

VISIT
KNOXVILLE
TENNESSEE

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026





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A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

This past fiscal year was one of remarkable momentum and success for Visit Knoxville as the Official Convention and Visitors Bureau for the City of Knoxville and Knox County.

Our year was filled with **new major events and initiatives**, including sports, film, conventions, and a new marketing campaign: *Calling the Curious*. Southwest Airlines® debuted at McGhee Tyson Airport, a decades-long enterprise that finally came to fruition this spring. Another exciting spring debut included an episode of *9-1-1: Nashville* on primetime on ABC, which the VK Film Office landed. Spring excitement continued with Luke Combs' performance at Neyland followed by a sea of yellow with the Savannah Bananas taking over for back-to-back games at Covenant Health Park and Neyland Stadium.

Returning events speak to our ability to recruit both new groups while maintaining relationships for repeat business opportunities. The Bassmaster Classic returned in March for the third time, Syndicate Crown (a CrossFit® Games North American qualifying event) was again held at the Coliseum, and the AAU Girls Basketball World Championships was held for its second time of a multi-year agreement. Visit Knoxville also produces and partners on several other annual events. These include FILM FEST KNOX's third year, a partnership with Bike Walk Knox to co-produce Tour de Lights, collaborating with the state on the Tennessee Songwriters Showcase, and partnering with the Tennessee Golf Foundation for the Visit Knoxville Open.

Several **FAM (familiarization) tours were also hosted** throughout the year, bringing awareness to the destination for meeting planners, content creators, and international journalists. Northstar Meetings Group held their Small & Boutique Meetings event in Knoxville, helping the attending meeting planners consider Knoxville for their own events. Creative collaboration with Greenville, SC and Asheville, NC welcomed visiting media on the "Ville-to-Ville" FAM, and partnership with the state on a Global South FAM brought high-profile writers discovering Tennessee for the first time.

The fourth quarter of this past fiscal year marked a special moment in our organization's history as the **Visitors Center renovation was completed and reopened** to the community in May. The Visitors Center is often the first impression of our destination, and we couldn't be more thrilled after months of behind-the-scenes collaboration with McCarty Holsaple McCarty to bring the vision to life.

This year has been deeply rewarding for our entire team. As you explore this report—highlighting hotel bookings, trade shows, site visits, volunteer hours, FAM tours, website traffic, film productions, journalist visits, and blog posts—keep in mind that these are just the highlights. For a more in-depth look at this past year and prior years, visit the [Media section](#) of our website to view our quarterly highlights.

On behalf of the entire Visit Knoxville team, thank you for the ongoing support and encouragement you provide. The incredible support of our board and stakeholders is what makes Knoxville a place that inspires curiosity for visitors and locals alike.

Sincerely,

Kim Bumpas, CDME, CMP
President
Visit Knoxville



VISIT
KNOX
VILLE
TENNESSEE

CONVENTION SALES & SPORTS COMMISSION

THE VISIT KNOXVILLE SALES TEAM ONCE AGAIN MET SEVERAL GOALS IN ANOTHER EXCITING YEAR. DETAILS ARE LISTED BELOW. THESE NUMBERS INCLUDE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CONVENTION SALES TEAM AND THE VISIT KNOXVILLE SPORTS COMMISSION (VKSC).



BOOKED EVENTS

218

(EXCEEDED GOAL OF 210)

Of the 218 events, 65% were new business. 57 events were booked at the Knoxville Convention Center.

HOSTED

39

INCLUDING 27 SITE VISITS
AND 12 PRE PLANNING VISITS

Among them BBI International Media & Events, Crown's Financial Ministry, Southeastern Association of Housing Officers, and American Forage and Grassland Council.

PRODUCED OVER
\$ 192.1 MILLION
OF FUTURE ECONOMIC IMPACT

TOTAL LEADS

685

(EXCEEDED GOAL OF 590)

Of this, 36% (247) went to the Knoxville Convention Center.

EXECUTED

4

EVENT SCOUTING TRIPS

These included Red Bull Creepers, Showdown in the Smokies Gymnastics, Bassmaster Elite Series, and Red Bull Tennessee National (Mountain Bike).

ATTENDED

18

TRADE SHOWS

At these trade shows, 441 appointments/ meetings were conducted by our sales teams and attending partners. Shows included Connect Marketplace, Connect Sports, HelmsBriscoe, TEAMS, Sports ETA Symposium, Destinations International Annual Convention, Meetings Today Live, and Professional Fraternity Association.

380

VK CONCIERGE VISITS

VK Concierge is a way for VK to engage with local hotel partners, providing updated information through personal contact with a VK staff member. Scheduled visits take place quarterly and ongoing contact is provided for additional needs and requests.



CONDUCTED

1

FAM WITH QUALIFIED MEETING PLANNERS

Visit Knoxville hosted one strategic familiarization (FAM) tour for eight high-producing meeting planners representing industry-leading organizations, including HelmsBriscoe, ConferenceDirect, Meetings Unlimited, and the National Commission for Black Arts & Entertainment. Collectively, these planners influence hundreds of meetings and events annually, providing Visit Knoxville with valuable opportunities to showcase the destination and generate future convention business.

DESTINATION & SPORTS SERVICES

THE DESTINATION AND SPORTS SERVICES TEAM SUPPORTS MEETING PLANNERS AND ATTENDEES WITH SERVICES DESIGNED TO ADD VALUE, MAXIMIZE ATTENDANCE, AND RETAIN GROUP BUSINESS. PROVIDING AN ELEVATED LEVEL OF CUSTOMER SERVICE POSITIVELY INFLUENCES THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR REPEAT BUSINESS AND VISITS. THIS TEAM PROVIDES SERVICES SUCH AS PARTNER REFERRALS, ITINERARY SUGGESTIONS, VISITOR INFORMATION, AND OFF-SITE SPECIAL EVENT ASSISTANCE FOR CONVENTIONS, TRADE SHOWS, SPORTING EVENTS, AND FESTIVALS USING A CONSULTATIVE APPROACH BASED ON THE UNIQUE NEEDS, SPECIFIC GOALS, AND ATTENDEE INTERESTS OF EACH GROUP.

SUPPORTED
319

CONVENTIONS, SPORTING EVENTS,
FESTIVALS, & MEETINGS

PARTNER REFERRALS PROVIDED

517
(150% INCREASE OVER FYE25)

Partner Referrals are meeting planner requests for suppliers, products, vendors, and services in the community.

TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS

587



Team Knox supported a wide variety of opportunities throughout our entire community including sporting events, civic improvement projects, neighborhood cleanups, and more. Volunteers served as information table and registration assistants, greeters, and badge monitors.



TOTAL NUMBER OF
INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS

130

PARTICIPATED IN

2

COMMUNITY CAREER FAIRS
TO RECRUIT NEW VOLUNTEERS:

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE GRADUATE SCHOOL
PROGRAM TO THE UT JONES CENTER FOR
LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Knoxville welcomed the **2025 Red Bull Championship Run** to Volunteer Landing on September 12. This bold, adrenaline-fueled event brought 160 competitors to race head-to-head up an inclined and greased goalpost, cheered on by an energized crowd. Competitors battled for limited-edition Red Bull swag, with the top eight advancing to an elimination bracket to crown the overall champion and winner of a custom trophy.

September 2025 served as the inaugural **“Shed Week,”** which included the Shed Sales Summit, National Shed Rental Association Conference, and Shed Builder Expo all in one place. These three conferences came to Knoxville as a result of the 2023 Shed Builder Expo at the Knoxville Convention Center and will return again in 2026 and 2027.

The **Tennessee Public Transportation Association** Annual Conference and Expo, hosted by Knoxville Area Transit, returned to Knoxville October 21–24 at the KCC with the Marriott Knoxville Downtown and Hilton Knoxville as host hotels. TPTA is a nonprofit that serves Tennessee communities through their dedication to improving public transportation.

The **Colson Center National Conference** was held May 28–31 at the Knoxville Convention Center with more than 2,500 attendees staying in multiple downtown hotels. The conference featured a presentation of the Wilberforce Award and commissioning of the Colson Fellows Class of 2026.

The **2026 AAU Gymnastics & TNT National Championships** came to Knoxville June 18–21, bringing athletes and families from across the country to compete in one of AAU Gymnastics’ premier national events. The event also featured AAU Day at Covenant Health Park.

Knoxville welcomed the return of the **2026 AAU Girls Basketball World Championships** June 24–28, with nearly 200 teams from across the country competing. Opening Ceremonies took place at Covenant Health Park, where Michelle Marciniak, CEO of the Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame, delivered the keynote address highlighting the connection between the history and future of women’s basketball.

Knoxville hosted the **TSSAA Track & Field** Middle School and High School State Championships for the first time on May 18–21. This event featured over 400 middle school athletes and over 1,000 high school athletes. The event took place at Tom Black Track on the University of Tennessee’s campus.



NOTABLE EVENTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



CALLING THE CURIOUS

This fiscal year, Visit Knoxville unveiled new creative direction, *Calling the Curious*, offering a fresh way to tell Knoxville's story and inspire visitation. Developed in collaboration with our agency, the campaign was designed to spark curiosity and invite travelers to experience Knoxville's welcoming spirit. Throughout the year, new creative was rolled out across print and digital advertising. The campaign features compelling photography and messaging that celebrate Knoxville's arts, culinary offerings, outdoor adventures, and vibrant culture. More than an advertising campaign, *Calling the Curious* serves as a long-term brand platform that positions Knoxville as a destination full of unexpected experiences, inviting visitors to discover everything the city and county have to offer.

9-1-1: NASHVILLE

In fall 2025, the Visit Knoxville Film Office welcomed the hit primetime series *9-1-1: Nashville* to Knoxville, with familiar locations playing a prominent role in the episode's storyline. Featured locations included World's Fair Park and the Sunsphere, Gay Street, Marriott Knoxville Downtown, and Zoo Knoxville. Two of the show's lead actors filmed on location in Knoxville for the episode "Hard Knox." The Film Office recruited the production and coordinated locations, permits, lodging, crew needs, city services, and other logistical support to ensure a successful filming experience. Airing March 19, 2026, the episode attracted 3.49 million same-day viewers, with millions more watching on Hulu and Disney+, providing valuable national exposure for Knoxville as a filming destination.



NORTHSTAR SMALL & BOUTIQUE BUSINESS

The Northstar Meetings Group selected Knoxville as the host destination for its premier hosted-buyer event focused on small and boutique-sized meetings, held October 12-14 in partnership with the Marriott Knoxville Downtown. Meeting planners connected with destinations, hotels, hospitality services, technology providers, and other industry partners through one-on-one appointments and networking opportunities. Visit Knoxville enhanced the experience with a private walking tour, a Volunteer Princess cruise, and a curated visit to Zoo Knoxville, giving planners a firsthand look at the destination. Hosting this prestigious event showcased our strengths as an ideal meetings destination, introduced planners to our unique venues and vibrant downtown, creating valuable opportunities for future earned business.

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

Southwest Airlines celebrated an exciting milestone on March 5 as the carrier launched new service to Knoxville's McGhee Tyson Airport (TYS). For the inaugural flight from Nashville to Knoxville, Tennessee One received a water canon salute and cheers from customers and employees at the gate. Visit Knoxville, as the Convention and Visitors Bureau, was a founding member of the Competitive Airfare Partnership, an initiative created back in 2012 to recruit Southwest Airlines to Knoxville. VK partnered with McGhee Tyson Airport, the Knoxville Chamber, and other organizations to host Southwest on multiple site visits over the past 15 years to showcase the vitality of the destination. Since the launch, flights have been consistently sold out.



BASSMASTER & BANANAS

In FYE26, Knoxville solidified its reputation as a premier host destination through a series of high-profile sporting events that welcomed visitors from near and far. In March, the 2026 Bassmaster Classic transformed downtown and the Tennessee River with daily boat launches, a bustling Expo, and championship weigh-ins at Food City Center. The multi-day experience was a reel win for anglers and spectators alike. Then, in May, Knoxville hosted two sold-out Savannah Bananas games (one at Covenant Health Park and another at Neyland Stadium) while Visit Knoxville coordinated a private experience for the team's K Club at Zoo Knoxville. Together, these events generated significant economic impact while introducing new audiences to Knoxville's vibrant attractions and exceptional hospitality. Beyond filling hotels, restaurants, and local retailers, they created memorable experiences that inspired visitors to explore and return long after the final cast or final inning.

VISITORS CENTER REOPENING

The newly renovated Visitors Center reopened on May 13, 2026, unveiling a more welcoming, engaging, and vibrant front door for our destination. Interior updates included new gathering spaces, a reimagined retail area showcasing local makers, an upgraded live music and event space, as well as a vibrant mural by local artist Curtis Glover. Outside, the building was refreshed with a new Visit Knoxville marquee sign, a restored exterior mural, updated information signage, and signature *Calling the Curious* green accents on the building. The grand reopening celebration featured a ribbon cutting, live music by Hayden Bright, custom keepsake hats from Hunny Hat Co., and cookies paired with postcards featuring the new mural. Feedback from both visitors and the community has been overwhelmingly positive, with many praising the updated look, welcoming atmosphere, and stronger reflection of Knoxville's identity.



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

THROUGHOUT THE 2025-2026 FISCAL YEAR, WE INTRODUCED OUR NEW CREATIVE DIRECTION, **CALLING THE CURIOUS**, TO INSPIRE TRAVELERS TO DISCOVER THE UNEXPECTED EXPERIENCES THAT MAKE KNOXVILLE UNIQUE. WE ADAPT THE LOOK AND USE THE TAGLINE TO SPARK CURIOSITY AMONG DIFFERENT AUDIENCES WHILE MAINTAINING A CONSISTENT BRAND. FOR EXAMPLE, OUR BARXVILLE CAMPAIGN INVITES CURIOUS DOG LOVERS TO EXPLORE KNOXVILLE ALONGSIDE THEIR FOUR-LEGGED COMPANIONS, EXTENDING THE BRAND IN A WAY THAT FEELS ENGAGING AND UNMISTAKABLY KNOXVILLE.

Throughout the fiscal year, the Marketing Team brought this creative direction to life through integrated campaigns spanning advertising, publications, social media, video, photography, public relations, and web content. By sharing Knoxville through a fresh, curiosity-driven lens, the team strengthened destination awareness, reinforced Visit Knoxville’s identity, and inspired travelers to take the next step toward planning a visit.

As AI and other emerging technologies reshape how travelers discover destinations, the VK website continues to evolve with fresh content, itinerary building, and search optimization to remain a valuable resource.

TOTAL NUMBER OF WEBSITE VISITS

2.8M SESSIONS

TOP 10 LANDING PAGES

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Home | 6. Visitors Guide |
| 2. Events | 7. Activities with Kids |
| 3. Concerts & Live Music | 8. Sunsphere Tickets |
| 4. Things to Do | 9. Pet-Friendly |
| 5. Events this Weekend | 10. Restaurants |

TOP 10 CITIES FOR WEBSITE TRAFFIC

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Knoxville | 6. Maryville |
| 2. Nashville | 7. Charlotte |
| 3. New York | 8. Oak Ridge |
| 4. Atlanta | 9. Dallas |
| 5. Farragut | 10. Columbus |

ADDITIONAL WEBSITE UPDATES

106

NEW PARTNER LISTINGS

2,947

NEW/UPDATED CALENDAR EVENTS

103

BLOG POSTS

TOTAL NUMBER OF

WEBSITE USERS

2.1M USERS

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

From the Field to the Feed: Throughout the year, our Marketing Team is on-site capturing the energy of sporting events across Knoxville and Knox County. From the Collegiate Open and the Visit Knoxville Open to swim meets, volleyball tournaments, cross-country races, basketball championships, and dozens of other competitions, the team brings each event to life with photo and video content. They also document one-of-a-kind events like the Bassmaster Classic, Savannah Bananas, Red Bull Championship Run, and Slippery Stairs, sharing these experiences across social media, digital channels, and beyond. By telling these stories in real time, the team extends the reach of each event while reinforcing Knoxville’s reputation as a winning destination for athletes, festival-goers, spectators, and visitors of all interests.

A Festival Takes a Team: Another Marketing Team highlight during FYE26 was its support of the annual FILM FEST KNOX. From initial promotion through the closing credits, the team played a vital role in supporting the festival. An all-hands-on-deck effort produced dozens of original print and digital designs, coordinated advertising across traditional and digital platforms, developed and updated festival webpages, and executed a comprehensive press release blitz. Together, these efforts elevated awareness of the festival, highlighted its unique programming, and helped attract filmmakers, film enthusiasts, and visitors to FILM FEST KNOX.

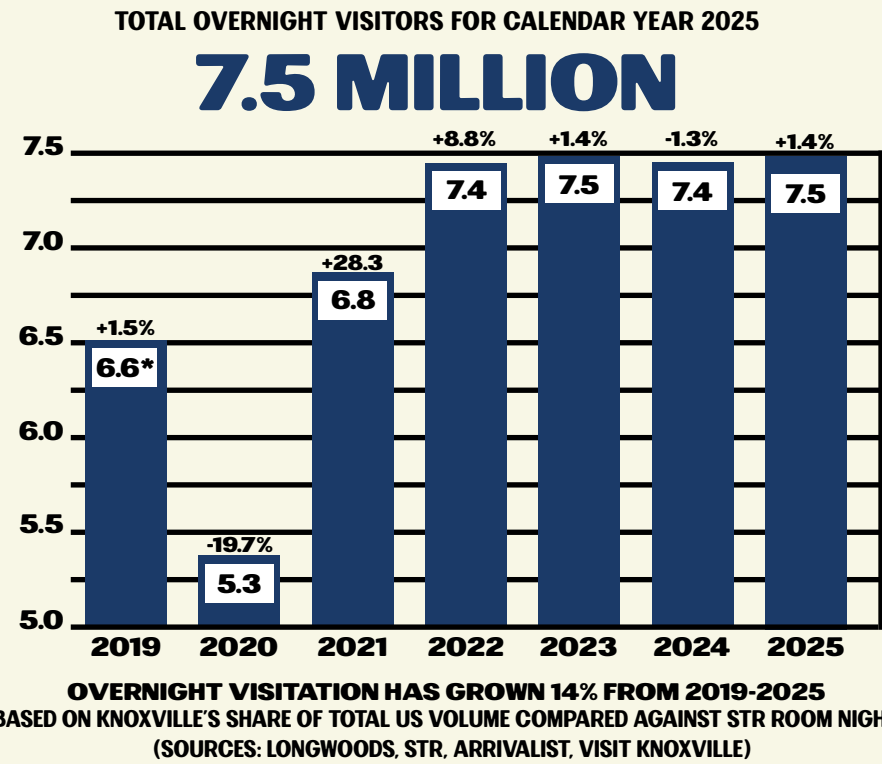
Helping Meetings Meet Knoxville: A third Marketing Team highlight in FYE26 was its support of the Sales Team through refreshed marketing tools designed to better engage meeting planners. Through collaboration on how users engage, we launched an extensive overhaul of the Meetings section of Visit Knoxville’s website to include improved organization, updated content, and enhanced planning resources. In collaboration with Big Slate Media, Marketing also led the planning and production of a new promotional video showcasing the destination’s appeal for meetings and conventions. To complement these efforts, the Marketing Team collaborated with Sales to design new conference materials that provide a cohesive, modern presence that increases visibility and reinforces the Visit Knoxville brand.

FAMs: A Marketing Department FAM (familiarization) tour invites journalists and influencers to experience Knoxville firsthand, inspiring future stories, social media content, and destination coverage that reaches new audiences. In April, we partnered with the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD) to host its Global South Pre-FAM. Journalists from Brazil, the Netherlands, Australia, Italy, and France explored Knoxville and the surrounding region, experiencing many of the attractions, restaurants, and experiences available to visitors. In June, we hosted a WITS Post-FAM for select attendees of the Women in Travel Summit in Chattanooga. Through articles, videos, and social media content, these creators help introduce Knoxville to travelers seeking their next leisure getaway.



MARKET RESEARCH

VISIT KNOXVILLE COLLECTS AND ANALYZES DATA FROM SOURCES INCLUDING LONGWOODS INTERNATIONAL, SMITH TRAVEL RESEARCH (STR), ADARA, AND ARRIVALIST TO COMPILE INFORMATION RELATED TO KNOXVILLE'S TRAVEL MARKET. A QUARTERLY TOURISM DASHBOARD IS AVAILABLE UNDER PUBLIC NOTICES IN THE [MEDIA SECTION](#) OF VISITKNOXVILLE.COM.



HOTEL DATA

TOTAL ROOM NIGHTS
JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025
2,480,970
(FLAT OVER FY25)

Occupancy **FLAT**
ADR **UP 2.4%**
Room Revenues **UP 2.4%**

Source: CoStar

BOOKING DATA

Visit Knoxville uses Adara to track hotel business generated from our digital ad placement and website visitation. Below is a summary of those findings.

HOTEL BUSINESS GENERATED BY WEBSITE VISITORS

Bookings 19,850
Room Nights 55,816
Average Rate \$173.92
Hotel Revenue \$9,707,771

HOTEL BUSINESS GENERATED BY DIGITAL AD PLACEMENT* EXPOSURE

Bookings 25,461
Room Nights 55,593
Average Rate \$176.92
Hotel Revenue \$9,835,503

ADARA tracks a 60-day booking window. The booking data above is current as of 7-17-26.
*Metrics may underrepresent actual bookings because of a pixel tracking issue.

TOP 10 BOOKING MARKETS

Atlanta • Charlotte • Chattanooga • Chicago • Dallas
Knoxville* • Memphis • Nashville • New York • Washington, D.C.

*The Knoxville DMA (Designated Market Area) consists of 22 counties within East Tennessee and Southeast Kentucky

FILM OFFICE

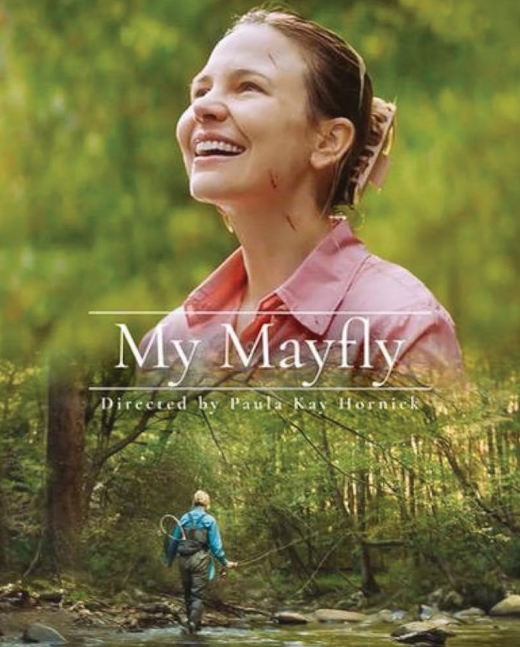
THE VISIT KNOXVILLE FILM OFFICE ACTIVELY PROMOTES KNOXVILLE AND KNOX COUNTY AS A PREMIERE FILMING LOCATION. IN FYE26, THE FILM OFFICE CONTINUED TO RECRUIT MOTION MEDIA COMPANIES BY MARKETING THE AREA'S LOCATIONS, ACCOMMODATIONS, SERVICES, CREW, AND TALENT. THESE EFFORTS CREATE LOCAL JOBS, STIMULATE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES, AND GENERATE VALUABLE EXPOSURE FOR KNOXVILLE AND KNOX COUNTY. VK'S FILM OFFICE ALSO MEDIATES THE PERMITTING PROCESS BETWEEN FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND THE FILM INDUSTRY. IN ADDITION TO RECRUITING FILM PROJECTS AND SUPPORTING LOCAL AND OUT-OF-TOWN PRODUCTION COMPANIES WITH FILMING NEEDS, THE FILM OFFICE CONTINUED TO SHOWCASE KNOXVILLE AND KNOX COUNTY THROUGH FILM.

This fiscal year, the VK Film Office successfully recruited the feature film, *My Mayfly*, a fly-fishing themed movie. The production filmed in the Knoxville area as well as in Townsend and starred Adelaide Clemens (*Rectify*, *Justified-City Primeval*), Melanie Hutsell (*Bridesmaids*, *Saturday Night Live*), and Kellan Rhude (*Law & Order*, *Blue Bloods*) and was directed by Paula Kay Hornick. The production was assisted with hotel rooms, crew, filming locations, vendors, city services, and film incentives. *My Mayfly* is currently being submitted to film festivals.

A highlight of our work this year was the recruitment of the hit television show, *9-1-1: Nashville*. The production came to Knoxville for three days to film part of an episode of the ABC primetime show. Two main cast members and a large production crew filmed at several downtown and nearby locations. The episode aired in mid-March, attracting nearly 4 million live and same-day viewers. Millions more watched the episode later on streaming platforms.

Building on its momentum, year three of FILM FEST KNOX delivered record success, with increased attendance and sustained audience engagement. The festival was also named by *MovieMaker Magazine*, for the second year in a row, to its annual list of "50 Festivals Worth the Entry Fee." *Moviemaker Magazine* also honored Knoxville/Knox County by naming us one of the "Best Places to Live and Work as a Moviemaker." This is the sixth time Knoxville has made the prestigious list.

To keep FILM FEST KNOX in the minds of the community year-round, we continued our partnership with The Public Cinema to produce a free monthly film screening series at Regal Riviera Theater as an extension of the festival. The popular screenings regularly attract film enthusiasts and help build anticipation for each year's festival.



VISITOR SERVICES & SUNSPHERE

AS THE WELCOMING FACE OF VISIT KNOXVILLE, THE VISITOR SERVICES TEAM HELPS BRING THE DESTINATION TO LIFE FOR THOUSANDS OF VISITORS EACH YEAR FROM THE VISIT KNOXVILLE VISITORS CENTER AND THE SUNSPHERE WELCOME CENTER AND [OBSERVATION DECK](#). THE TEAM COLLABORATES WITH OVER 80 LOCAL/REGIONAL ARTISANS TO OFFER A DIVERSE RANGE OF HIGH-QUALITY RETAIL PRODUCTS IN BOTH [GIFT SHOP](#) LOCATIONS. ADDITIONALLY, THEY ORGANIZE TOURS, MONITOR AND MAINTAIN THE [EVENTS CALENDAR](#) AND [WEEKEND EVENTS NEWSLETTER](#), AND PROCURE MAPS AND BROCHURES TO ENHANCE VISITOR EXPERIENCES IN KNOXVILLE.

VISITORS CENTER* GUESTS
21,000+

*Note: VC was closed January 5–May 13, 2026

1. Florida

2. Texas

3. North Carolina

4. California

5. Ohio
6. New York

7. Illinois

8. South Carolina

9. Georgia

10. Michigan

VISITORS GUIDES
166,000+

1. Tennessee

2. Florida

3. Ohio

4. North Carolina

5. Illinois
6. Texas

7. New York

8. Pennsylvania

9. California

10. Georgia



SUNSPHERE GUESTS
SINCE FEBRUARY 2022
240,000+

**TOP VISITING COUNTRIES FOR
JULY 1, 2025 – JUNE 30, 2026**

1. United Kingdom

2. Mexico

3. France

4. Canada

5. Germany
6. Honduras

7. Peru

8. Brazil

9. Colombia

10. Ireland/Panama/
South Africa



RETAIL PARTNERSHIPS
80+

**CURATING KNOXVILLE INSPIRED PRODUCTS.
A FEW NOTABLE PARTNERSHIPS INCLUDE:**

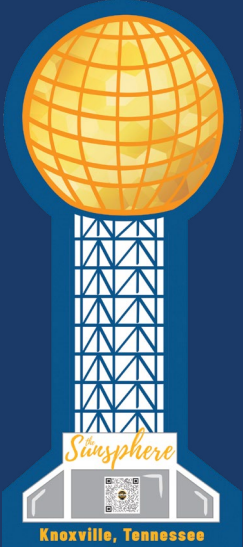
- Rabbit and Fox Pottery
- Beanie Bee Soapery & Candle Co.
- Illustrate Kate
- Pawsitively Natural Dog Treats
- Carter Dunlap

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR



On May 13, 2026, Visit Knoxville proudly reopened its renovated Visitors Center, unveiling a refreshed and more engaging front door for Knoxville. The transformed space features an elevated retail section, flexible gathering areas, an enhanced Blue Plate Special stage, and a custom mural. Exterior improvements included a new marquee-style sign and refreshed façade which further brought Visit Knoxville’s “Calling the Curious” brand to life. The grand reopening welcomed hundreds of visitors and was followed by the return of the Blue Plate Special to its home stage on May 27, where the beloved live music series resumed its regular five-day-a-week schedule.

The Sunsphere continued its evolution as one of Knoxville’s most iconic attractions through creative programming, educational experiences, new brochure card, and community engagement initiatives. Signature events this fiscal year included Santa at the Sunsphere, Sunset at the Sunsphere, Sunsphere Sessions, First Friday Free for Locals Days, Little History Lessons, seasonal scavenger hunts, and the Valentine’s Day Build-A-Bouquet experience. During the 2026 Bassmaster Classic, the attraction welcomed its busiest day since reopening, with more than 1,000 guests visiting the Welcome Center in a single day.



Visitor Services expanded opportunities for residents and visitors to experience Knoxville through new initiatives and strategic partnerships. Highlights included the launch of the [Downtown Coffee Crawl](#) and expanded educational outreach through collaborations with Knox County Schools, the University of Tennessee, the East Tennessee Historical Society, Leadership Knoxville, and Leadership Tennessee.

In FYE26, the Visit Knoxville Gift Shops continued supporting the region’s creative economy through partnerships with more than 80 local and regional makers. Products from artists, potters, candle makers, illustrators, and specialty food producers provided visitors with meaningful opportunities to support small businesses while taking home a piece of Knoxville.

Visit Knoxville also remained committed to preserving and sharing the stories that shape our community, including hosting a memorial celebration honoring former Knoxville Mayor Randy Tyree and his lasting contributions to the legacy of the 1982 World’s Fair and the Sunsphere. January 20th will always remain free admission to the attraction in honor of his life.

Additional annual initiatives and partnerships included First Friday Artwalk, Newts in Knox, Where’s Waldo, Wicked Cool, Elf on the Shelf, Peppermint Trail, National Travel & Tourism Week, Big Orange Hospitality Day, Kid A’Riffic, Dogwood Arts, and Celebration of Lights.



VISIT KNOXVILLE

T E N N E S S E E



TENNESSEE
SOUNDS PERFECT

**The Official Destination Marketing Organization for
the City of Knoxville and Knox County, Tennessee**



301 S. Gay Street Knoxville, TN 37902

865-523-7263

visitknoxville.com