

ANNUAL REPORT

A look at what we've been up to



2019/2020

visit
knoxville
TENNESSEE



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Dear Friends,

When Visit Knoxville released our 2019-2020 Sales & Marketing Roadmap at the beginning of the fiscal year, we (like you) had no idea how much our plans, our expectations and our lives in general were going to change. We had big plans for the year, and in the first half of the year we celebrated some amazing accomplishments, including the Garth Brooks concert at Neyland Stadium. In addition to this, we welcomed a variety of groups and events including Alpha Kappa Alpha, International Society of Arboriculture, National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds Outdoor Hospitality Conference and Expo, and the return of the TYR Pro Swim Series. The VK Film Office was also thrilled to announce that, for the second consecutive year, Knoxville was named one of the “Best Places to Live and Work as a Moviemaker” by MovieMaker Magazine. You’ll find a few of these notable accomplishments, all of which could never have happened without our amazing partners, in this report.

In the second half of the year, we celebrated accomplishments of a different nature – like moving more than **85 groups** and sporting events representing more than **\$83 million** into future years. The COVID-19 pandemic turned our industry upside down and will continue to create challenges in FYE21, but the pandemic also revealed the strength and resolve of this industry, especially here in Knoxville. Throughout Knox County, partners worked together to keep a spotlight on our destination. Focused on the future, the VK team remained in contact with Meeting Planners, Sports Events Planners, Film Production Companies and leisure travelers.

In the end, against all odds, we accomplished a number of goals we had set for ourselves, and others we never imagined – and, as always, we did so with the support of the City of Knoxville, Knox County, the State of Tennessee and our amazing local tourism partners. This annual report only touches on the highlights. For the details of the year, I encourage you to view the quarterly highlights online under Media at [visitknoxville.com](https://www.visitknoxville.com).

Thank you for your support this past year. It is certainly one for the record books.

Sincerely,

Kim Bumpas
President
Visit Knoxville

CONVENTION SALES & SPORTS COMMISSION

VK's Convention Sales and Sports Commission Teams once again exceeded several goals in an exciting yet unique year. Detailed information is listed below.

BOOKED EVENTS

140

(EXCEEDED GOAL OF 137)

Of the 140 events, 68% were new business. 35 booked at the Knoxville Convention Center.

PRODUCED OVER \$99.6 MILLION OF FUTURE ECONOMIC IMPACT

SUCCESSFULLY MOVED

85+ GROUPS

AFFECTED BY COVID-19 TO FUTURE YEARS REPRESENTING MORE THAN \$83 MILLION IN ECONOMIC IMPACT

TOTAL LEADS

409

(EXCEEDED GOAL OF 349)

Of this, 40% (162) went to the Knoxville Convention Center.

HOSTED SITE VISITS

36

Among them were Building Industry Association of Central Kentucky, AAU Basketball Committee, Hobie Kayak Bass Fishing, Bulldog Club of America, and Tennessee Gas Association. VK has booked 17 groups as a result.

CONDUCTED SALES APPOINTMENTS

28

IN THE GREATER NASHVILLE METRO

Notable appointments include Tennessee Medical Association, Tennessee Realtors, National Guard Association of Tennessee, and International Bluegrass Music Association.

PERFORMED 2 OUT-OF-MARKET SALES PRESENTATIONS TO THIRD PARTY MEETING PLANNER HEADQUARTER OFFICES.



ATTENDED TRADE SHOWS

24

VK Sales Directors and attending partners conducted 418 appointments/meetings. Shows included IMEX America, Professional Fraternity Association, Connect Sports, HPN Global Partner Conference, and USSSA National Convention. Visit Knoxville issued 30 leads resulting from show activity.

EVENT SCOUTING TRIPS

3

VK Sports Commission completed 3 scouting trips in FYE20, including visits to Northern Trust Open, NAIA National Headquarters and NASCAR Heat E-Sports Championships.

PRE-PROMOTE

1

Performed Knoxville pre-promote for the American Chemical Society's Rubber Division, International Elastomer Conference

VK CONCIERGE VISITS

266

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

CONVENTION & SPORTS SERVICES

The Convention and Sports Services Team is tasked with enhancing 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. Providing planners with a high level of customer service and visitors with an enhanced experience will positively influence the opportunities for repeat business and visits. The Visit Knoxville Convention Services Team provides services such as partner referrals, itinerary suggestions, visitor information, and off-site special event assistance for conventions, trade shows, events and festivals utilizing a consultative approach based on the unique needs, specific goals and attendee interests of each group.

SUPPORTED
181
CONVENTIONS, SPORTING EVENTS,
FESTIVALS & MEETINGS

PROVIDED
221
PARTNER REFERRALS

HOSTED
12
PRE-PLANNING TRIPS



FEATURED GROUPS INCLUDE:

- AAU Girls Basketball 7th Grade National Championships
- Zeta Phi Beta Bi-Annual Leadership Conference
- Annual International Herpes Virus Workshop
- International Clarinet Association Annual Conference
- USA Diving Junior National Championships
- International Doctors in Alcoholics Anonymous Annual North American Convention
- US Masters Swimming Marathon Distance Open Water Nationals
- International Society of Arboriculture Annual Conference & Trade Show
- Association of Library and Information Science Education
- Tennessee County Services Association Fall Conference and Trade Show
- National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds Outdoor Hospitality Conference and Expo
 - AAU Southeastern District Cross Country Championships
 - Garth Brooks Stadium Tour
- AAU Cross Country National Championships
- TYR Pro Swim Series
- Alpha Kappa Alpha South Eastern Regional Conference
- NAIA Swimming and Diving National Championships

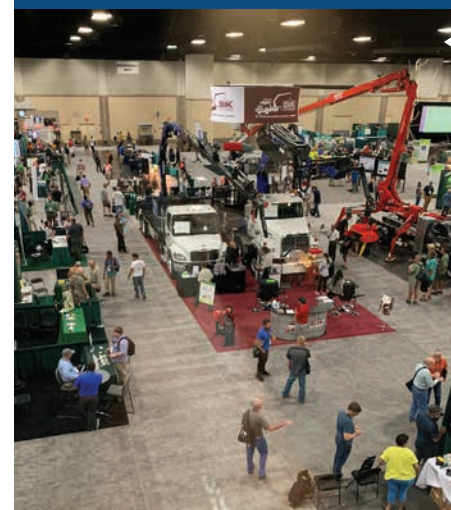


HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

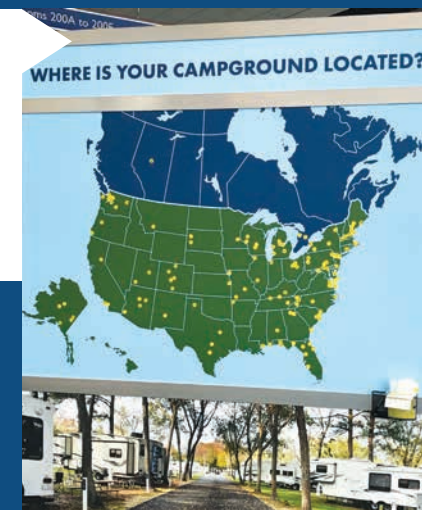
VK welcomed approximately 2,000 national and international attendees for the International Clarinet Association Annual Conference: ClarinetFest® 2019. During the four-day conference, the Association broke the Guinness World Record for the World's Largest Clarinet Choir with 367 clarinetists.



VK welcomed the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) for their International Tree Climbing Competition (ITCC) at Lakeshore Park and Annual Conference & Tradeshow at the Knoxville Convention Center. Representing an estimated 20 countries, approximately 500 ISA attendees and 1,000 spectators were present for the competition and approximately 2,000 ISA attendees gathered for the conference and tradeshow. The meeting planner reported the ITCC had some of the highest foot-traffic it has ever received.



The National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds held their Outdoor Hospitality Conference & Expo at the Knoxville Convention Center with approximately 1,200 attendees representing 49 states and five Canadian provinces. ARVC is the only national association dedicated to representing the interests and needs of private RV parks and campgrounds in the US and Canada.



VKSC hosted teams from 16 states for the 2019 AAU Girls Basketball 7th Grade National Championships at the Knoxville Convention Center over the Fourth of July weekend.



The 2019 AAU Cross Country National Championships returned for a second year and brought over 1,950 athletes to Knoxville the first weekend in December. This was the largest event for AAU in 13 years. Due to the success of the event, Knoxville is now in the rotation for this event to return in 3-4 years.

The TYR Pro Swim Series returned in 2020 and will come back again in 2021. With the Olympics being pushed to 2021 we anticipate another year of hosting some of the top swimmers in the USA. The series is televised on NBCSN and the Olympic Channel and livestreamed at usaswimming.org

2020 NAIA Swimming & Diving National Championships - This event will return in March 2021. Please see Notable Events & Accomplishments for details.



NOTABLE EVENTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Revealed a New Branding Campaign for Knoxville

Campaign elements, including videos and a new “destination logo”, were revealed at the VK Block Party on September 20th. Campaign focus: Knoxville can’t be defined by one thing; you’ll be surprised by the seemingly never-ending cultural, culinary, music and outdoor experiences Knoxville has to offer.

Broke Records with Garth Brooks

VK partnered with the University of Tennessee to create the ultimate experience for fans visiting from throughout the world. The November 16th concert, the final stop on Brooks’ Stadium Tour, was the first concert at Neyland in 16 years and broke the Neyland Stadium and state of Tennessee attendance records for a single concert event. Vivid Seats named Knoxville as the 2020 Concert City of the Year.



Partnered on the KNOXTOGETHER Community Initiative in Response to COVID-19

Partnered with Knox County, the City of Knoxville, and the Knoxville Chamber to launch knoxtogether.com with ongoing updates regarding state and local COVID-19 mandates. VK also facilitated a community survey, PSA production and signage.



Welcomed Alpha Kappa Alpha for their 88th South Eastern Regional Conference

VK and a host of partners blanketed downtown in a sea of pink and green to welcome more than 3,800 attendees for their conference at the KCC and several downtown hotels.

“Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., 88th South Eastern Conference was FANTABULOUS.”
– Ola Blackmon-McBride; AKA 88th South Eastern Conference Chair



Began Staffing a Knoxville Information Desk at the Sunsphere

The VK staff at the information desk (located on the Observation Deck) greeted 23,868 visitors from all 50 states and 63 countries from December 9 - March 16 (at which time it closed due to COVID-19).

Hosted the 2020 NAIA Swimming & Diving National Championships

The VK Sports Commission hosted and managed the largest championship in NAIA history. We partnered with Tennessee Athletics and welcomed over 475 athletes to Allan Jones Aquatic Center. This event will return in March 2021.

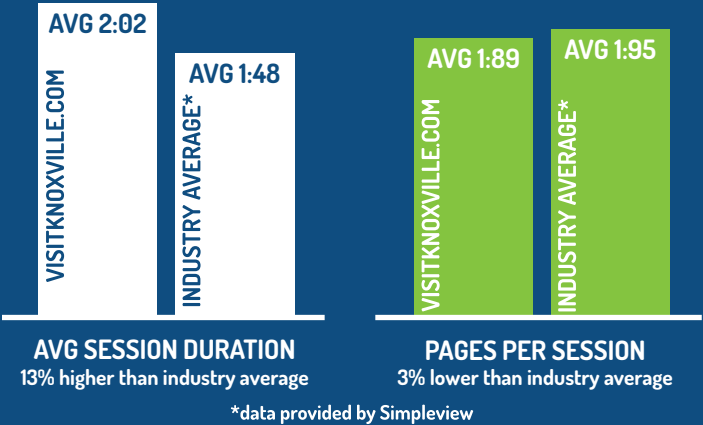


MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

The Marketing and Communications Team worked diligently amid the ever-changing circumstances of this past year to keep a spotlight on Knoxville for leisure travelers, meeting planners, sporting events planners and film production companies. We accomplish this by utilizing a variety of marketing tools and strategies that direct people to VisitKnoxville.com. The statistics in this section are related to the leisure market.

Despite an 11-week pause in paid media during this fiscal year, it is important to note that during that time, Visit Knoxville continued to see an improvement in organic search traffic following the industry-wide declines seen in early March. While not quite at the same year-over-year comparisons seen prior to the pandemic, it is encouraging to see continued increases. This information and the future bookings found on the Market Research page of this report make us hopeful as to what lies ahead for our top-of-mind destination.

TOTAL NUMBER OF WEBSITE VISITS
1,314,376 (Up 1.8%)



TOP TEN LANDING PAGES

1. Events

2. Things to Do

3. Artsy Town

4. Restaurants

5. Blog
6. Garth Brooks

7. Ale Trail Map

8. Urban Wilderness

9. Plan a Trip

10. KnoxTogether

VK WEBSITE UPDATES

CREATED
26
NEW LANDING PAGES INCLUDING
2 FOR MEETING SALES GROUPS AND
5 FOR VK SPORTS EVENT GROUPS

ADDED
108
NEW LISTINGS
PRODUCED/PARTNERED ON

112
BLOG POSTS
(ALL SHARED ON SOCIAL MEDIA)

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

VISIT KNOXVILLE APP
2,882 Downloads
8,785 Sessions

AVERAGE TIME ON APP
7:54

Note: The app changed analytics platforms this year, thus making the prior year's numbers non-comparable for percentage growth.

E-NEWSLETTER SIGNUPS
1,588

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR



Revealed a new branding campaign now in place for Knoxville, including four new videos and a new “destination logo”. The paid media campaign launched in late July was paused March 13–May 31 due to COVID-19, and relaunched with adapted messaging on June 1st. The new tagline “nature-loving-adventure-seeking-artsy-kind-a-town” has been utilized not only for leisure travel promotion but also for marketing related to Convention Sales and the Sports Commission. It was also utilized to create photo murals for the Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum.

Partnered with the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD), The Bluebird Café, and the Nashville Songwriters Association International (NSAI) to present the Knoxville Showcase for 2020 Songwriter Week at the Bijou Theatre. A total of 19 artists from a variety of cities and states (all of whom had won qualifying rounds) took to the stage. Adeem Bingham of Knoxville won the night.



Partnered with Brand USA to update international marketing for Knoxville on visittheusa.com

Partnered with Pigeon Forge to host four members of the Midwest Travel Journalists Association (MTJA) on a post-conference FAM. Published stories to date include: “Tale of Two Cities, Tennessee Style” in print and at lavendermagazine.com and “The Good Life” online at detroitnews.com.

Collaborated with California-based Social Media Influencers Bobby and Alli Tally (@traveling_newlyweds) on a Knoxville/Louisville getaway contest. The contest produced a total of 331 new followers for Visit Knoxville.

Partnered to produce and promote a Knoxville Spotify Playlist –a curated playlist featuring local favorites like Erick Baker and Adeem Bingham



Created 340 Instagram stories highlighting Knoxville’s culinary, history, outdoor and art/culture scenes, including the “Black Stories that Matter” series in response to the most recent efforts involved in the BLM Movement

Updated visitknoxville.com with a new blog home page that features the most popular blog categories.

Produced 17 new videos (in-house) for the VK Network including a Scooter Safety video

Produced 12 e-newsletters

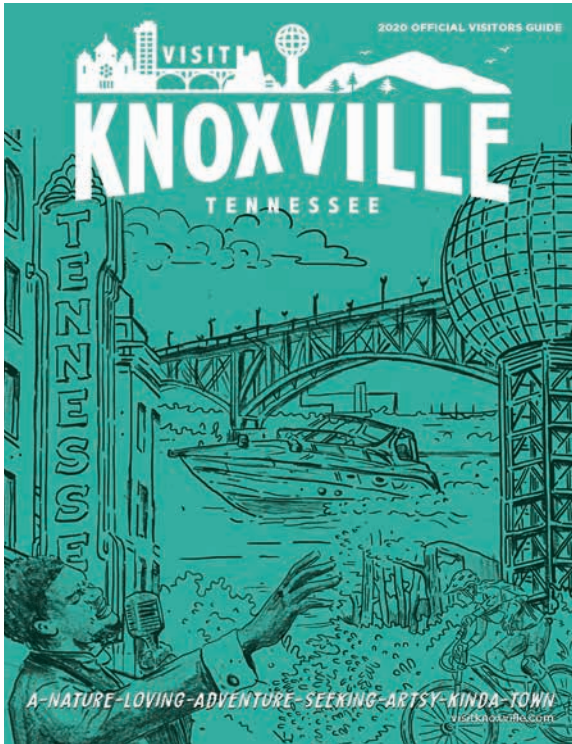
Hosted a variety of national and international journalists including bloggers/influencers:

- six international journalists representing Germany and the UK
- three influencers from Atlanta, New York and Nashville (part of the new branding campaign)
- freelance journalist Amber Gibson – who has since produced an article in USA Today

Generated more than \$1,052,000 in earned/unpaid media via PR efforts

VISITOR SERVICES

The Visitor Services Team serves as the face of Knoxville, helping visitors and locals find information as well as souvenirs and gifts. Our commitment is to provide the best possible experience for everyone we encounter.



DISTRIBUTED VISITORS GUIDES
157,424

*149,052 represents fulfillment through Visitor Services only; other departments fulfill guide requests per their client needs

VISITORS GUIDE REQUESTED STATES

Visitors Guide requests are received from around the world. Within the U.S., the most requests came from the following states:

1. Tennessee

2. Florida

3. Illinois

4. North Carolina

5. Ohio
6. New York

7. Georgia

8. Texas

9. Pennsylvania

10. California



TOTAL NUMBER OF
WDVX BLUE PLATE SPECIAL
RESERVATIONS
8 GROUPS
176 GUESTS

TOTAL NUMBER OF
WALK-IN VISITORS
35,681
- 7,037 PARKING PERMITS -

TOTAL NUMBER OF
ASSISTED CALLERS
2,338

TOTAL NUMBER OF
RIDE ALONG PIECES SENT
20,219

TOTAL NUMBER OF
BROCHURES PICKED UP
AT VISITORS CENTER
25,672

TOTAL NUMBER OF
GKK AMBASSADORS
TRAINED
82

TOTAL NUMBER OF UNIQUE
BROCHURES OFFERED
IN THE VISITORS CENTER
101

TOTAL NUMBER OF CALENDAR
EVENT LISTINGS ADDED/
UPDATED ON VK WEBSITE
2,143

VOLUNTEER HOURS

TOTAL NUMBER OF
VOLUNTEER HOURS
437

TOTAL NUMBER OF
INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS
98

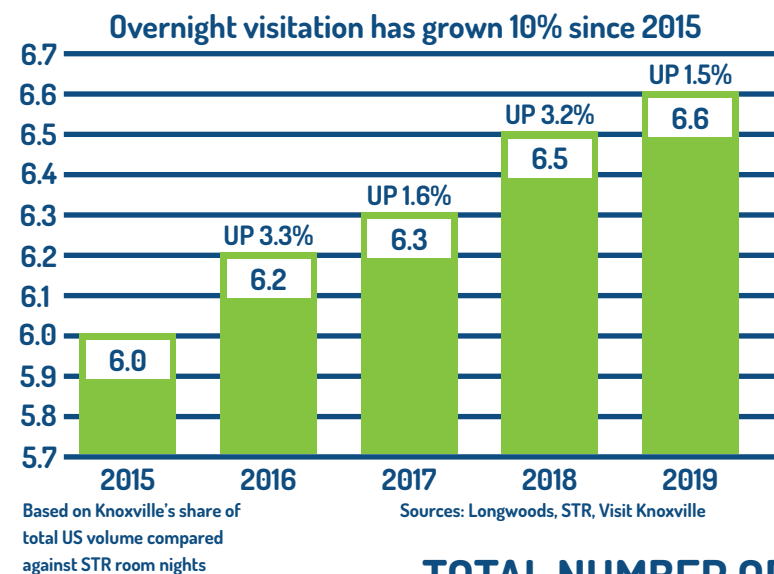
- 40 VOLUNTEER EVENTS INCLUDING
USA CYCLING POSTPONED UNTIL FYE21 -

MARKET RESEARCH

VK's Department of Market Research collects and analyzes data from sources including Longwoods International, Smith Travel Research (STR) and ADARA to compile information related to Knoxville's travel market. A quarterly Tourism Dashboard is also available for viewing under Public Notices on the Media section of visitknoxville.com.

TOTAL OVERNIGHT VISITORS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2019

6.6 Million



HOTEL DATA

Growth from 2012 to 2019

Occupancy **9.3%**
ADR* **27.5%**

*ADR = average daily rate
Source: STR

TOTAL NUMBER OF ROOM NIGHTS

JULY 1, 2019 - JUNE 30, 2020

1,762,316

Source: STR

BOOKING DATA

VK's digital ad placement and organic website visitation generated the following:

46,226 bookings
85,381 room nights
\$9,817,597 revenue

ADARA tracks a 60-day booking window
The booking data above is current as of 7-17-20

TOP 10 BOOKING MARKETS

Atlanta	Nashville
Chicago	New York City
Chattanooga	Tampa
Knoxville*	Tri-Cities
Memphis	Washington D.C.

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

VK FILM OFFICE

The Visit Knoxville Film Office continued its mission to successfully promote Knoxville and Knox County as a premiere location for productions to call home. The Film Office was again very active in recruiting and winning projects from large production hubs such as the feature film, **A HARD PROBLEM**, from Los Angeles. Below are some highlights of the past year.

Continued to work with the Tennessee Entertainment Alliance, meeting with legislators in Nashville with the mission of highlighting the importance of strong, competitive Film Incentives in our state.

Made MovieMaker Magazine's "Best Places to Live and Work as a Moviemaker" for the second year in a row, keeping Knoxville in front of top producers and filmmakers.

Worked closely with Hazart Films on the feature film **A HARD PROBLEM**, starring John Berchtold (Manhunt) and Catherine Kim (Ballers). The film wrapped in the Fall of 2019. The Film Office recruited the project out of Los Angeles and assisted with locations, crew, lodging, film incentives and permits.

Continued to work with out-of-town production companies on projects ranging from commercials, crime re-enactment television shows and hit network television shows such as **THE BACHELOR** airing on ABC. **THE BACHELOR** filmed in Knoxville in the Fall of 2019. The Film Office assisted with permits, locations, lodging, crew and city services for these productions.



Hosted a screening and reception in December for Paul Harrill's film, **LIGHT FROM LIGHT** starring Jim Gaffigan and Marin Ireland. The film was released in theaters the following week. **LIGHT FROM LIGHT** was filmed in Knoxville in 2018 and was incentivized by the VK Film Office.

Worked with several producers in the recruitment of projects that have plans to shoot in FY 20/21 including **AN ACCIDENT ON RELAY STREET** directed by Rohit Batra. The film has A list talent attached. The Film Office also worked with Boris Isaacs on a romantic comedy planned for late 2020. These are just a couple of the many projects that the Film Office is recruiting for the upcoming months.

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

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