check: Rain or shine, the Ambassador program checks on vulnerable populations throughout the day. During Q3, 478 individuals were approached to ensure their well-being. Referrals and further assistance are provided as needed.
- Directions Provided: Ambassadors helped 1,083 people get where they needed to be.
- Scooter relocation: Ambassadors have moved 732 scooters to a safe location.
- Ordinance Violation: Safety is our number one priority. Ambassadors are trained to politely ask those participating in an unsafe act to put safety first. Over the last three months, Ambassadors have witnessed 51 ordinance violations.



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 from 7 AM to 3:30 PM Sunday through Saturday. Additional hours have been extended to 3:30PM to 11:30PM Wednesday through Sunday.