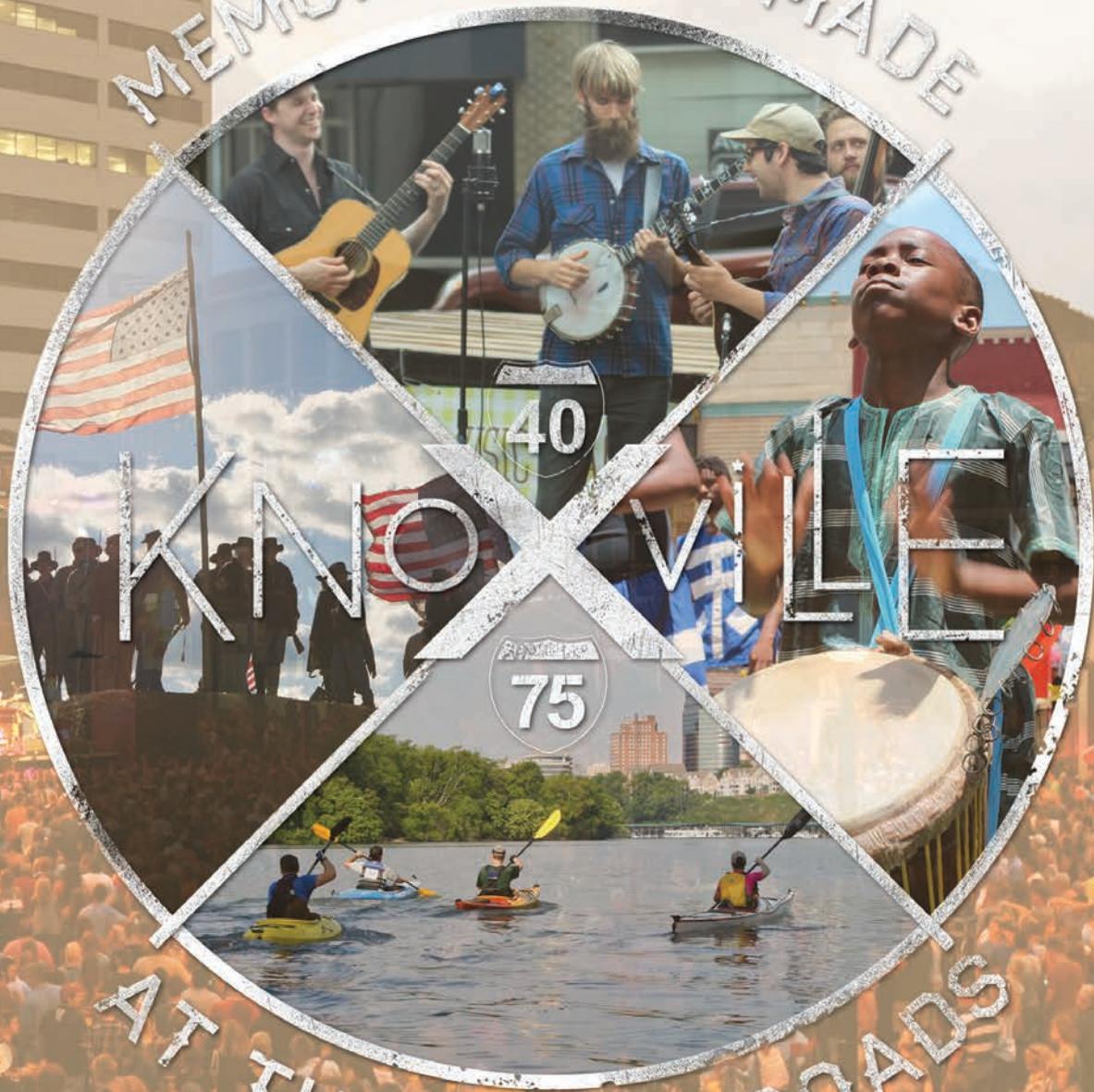


visit knoxville

TENNESSEE

MEMORIES ARE MADE



AT THE CROSSROADS

ANNUAL REPORT
2014-2015



VISIT KNOXVILLE
ANNUAL REPORT
2014-2015

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Tourism Stakeholders:

This year has been an exciting one for Visit Knoxville. It kicked off with major events including the Medal of Honor Convention at the Knoxville Convention Center and wrapped up with Garth Brooks singing the praises of Knoxville to 60,000 screaming fans from all over the country at Thompson Boling Arena. The Visit Knoxville team booked 103 events for future years while also supporting more than 185 events, festivals and meetings this year. You can find additional details on all our bookings in our Quarterly Reports, as well as the Highlights Report on *VisitKnoxville.com* under the Public Notice section.



In closing, this report serves as a celebration of the tourism industry in Knoxville, TN! In the following pages, we have provided a summary of the yearly activities and accomplishments of the Visit Knoxville Sales & Services, Marketing & Communications and Visitor Services departments. This summary-style format comes in direct response to focus group feedback that requested a more clear overview of Visit Knoxville's activities and accomplishments.

We appreciate your continued support,

#KNOXROCKS

Kim Bumpas

A handwritten signature of Kim Bumpas in black ink, written in a cursive style.

President

Visit Knoxville

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SALES & SERVICES

The Visit Knoxville Sales & Services Team had a productive year, exceeding a number of booking goals and servicing over 185 events. Detailed information on sales activities are listed below featuring site visits, FAM tours, sales blitzes, and trade shows.

**BOOKED
EVENTS** 103

○ Of the 103 events, 65% were new business and 35% were repeat business. *Also, 20 of the 103 events were booked at the Knoxville Convention Center (70% new business; 30% repeat business).*

**HOSTED
SITE VISITS** 43

○ Among them, the North American Society for Bat Research and the International Society of Arboriculture, groups that have since respectively selected Knoxville for their 2017 and 2019 conferences. Visit Knoxville currently has booked 18 of the 43 visits for future years.

**ATTENDED
TRADE SHOWS** 18

○ Over 300 appointments were hosted by Visit Knoxville and attending partners. Shows included Conference Direct Annual Partner Meeting, Collaborate Marketplace, National Association of Sports Commissions, and Council of Engineering and Scientific Society Executives. Visit Knoxville currently has 58 pending bookings resulting from the shows and turned 13 groups definite for future years.

**COORDINATED
SALES BLITZES** 4

○ These included three multi-market blitzes and one sports market blitz. Appointments included USA Gymnastics, Lifeway, TN Grocers & Convenience Stores Association, USA Diving, Conference Direct, American Association for Laboratory Animal Science, Chi Omega, Fed Ex, and the Society of American Foresters.

● **Additional detail in quarterly summaries.**

HOSTED 4 FAM TOURS Familiarization Tours

○ Visit Knoxville hosted over 40 planners for FAM events. Groups that have chosen Knoxville as a result of these FAMs include the American Baptist Association, TN Health Care Association, and KY/TN Water Environment Association. Visit Knoxville currently has 23 pending bookings resulting from the FAMs.

BID 2 PRESENTATIONS

○ The Visit Knoxville and Knoxville Convention Center sales teams traveled to Louisville, KY to execute a bid presentation for the 2016 US Trampoline & Tumbling National Championships. Knoxville successfully won the bid against Kansas City, MO and Ft. Lauderdale, FL. The five day competition will bring an estimated 1,700 athletes to Knoxville. The team also traveled to Springfield, IL to present for the 2019 American Baptist Association Annual Conference. Knoxville also secured this event prevailing over Wichita, KS, Springfield, MO, and Little Rock, AR. The booking represents approximately 2,200 attendees for a three day conference.

EVENT 2 SCOUTING TRIPS

○ The sales team attended two event scouting trips for the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) World Summit and the Nitro Circus Show. These efforts will lead to future bookings.

The Visit Knoxville services team begins working with groups as soon as the event is secured by the sales team. The services team serves as the group's local event planner and handles the customized needs for each group. These needs can include anything from securing permits, arranging transportation, sourcing equipment, designing event flyers to scheduling elected officials.

EVENT 2 PRE-PROMOTES

○ Event pre-promotes are opportunities for the upcoming host destination to have presence at a specific convention/conference that will be held in their destination in a future year. Conference attendees are able to learn more about the destination they will be visiting and receive assistance on customizing the experience to fit their needs. The Visit Knoxville team participated in two pre-promote opportunities: International Society of Arboriculture Southern Chapter Meeting held in Mobile, AL and the American Cornhole Organization's Regional Major in Peachtree City, GA.

SUPPORTED 185 OVER EVENTS & MEETINGS

○ Featured groups include National Street Rod Association, Outdoor Writers Association of America, American Bantam Association, Bunch Marine TN Valley Team Championships, Destination Imagination and TN Governor's Conference on Hospitality and Tourism, which drew a record number of attendees.



VISITOR SERVICES

Utilizing a wealth of tools and knowledge, Visitor Services focuses on the end experience of visitors. The team's priority is to engage the Knoxville community with the travelers and ensure the experiences of visitors are both memorable and positive.

DISTRIBUTED 114,341 VISITORS GUIDES

The total takes into account 26,908 individual requests, 159 local groups totaling 14,093 pick-ups and 73,340 visitors guides shipped in bulk.

Requests come from around the world. The most U.S. requests this year came from:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| 1. Tennessee | 6. Illinois |
| 2. Florida | 7. North Carolina |
| 3. Texas | 8. Georgia |
| 4. Ohio | 9. Indiana |
| 5. New York | 10. Virginia |

GREETED 24,732

WALK-IN VISITORS FROM AROUND THE WORLD*

The most visits for the year came from the states listed below. In addition to the visitors who stopped by the downtown Visitors Center, almost 1,700 callers were provided with Knoxville information.

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. Tennessee | 6. Virginia |
| 2. Florida | 7. Ohio |
| 3. North Carolina | 8. Wisconsin |
| 4. California | 9. Georgia |
| 5. Texas | 10. New York |

**This year, the Knoxville Visitors Center welcomed visitors from every continent except Antarctica.*

FACILITATED 86

GROUP RESERVATIONS FOR BLUE PLATE SPECIAL

The live radio concert is hosted by WDVX and takes place Monday-Saturday at noon at the Visitors Center.

HANDED OUT **41,240**
BROCHURES

- This number reflects the total amount of brochures taken from the downtown Visitors Center. Details are provided in each quarterly report.

DISTRIBUTED **13,100**
BROCHURES

- These brochures were distributed via our Ride Along Program (accompanying requests for the Visitors & Relocation Guide).

TRAINED **91**
TOURISM AMBASSADORS

- Training took place via eight Gotta Know Knoxville classes. Learn more at VisitKnoxville.com.



LOGGED **1,055**
VOLUNTEER HOURS

- Visit Knoxville Volunteers (formerly TEAM Knoxville) served 35 groups/events providing a no-cost, service-added benefit to VK's clients.

LOANED
EQUIPMENT TO **64**
GROUPS

- Radios, coolers, ice chests, tables, tents and more were provided free of charge for various non-profit partners and events.

DONATED
MORE THAN **36**
BASKETS

- Knoxville themed baskets were made for various groups including local organizations, conference groups and tourism partners.
- Throughout the year, Visitor Services also staffs retail/information tables for festivals and events, and hosts bus tours for various groups.



NOTABLE EVENTS & Accomplishments for the Year

- ★ Knoxville welcomed more guests than ever to the Governor's Conference on Hospitality and Tourism.

"The 2014 Governor's Conference on Hospitality and Tourism is now in the books -- the record books! This year's conference in Knoxville saw the largest attendance in the history of the event, with over 515 registered delegates from all across the state (and yes, even from all across the country!) And, of course, thank you to our great friends at Visit Knoxville -- Kim Bumpas and her team truly pulled out all the stops to make us feel welcome and to show us what a great city Knoxville is!"

Greg Adkins,
President & CEO, TnHTA



- ★ VK partnered with the University of Tennessee to bring Garth Brooks back to Knoxville after 15 years. Garth performed a four night concert series that generated roughly \$7.5 million in economic impact while also contributing to the Visit Knoxville Marketing Fund.



- ★ VK provided Knoxville branding and information at the new UT Visitors Center.

- ★ VK partnered with Outdoor Knoxville, Legacy Parks Foundation, Regions Bank and Billy Lush Board Shop to provide Get Out & Play! bike rentals at the Outdoor Knoxville Adventure Center and the Knoxville Visitors Center.



- ★ Visit Knoxville partnered with the Knoxville Chamber and the University of Tennessee Office of Admissions to produce a new Visitors & Relocation Guide and a new UT Visitors Guide.



- ★ VK underwrote and assisted Jack Hanna's film crew on a recent visit to film for Into the Wild and Wild Countdown. Jack is pictured here at the Knoxville Zoo, where his illustrious career began.

Check out the promo at:
[youtube.com/user/enjoyknoxville](https://www.youtube.com/user/enjoyknoxville)



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Many of the recent regional and national stories we've enjoyed reading about Knoxville were generated by travel journalists that Visit Knoxville wooed to this city.

A few examples include...

"This one-time flyover spot has become a terrific option for a weekend getaway. Smart regional food, a first-class art museum, and a strong local design community mean plenty to do for a visitor."

Michael Kaminer, New York Daily News, August 31, 2014

"Having received what some locals call a bad rap as the "Scruffy City," Knoxville is, in fact, anything but. The city's resurgence in the past 10 years has been something to write about. Look closely, and you'll find that it is full of a beautiful, rich history, a sprawling Urban Wilderness and audacious chefs."

Rani Robinson, TravelChannel.com, The Best of Knoxville, March 2015

A total of **\$469,878.73** worth of publicity was generated by travel writers VK brought to Knoxville.

Overall, Visit Knoxville generated more than **2-million dollars worth of unpaid media mentions.**

\$1,395,314.03 in broadcast mentions
\$191,833.21 in online mentions
\$554,911.58 in print mentions

Example: Knoxville earned \$774,377.35 in unpaid media mentions for Destination Imagination.

WEB STATS

○ VisitKnoxville.com was visited over a **half a million times (505,552).**

Analytics reflect a 32% gain in visits over 2014 and a 25% gain in pages viewed.

65% of the audience visits are from outside Knoxville, with the largest feeder markets being Nashville, Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, Washington, DC, New York, Raleigh, Detroit, Dallas and Houston.

One out of every five website visitors requests a visitors guide, signs up for our newsletter or clicks on our booking engine.

ADVERTISING

VK's digital advertising **EXCEEDED** industry averages.

VK's pay per click campaign produced a 10% conversion rate on search ads, almost 7 times higher than the travel industry average of 1.45% for Paid Search.

VK's display campaigns produced a 3% conversion rate, almost 4 times higher than 0.8% average for display ads.

Print advertising and promotion **produced** nearly **6,000** calls to the Visit Knoxville offices.

VK participated in the state's Made in Tennessee broadcast and digital campaigns. The digital campaign produced a total of 61,362 unique leads (campaign benchmark: 21,000).



SOCIAL MEDIA

VK experienced **impressive social media growth** over last fiscal year.

- Facebook up 38%
- Twitter up 42%
- Instagram up 456%
- Pinterest up 27%

PARTNER SUPPORT

(ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES FOUND IN QUARTERLY REPORTS)

VK worked with the marketing team at Legacy Parks to help produce native content for *TNVacation.com*. Here, visitors learn not only about outdoor adventure in Knoxville, but its proximity to fine dining, upscale hotels, museums, theatres and live music.



Outdoors and on the Move in Knoxville

Capitalizing on this theme, Visit Knoxville's marketing team recruited Nashville writer Kristen Luna to tell more of the Knoxville story from her blog on *discoversoutheast.com*.



In the heart of Knoxville

If you're seeking a thrill in the heart of Knoxville, you needn't look further than the World's Fair Park, the site of the 1982 World's Fair that now plays host to a bevy of annual events. Towering at 266 feet tall above the park, the Sunspire offers a spectacular 360-degree view of Knoxville from the 4th floor observation deck, open free daily to the public. Guests can also grab a cocktail or bite to eat on the 9th floor at the Icon Ultra Lounge.

As dusk draws near, downtown starts to heat up, and Knoxville's artists emerge from the woodwork, especially on Fridays for *After Five* at the Knoxville Museum of Art. The series showcases musicians of all genres ranging from swing orchestras to Cuban jazz to blues bands. The Art Market Gallery, a collective of more than 60 local artists, is bustling any day of the week, but puts its best foot forward for the monthly Downtown Knoxville's First Friday Art Walk, a cultural smorgasbord of live music, artwork of varying mediums, and



TENNESSEE

Visit Knoxville:

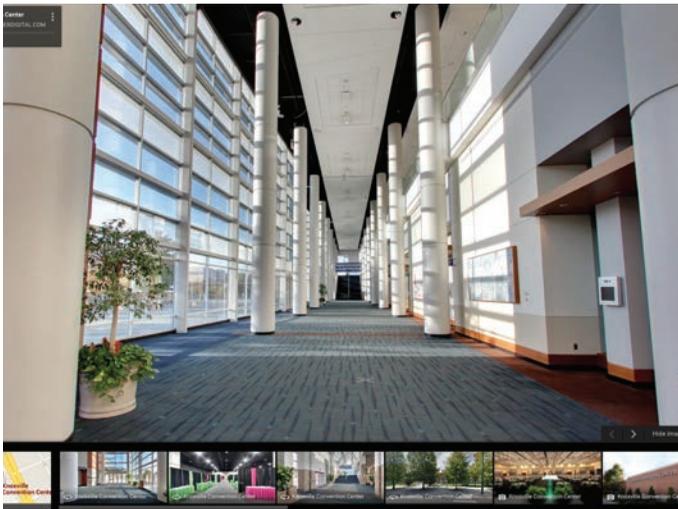
As Presenting Sponsor for **Dogwood Art's Rhythm N' Blooms**, VK pitched the festival to nearly 100 music media outlets and partnered on the festival's digital ad campaign.

VK was pleased to support the **Tennessee Theatre** on the publication of *The Tennessee Theatre: A Grand Entertainment Palace* by Jack Neely.

As Presenting Sponsor for the **Big Ears Festival**, VK had a major presence at the KMA (the only free venue for festival goers) and staffed an information table for visitors.

VK was pleased to support a number of our History & Heritage partners through sponsorship and promotion of **Knoxville's Civil War Sesquicentennial Commemoration**.

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR



VK oversaw the production of a Knoxville Convention Center Google tour that provides a peek inside the city's premier meeting venue. The tour can be viewed at KCC.VisitKnoxville.com.



VK installed a VK Network screen in the lobby of the Hilton and two screens at the Knoxville Convention Center. Rotating promotional videos inform and educate visitors at over 15 locations.



VKTV, Visit Knoxville's In-Room Hotel Channel, went live at the downtown Hampton Inn. Additional VKTV installs are scheduled for 1Q 2015-2016.

Visit Knoxville

FILM/KNOX

filmknoxvilletn.com

The Visit Knoxville Film Office assisted 28 productions from out of town and local production companies. Assistance included providing help with location scouting, permits, crew, talent, city services and accommodations, as well as continuing to recruit out of town projects to shoot in Knoxville.

Kind Words from our Tourism Partners

"Visit Knoxville is a great partner and asset to our community. They have fostered a sense of community and connection by bringing many organizations and attractions together for regular meetups where we are able to build partnerships and relationships and to collaborate for the greater good."

Lila Honaker
Communications and Development Manager
Historic Tennessee Theatre

"The Visit Knoxville team is providing information, exposure and support for our work at Ijams. A partnership is growing, one that will make our community a better place to live and to visit."

Mary Thom Adams
Assistant Director and Development Officer
Ijams Nature Center

"Visit Knoxville is one of our strongest area partners. From FAM tours to assistance with promotion, we are able to further our reach and collective mission. We are thankful for Visit Knoxville's support."

Calvin Chappelle
Executive Director
Mabry-Hazen House & Bethel Cemetery

"It is hard to imagine a CVB that could be more helpful and supportive to its local arts and culture industry than our Visit Knoxville. As a partner, they are collaborative, appreciative, and generous."

Liza Zenni
Executive Director
Arts & Cultural Alliance



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