



DESTINATION MARKETING & EVENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES REPORT JANUARY 1 - MARCH 31, 2023



April 14, 2023

From the beginning of the new year to the beginnings of festival season, Visit Knoxville had an incredible start to 2023. The third quarter of FY2022–2023 saw high praise from the film industry being included for the third time as one of *Moviemaker Magazine's* **"Best Places to Live and Work in as a Moviemaker"**, hosting the fifth annual **Tennessee Songwriters Week**, and holding the highest attended **Bassmaster Classic** to date.

Additionally, the 4th Floor Observation Deck of the Sunsphere **commemorated one year since reopening**, welcoming 59,000 visitors from across the globe since February 22, 2022. We celebrated by opening on Mondays, giving visitors and locals alike an opportunity to experience Knoxville's iconic attraction seven days a week.

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

On behalf of Visit Knoxville, I proudly submit the January 1 – March 31, 2023 report for Destination Marketing and Event Management Services for Knoxville and Knox County.

Sincerely,

Kim Bumpas, CDME, CMP President, Visit Knoxville

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Highlights Summary	Page 4
Sales Summary	Page 8
Convention & Sports Services Summary	Page 10
Marketing & Communications Summary	Page 16
Film Office Summary	Page 22
Visitor Services Summary	Page 23

HIGHLIGHTS SUMMARY

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

Hosting the Visitors Guide Launch Party – On January 26, the 2023 Visitor's Guide was released at the Visitor's Guide Launch Party held at Addison's Bookstore and The Tea Bar. This annual event welcomed partners, highlighted contributors and new features of the guide, and recognized Team Knoxville Volunteers. Guests



got a sneak peek at the newly reimagined guide,



top volunteers were honored for their service, and sweet treats were provided by All Occasion Catering. Each year, VK hosts this event at a space that is newer to the Knoxville area to expose the space to a new audience. The 2023 Guide's cover displays a wraparound scenic photo of Augusta Quarry by Bruce McCamish. The guide also includes pet friendly articles, an events calendar, and emphasizes various neighborhoods throughout Knoxville.

Knoxville

• Presenting the 2023 Tennessee Songwriters Knoxville Showcase – As part of the fifth

annual Tennessee Songwriters Week, VK partnered with the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD) to present the Showcase at the Bijou Theatre on February 20. A total of 18 regional singer songwriter competition winners from throughout East Tennessee performed original songs with Knoxville's Melanie LaFoy winning the night. LaFoy joined winners from Chattanooga, Memphis, Gatlinburg, Johnson City, Franklin, and Gallatin at Nashville's iconic The Bluebird Cafe on March 26 for a private event with music industry professionals. Past winners of the





Showcase include Travis Bigwood and the Lonesome Doves, Adeem the Artist and Tyson Leamon. Bigwood and Leamon performed as part of the event with Evie Andrus as host. • Hosting the 2023 Bassmaster Classic – The Visit Knoxville Sports Commission (VKSC) hosted the 2023 Bassmaster Classic from March 24–26 across multiple Knoxville venues.

Known as the "Superbowl of Bass Fishing," the event saw a record-breaking 163,914 attendees – the most of any Bassmaster Classic to date. Fifty-five anglers competed over the course of three days to win the coveted Ray Scott Bassmaster Classic Champion trophy. VK started the weekend off with a boom by hosting the Bassmaster Kickoff Party presented by TNT Fireworks. The Kickoff Party took place at the Knoxville Convention Center (KCC) Plaza Terrace and offered a fun family-friendly evening to welcome guests to Knoxville and celebrate an exciting weekend



of bass fishing. The VK and VKSC Teams coordinated the party logistics, including



scheduling the live band Smooth Sailor, securing security via Axis Security, facilitating road closures with Traffic Engineering, overseeing event decor, designing, and providing event signage, managing the event layout, working with vendors, and helping coordinate details for the grand finale of fireworks and Knoxville's first ever drone show. VKSC also partnered with KCC to provide food trucks, seating, stage set up, and a beer garden. Team Knoxville Volunteers were recruited and trained to assist throughout the event. Attendees and athletes were welcomed with digital signage at the airport, a custom Bassmaster Classic magnet on both sets of the KNOX letters, and a custom message on the Visitors Center Reader Board. The Team provided a Yeti bucket welcome gift

to each angler and staff member upon arrival.

The Team hosted multiple site visits in preparation for the event and participated in several key preplanning calls. The VK Marketing and VKSC Teams assisted with Media Day leading up to the event, provided Knoxville photographs and videos, assisted with promotional billboards, press releases, e-blasts, handouts, and other marketing materials as needed. VKSC created a detailed micro-site on the VK website, which included a "Know Before You Go" section with a detailed event schedule, parking information, maps, venue policies, and other



important event information. Traffic to this year's Bassmaster event listing on the VK

website was the highest to any single calendar event ever with 38,320 pageviews; 61,286 total pageviews for Bassmaster related pages including the Kickoff Party, contributing to the highest monthly site traffic ever.



The VK Marketing Team coordinated local shoots for the Bassmaster production team and videos of the Bassmaster Classic trophy were filmed in various iconic locations throughout Knoxville. The segments aired in nationally televised coverage of the Classic and in Thompson Boling Arena during weigh-ins, alongside a specially produced :30 version of Knoxville's artsy-town video. The video celebrated Knoxville as a nature-loving-adventure-seeking-CLASSIC-kinda town. Stills from the filming were included in social media collaborations between VK and Bassmaster. Both the Kickoff Party and the full weekend of events were promoted in advance and during the entire event on both VK and VKSC social media platforms.

VK worked in partnership with the Special Events Office and the B.A.S.S.® team on Bassmaster branded pole banners and a Market Square banner promoting the event. VKSC worked with UT Parking to provide event parking on campus and scheduled shuttle buses to move attendees across the multiple event venues. A-Frames with event information and

directions at KCC were set up onsite at the venues and custom signage was displayed at Ned McWherter Park to ensure use of the area for anglers and service crews. VKSC coordinated with the Knoxville Police Department for road closure staffing and traffic control needs, and scheduled the set up a traffic marquee sign with directions for anglers as they entered the launch location. VKSC coordinated the usage of the Knoxville Coliseum parking lot for use as the Boat Yard. VKSC provided many referrals for local restaurants, venues, event equipment rental companies, marine agencies,



first responders, golf carts, and other local partners to ensure no detail was overlooked. VKSC assisted with insurance needs and lease agreement assistance via PBA for World's Fair Park, Vol Landing, and the Festival Lawn. VKSC coordinated with KUB and the Knoxville Fire Department on water usage for the Go Outside expo activations of dog pools and catfish ponds. VKSC assisted with the set-up of hotel options for exhibitors and provided VKSC stickers and VK pens to each exhibitor upon arrival at set-up. Visitor

Services staffed a merchandise booth within the event expo. For the nightly-weigh ins, the Team created parking passes for distribution to VIPs and worked with UT Hospitality to manage the VIP suite experience at Thompson-Boling Arena, including selecting catering options, coordinating with Cherokee Distributing on beverage needs, providing custom signage, and managing invitation-based credentials. VK scheduled National Anthem singers for each event. VKSC attended the Kickoff party, launch, expo, weigh ins, Night of Champions, and Champion's Toast, to show full support of the event as representation of Knoxville.

"Congrats on an amazing event! Such positive feedback from everyone. We received many compliments. Thank you, thank you, thank you...your team is amazing! - Eric Lopez, Director, Events and Sponsorship Activation, B.A.S.S.

"Just wanted to express my sincere gratitude to each of you! Thank you so much for all the help and support! It was a great event, and we couldn't have done it without you! Thanks for being such a great partner. I look forward to working with you in the future! Thank you so much!! – Lisa Talmadge, Tournament Director – Elite Series, B.A.S.S.



• **Recognizing VK Team Member** – VK's Director of Sales, Pearl Dorsey, was recognized by the Tennessee Society of Association Executives (TNSAE) as Associate Member of the year. TNSAE is devoted to the promotion, advancement and development of association professionals and the organizations they serve across Tennessee. TNSAE's annual awards program recognizes the leading association executive and association member each year, as well as

honoring the best of the best in association programs and services.

• Launching New Dog-Friendly Ads – As part of VK's ongoing nature-loving-adventure-

seeking-artsy-kinda-town campaign, new digital ads focusing on Knoxville's pet friendly nature have been added to the marketing mix. The ads drive traffic to visitbarxville.com, a page on the VK website. Since the ads launch, the have 1,302 generated hotel bookings with an average



stay of 1.7 nights. Top markets include Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, Indiana, and South Carolina. View the Barxville videos <u>here</u>.

SALES SUMMARY

- Trade Shows The VK Sales Team attended four trade shows during 3Q:
 - PCMA Convening Leaders (January 8–11) VK Sales Staff attended the PCMA Convening Leaders 2023 in Columbus, OH. VK had 9 appointments with planners about bringing their events to Knoxville in future years.
 - Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA) (January 24–26) – VK Sales staff, along with KCC staff attended RCMA in Chattanooga, TN. VK had a booth on the show floor and met with planners about bringing their events to Knoxville in future years. Six RFPs were received at the show.



 Rendezvous South (February 27–March 1) – VK Sales Staff attended Rendezvous South in Blount County, TN. The show had 35 meeting planners and two RFPs were received.



• ConferenceDirect Annual Partner Meeting (March 26–30) – VK Sales Staff attended the Conference Direct Annual Partner Meeting in Louisville, KY. VK had eight appointments with third party planners about bringing their events to Knoxville in future years.

VK tracks each sales activity and monitors results throughout the fiscal year. For FYE23, VK received twelve RFPs resulting from 3Q trade show attendance.

- Site Visits The VK Sales Team hosted seven site visits during 3Q:
 - Denise Amber Lee Foundation VK Staff conducted a half day site visit with the founder. This group is looking at Knoxville for their 2024 Conference. VK toured the Marriott, Cumberland House, and KCC followed by a downtown tour to show the walkability.





• **Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference** – VK Staff conducted a one-day site visit for two planners from Nashville and one board member from Knoxville. VK toured the Marriott, Hilton, Cumberland House, and Hyatt Place. The KCC was also toured, and they felt that their event would fit perfectly in the ballroom. They are looking at Knoxville for their 2024 Annual Fall Conference.

• American Interprofessional Health Collaborative – VK Staff conducted a half-day site visit with the Project

Manager from Lincoln Memorial University. They, along with South College, want to partner with VK to bring the 2025 Collaborating Across Borders Conference to Knoxville. The Marriott, Hilton, Cumberland House, and KCC were toured. VK will collaborate with both groups to submit a bid before the deadline.

- Arbor Day Foundation VK Staff conducted a site visit with the Vice President and Meeting Planner. They were both very impressed with Knoxville. The Marriott, The Tennessean, Hilton, Embassy Suites, Hyatt Place, and KCC were toured followed by a driving tour of downtown.
- National Society of Black Physicists VK Staff hosted the group and toured the Cumberland House, Marriott, Hilton, and KCC. The group also visited the
 - Sunsphere. Feedback from the group was very positive.
- Kenilworth Media VK Staff hosted a oneday site visit with the Director of Events and Operations and the Events and Operations Manager. They host two trade shows that we are looking to bring to Knoxville in future years.



Pickleball for All – VK Staff hosted their
 Director and toured both the KCC and World's Fair Exhibition Hall. He is looking

to host an event in Knoxville in 2024.

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 67 events/meetings, seven festivals, and provided a total of 78 partner referrals. All 78 partner referrals were related to events/meetings and festivals that were supported this quarter. Team Knoxville Volunteers were utilized at three events this quarter, for a total of 53.5 hours provided as a no-cost, service-added benefit to local events.

3Q Goals:

- <u>Attend the ESPA Annual Conference in Pittsburgh</u> Attended conference January 19–22 for networking opportunities, continuing education and to learn newest trends in Convention Services.
- <u>Recognize Team Knoxville Volunteers and honor the top</u> volunteer of the year at the annual Visitors Guide Launch <u>Party</u> – Celebrated Team Knoxville Volunteers at the annual Visitors Guide Launch Party and gifted those in attendance with







magnets. Volunteers wore Team Knoxville name tags to give them recognition in the crowd. Honored the top two volunteers of 2022, Deb Barrow and Danny Johnson, with a VK gift basket and gift card.

• <u>Host</u> <u>Active Shooter</u> <u>Training in</u>

<u>conjunction with KPD for</u> <u>local festival planners</u> <u>and partners</u> – Hosted training on February 28 with 12 local festivals/events represented as well as City of Knoxville Special Events Office and PBA.



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

• Chi Alpha Campus Ministries hosted their Southeast SALT Conference at the KCC January 2–5. Approximately 800 attendees gathered in Knoxville to connect with God and have fun in our beautiful city. VK hosted the planners for Chi Alpha for three site visits

where they were shown various properties based on the needs outlined in their multi-year RFP. Once the contracts were signed, VK Convention Services was introduced and began facilitating the needs of the planner to create a seamless planning process. The planner was provided the Ultimate Attendee Checklist which suggests many must see and do things in town and created a fun starting point for the initial conversation. A pre-planning



call was scheduled where it was determined that the planner wanted to arrange a preplanning visit and invite the local Chi Alpha students who help plan the conference. This meeting was held at the Hilton Downtown over breakfast. VK discussed specific attractions that interested the group such as the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame and East Tennessee History Center due to their kid- friendly atmosphere with play areas for families bringing their children along to the conference. VK inquired about pricing and availability of



activities for children at both attractions. Motorcoach parking and general attendee parking also discussed, were and VK provided recommendations for both needs. Visitor materials, Linktree/VK Info Website, and ways in which VK welcomes the group to Knoxville (such as the Visitors Center Reader Board and VK TV Loop Message) were discussed. This group preferred digital content versus paper, so QR codes were provided for Visitors Guide, Downtown Dining &

Trolley Map, Downtown Map, Knoxville Savings Pass, Mural Map, Coffee Listings, Shopping & Amenities Map, Market Square Map, VK Visitor Info Handout, and Sunsphere Ticket Handout. As an added touch, VK designed, printed, and placed a KNOX letter with the conference logo at the KCC and welcomed the group via a custom message on the Visitors Center Reader Board and VK TV Loop Message at various locations around downtown. Knoxville looks forward to welcoming SALT back in 2024, 2026, and 2027.

"Everything went well for Salt! Thank you, Christina, for all your help! Everyone is excited to return to Knoxville next year." – Jessica Wunder, Past President, Chi Alpha MA VK welcomed over 800 attendees to the Membrane Technology Conference & Expo at the KCC February 20–23. Following the site selection, Convention Services hosted the planners for a pre-planning visit to determine final details and needs for the conference. Referrals were made for transportation to Pre-Conference Workshops and Tours, access to Knoxville photography was given for promotional materials and links to visitor materials

were provided in advance for attendee planning purposes. Prior to the conference, dinner reservations were made for staff and arrangements were made for a Knoxville Paranormal Ghost Tour. The group was welcomed at the KCC with a customized KNOX magnet and at the Visitors Center with a welcome message on the Reader Board. Team Knoxville volunteers answered questions, greeted attendees, and provided visitor



materials such as Visitors Guides, Ale Trail brochures, Sunsphere ticket information, dining maps and Experience Knoxville Savings passes at an information booth at KCC. An alert was also sent via Downtown Knoxville Alliance to notify businesses, restaurants, and attractions that attendees would be active during the week.

"Kelli was very responsive and helpful. The people in Knoxville are so friendly and always willing to help!"

– Joanne Gaglia, Senior Manager of Conferences and Events, American Water Works Association

• The **2023 K2 Presidents' Day Bash** was hosted **February 18–19** at the Knoxville Convention Center and World's Fair Exhibition Hall. VKSC facilitated the setup of a record 31 volleyball courts and net systems with help from partners ACES and Northview



Academy, and collaboration with Courts Galore Courts to provide additional volleyball courts to meet the needs of the tournament capacity. The Team also utilized Heavy Haul for both load-in and load-out of trailers from storage. Once floors were set, VKSC set up nets, taped all courts, and delivered event equipment preceding and following the event. The VKSC Team designed the court layout and provided the court numbering system. Also provided was directional signage, which was placed throughout KCC and WFEH, and A-Frames in between each

tournament venue to direct athletes across the multiple venues. Custom digital welcome signage was designed and displayed, along with a welcome message on the VK Reader

Board. Visitor Information, including the Experience Knoxville Savings Pass, digital weekend guide, and restaurant recommendations, were provided via the visitor information booth, along with physical Visitor Guides. VKSC displayed a volleyball magnet on the KNOX letters for a fun photo opportunity. VKSC promoted the event on social media platforms and provided table covers for tournament director tables. Hotel sourcing, contracting, and reservation management were managed via the VK Housing System for both attendees and event staff.



"Visit Knoxville was an integral part of the success of the Presidents' Day tournament. Their hard work, attention to details and communication made our tournament successful and smooth. I want to extend a thanks to their staff who always work diligently to ensure that the tournaments are the best they can be!" – Chris Hames, Owner, K2 Volleyball

• Knoxville played host to two major NCAA events the weekend of March 15, 2023. To kick off the weekend, VKSC welcomed the **2023 NCAA Division 1 Women's Swimming and**



Diving Championships March 15–18 at the Allan Jones Aquatic Center. VKSC designed and displayed a custom welcome at McGhee Tyson Airport and presented a welcome message on the VK Reader Board. To further welcome the athletes, VKSC provided custom beanies as a gift to each qualifying athlete. A welcome sign was placed at the host hotel to greet teams as they arrived, and "Welcome to Knoxville" buttons were provided for event staff to wear onsite. The VKSC Team assisted with the event's hotel sourcing and selection

process for teams and officials. VKSC showed support by attending the event and offered onsite assistance to tournament staff as needed.

Across campus, Knoxville and the University of Tennessee also welcomed the 2023 NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament 1 & 2nd Rounds at Thompson-Boling Arena from March 15–20. Four teams competed for the chance to advance in the esteemed NCAA Women's Basketball March Madness tournament. VKSC gifted each coach with a custom welcome basket which included a personalized handwritten letter welcoming them to Knoxville and congratulating them on their postseason achievement. The VKSC Team assisted with hotel sourcing and securing sleeping rooms for each team. Five hundred

"Welcome to Knoxville" buttons with the March Madness logo were provided and worn by event staff, ushers, and gate attendants to provide a warm welcome as fans arrived at the arena. VKSC attended the tournament and welcomed the teams on the Visit Knoxville Reader Board.

Team Knoxville Volunteers

A total of 53.5 hours provided by 13 volunteers as a no-cost, service-added benefit to the following:

- Team Knox served as information table assistants for a total of five hours during the Membrane Technology Conference & Exposition, February 20–23.
- Team Knox served as attendance monitors for a total of 40.5 hours during the Bassmaster Classic Kickoff Party, March 23.
- Team Knox served as information table assistants for a total of eight hours during the OHRP Research Community Forum, March 29.

Team Knoxville participated in the following additional activities:

- February 9 Recruited potential volunteers at the University of Tennessee Future Professional Event Planners Career Expo.
- February 28 Shared recruitment opportunities with festival planners at the KPD Active Shooter Training for Festivals.
- Shared partner volunteer opportunities, including:
 - March 4 DEKA FIT
 - March 18 One Knoxville SC
 - April 1–2 Covenant Health Knoxville Marathon

Additional 3Q Activity:

- Pre-planning Visits:
 - Insider Exposure Pre-Planning Visit January 24 Planner visited venue to determine planning and set up needs for April event.
 - Crappie/USA King KAT Trial Pre-Planning Visit January 25 Hosted planner and visited Ned McWherter Park in preparation for May event.







- ASR-ARS Association and DaNang Association Pre-Planning Visit –March 1 – Met with planners to discuss overall event itinerary and needs. Provided planner with Knoxville lapel pins for November ASR-ARS reunion. Arranged tour of Start of Knoxville Riverboat to confirm details for October 2023 and April 2024 reunions.
- National Association of Teachers of Singing Pre-Planning Visit – March 2 – Hosted two planners with NATS and met with the host



hotels, Knoxville Convention Center, and Visit Knoxville to discuss overall service needs in preparation for 2024 event.

- **Festival and partnership support included** Chocolatefest, Dogwood Arts House & Garden Show, Mardi Growl, Knox St. Patrick's Day Parade, Knox Shamrock Fest, Bassmaster Classic Kick Off Party and Big Ears Festival.
- Conducted pre-planning calls and/or meetings for Bassmaster Classic, National Association of Health Unit Coordinators, Let's Par-Tee FAM, FILM FEST KNOX, TN State PEO, Big Ears Festival, Association of Leadership Programs, Tour de Lights, Grassroots Outdoor Alliance, Herpetology Taxon Advisors Group, IACMI Composites, Women's Basketball Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, Governor's Conference on Hospitality and Tourism, USA Cycling, Knox Asian Festival, Grooves in the Garden, TN HOSA, Kuumba Festival, and Peace in the Streets Rally.
- Additional partner calls and meetings included ESPA 2023 Annual Conference Committee Call, YeeHaw Brewery Meeting, Dollywood HeartSong Lodge Meeting, and ESPA 2024 Annual Conference Committee Kick-off Meeting
- Participated in the following webinars and virtual events:
 - Volunteer Pro Volunteer Management Progress Report Results
 - o Volunteer Match Creative and Innovative Volunteer Recognition Strategies
 - o SimpleView Women in Leadership: Breaking Barriers in the Tourism Industry

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 <u>visitknoxville.com</u>. The Team also recruits and partners with journalists and influencers to share Knoxville's narratives.

3Q Goals:

- Launch distribution of the 2023 Knoxville Visitors Guide The 2023 edition of this annual publication launched officially at the Visitors Guide Launch Party referenced in the Highlights Summary of this report. The Guide is available at the Visit Knoxville Visitors Center, the Sunsphere and Visitor Information Centers throughout Knox County. Additional information on these centers and data related to distribution is included in the Visitors Services section of this report. The digital version of the Guide can be viewed on the <u>Visit Knoxville website</u>.
- <u>Partner with the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development on the Knoxville</u> <u>Songwriters Showcase at the Bijou – part of Tennessee Songwriters Week</u> – VK presented the event on Monday, February 20th. Please reference the Highlights Summary and Journalist Assistance sections of this report for details.
- Launch new dog-friendly ads as part of ongoing nature-loving-adventure-seekingartsy-kinda-town campaign – The ads launched in early February and are in rotation with culinary, family, nature, music, and family spring break themed ads. Please reference the Highlights Summary of this report for details.
- <u>Partner with ASM on new wraps at the Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum</u> VK has worked with the team at KCAC to have the columns on Mary Costa Plaza inspected. After review and discussion, the decision has been made to paint the poles instead. A color scheme has been agreed upon by VK and KCAC. Once approved by the City of Knoxville, painting will be completed in 4Q.

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

• VK's Marketing Team continues to work closely with VK Sales and Services Teams to create customized **creative materials**. Materials are referenced throughout this report.

- VK continues to utilize its e-newsletter, Community Corner, and VK Network messaging to communicate events and activities to visitors and the community. To stay in the loop, sign up for the e-newsletter and/or VK Blog.
 - **3Q E-newsletters**
 - Knoxville Rocks This edition promoted the fact that Knoxville was named one of the Top 50 concert markets in the nation. <u>Pollstar's Concert Market Rankings for 2023</u> affirmed what we know to be true... Knoxville is an amazing place for music of all kinds at a variety of venues. (Knoxville is ranked #41 on this list, moving up the charts from last year's #97. This 56-spot vault awards Knoxville the single largest jump in the country.) The newsletter also promoted live music at the Tennessee Theatre, Bijou Theatre, Knoxville Civic Auditorium & Coliseum, and Thompson Boling Arena as well as Southern Skies and Big Ears.
 - What's New with You? This edition featured a collection of just a few of the new things visitors can look forward to on their upcoming visit, including Ebony & Ivory Brewing, Bassmaster Classic, Paris Woodhull Illustrations, Drop Zone Distilling, Tennessee Triennial, the Boocherie, Mood Ring Vintage, Abridged Beer Company World HQ, Dinosaurs at Zoo Knoxville, and 10 Years of Big Ears.

Current open rate for the e-newsletter is 41.8%* *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 1,065,314 pageviews in 3Q. Additionally:
 - Average length of session was 1 minute 45 seconds
 - Pages per session was 1.99
 - Number of clicks to partner sites from VK website was 88,022
 - Top three metros generating traffic were Nashville, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C.
 - 1,677 pageviews to sign up for the e-newsletter

In this quarter, VK created new pages for the website as well as regularly updated content on various pages throughout the site which also feeds into the VK app, keeping everything fresh and up to date. For 3Q, the VK app had 411 downloads with a total of 1,781 sessions. The average engagement time per session spent on the app was 2 minutes 50 seconds.

The VK Online Event Calendar is managed by the Visitor Services Team. In 3Q, 411 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:



- Five Knoxville Things to See in 2023
- o Tennessee Triennial for Contemporary Art: RE-PAIR
- <u>5 Hikes for Springtime</u>
- 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 the quilt exhibit at Historic Ramsey House, performances at the Old City Performing Arts Center, Knoxville Ice Bears games, and more.
 - o Instagram story series including a point-of-view hike in the Urban Wilderness at

William Hastie Natural Area, the William Edmonson exhibit at the McClung Museum for Black History Month, promotion of festivals and events like Mardi Growl, Big Ears Festival, Dogwood Arts' Chalk Walk, and more.



- Additional Partner Promotion & Involvement VK continues to provide support to our tourism partners. Highlights include:
 - Partnering on Appalachia Sessions Live Taping at the Bijou Theatre, presented by the East Tennessee Historical Society. The live taping will be cut down to a onehour TV show broadcast in cooperation with WATE across the Appalachian region.
 - Collaborating on Cities of the SEC a free, digital passport partnership between the destinations that are home to the schools in the Southeastern Conference. This partnership is born from the idea that college football fans are familiar with the teams, coaches, and rivalries within the conference, but perhaps not as much regarding the places each of these teams call home. The passport is on Visit Knoxville's Gameday page: goodolrockytop.com. For more information, visit visitthesec.com.
 - Partnering on the Tennessee Theatre's Broadway season (includes ad placement in playbills). NOTE: the Tennessee Theatre reports Hamilton ticket purchases represented 35 U.S. states.
 - Partnering on the new Fort Kid playground. VK was honored to be part of the ribbon cutting at this re-imagined, accessible playground.
 - Partnering with/speaking at Introduction Knoxville's "Quality of Life" session highlighting a variety of tourism partners and experiences (annual partnership includes three sessions in October, February, and May).
 - Collaborating with the University of Tennessee Athletics on social media promotions for Lady Vol Hoops (1/26 versus UCONN) and Vol Hoops (2/4 versus Auburn)
 - 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 Cincinnati Boat, Sport, and Travel Show; the Indianapolis Boat, Sport, and Travel Show; the Cincinnati CORA Bike and Trails Expo; the Knoxville Man Show; and the Bassmaster Classic Expo in Knoxville. These shows appeal to attendees looking for travel information including family vacation, lakes, boating, fishing, cycling and weekend getaways. Additionally, METTC's Executive Director secured videographers, photographers, and writers to cover the Bassmaster Classic.
 - Serving on the Tennessee Tourism Committee (TTC). TTC did not meet virtually in 3Q. With that in mind, the TTC Research Committee did meet on February 9 to discuss new research options for the state & partners. Project Sparrow was also discussed for a presentation in May in Texas. 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 3,038 hotel bookings. These numbers will continue to increase up to 60 days post-campaign. Additionally, organic website traffic in 3Q contributed to 6,540 hotel bookings. VK continues to pull insights from our Arrivalist partnership: For January -March 2023, 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 1.7 nights. *
 - 1. Nashville 6. Memphis 2. Tri-Cities-TN-VA 7. Lexington 8. Knoxville** 3. Chattanooga 9. Charlotte
 - 4. Atlanta
 - 5. Greenville/Spartanburg/Asheville/Anderson
 - *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 28 on the VK website.

Trade Show:

• VK attended TravMedia's International Media Marketplace (IMM) North America and TravMedia Summit. TravMedia is the travel industry's global network connecting travel media and PR professionals with top journalists, editors, influencers, and broadcasters. IMM is the annual media networking trade show that is set up appointmentstyle for DMOs, CVBs, and other organizations to meet with journalists. 24 appointments

were completed with freelance writers, blog writers, and content creators to discuss Knoxville and possible media visits for spring through fall and beyond. Frequent discussion topics included "soft adventure", road trips, and Ale Trail/Whiskey Trail interest. Plans have already moved forward with two of the appointment writers as Penny Zibula visited this quarter, and another writer will be hosted in the fall.



10. Huntsville/Decatur/Florence

Journalist & Influencer Visits and Assistance:

• VK hosted **Penny Zibula**, a freelance writer targeting articles for **Foodie Flashpacker** and **Rovology** alongside her own platform **Six Legs Will Travel**. Penny, who is nearly blind, travels with a service dog, and often includes mention of accessibility in her pieces. Her visit was a homecoming of sorts, as this Greenville-based writer lived in Knoxville decades ago, and she and her husband were delighted with the development of the destination.

Publication Updates from Previous Visits:

- Kim Carr has had an article published in The Daily Mirror (print only).
- Jacob van Splunter has had an article published in AmericA Magazine.
- H. M. Cauley has had an article published in the Atlanta Journal Constitution.

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, AAA Living Magazine, Due North Media, World Nomad, St. Jude's Research Hospital, Fodor's, Bourbon + magazine, New York Times, Southern Travel + Lifestyles, Pride Journeys, Viator, Money.com, Knox Game Makers, National Geographic Traveler, Group Travel Leader, USA Today, and various freelancers.

Published pieces (both earned and paid placement) include:

- Pride Journeys <u>Embracing Wellness in Knoxville</u>
- Trips to Discover <u>Weekend Getaways in Tennessee</u>
- Money.com <u>2023 Best Places to Travel</u>
- Southern Living <u>15 Best Weekend Getaways in Tennessee</u>
- Earned/Unpaid Media Report Earned media is publicity gained through nonadvertising news stories. Stories written by VK hosted travel writers are included. Values and advertising equivalency (\$) determined by <u>Cision</u>.
 - Total Number of Placements 1,569
 - Total Publicity Value for Earned Media \$1,030,549

VISIT KNOXVILLE FILM OFFICE

The <u>Visit Knoxville Film Office</u> 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 VK Film Office provided assistance to local production companies such as Jupiter Entertainment, Loch & Key, Knoxville Community Media, and Marsh & McClennan Agency. Assistance from the Film Office included help in obtaining permits, location needs, and city services for projects ranging from crime reality television shows, commercials, and marketing campaigns. The television shows air on networks like Discovery ID, Oxygen, and The Weather Channel.

In January, the VK Film Office received exciting news as we were once again honored by *Moviemaker Magazine*. Knoxville made the magazine's annual list of "Best Cities to Live and Work in as a Moviemaker." This is the third time Knoxville has made the list, coming in at #6. This is the highest placement yet for the Film Office.

"Knoxville and the Visit Knoxville Film Office are known for their versatility and experience – they make productions from all over the world feel welcome. And while few other locations can mimic the wide-eyed wonder of the Great Smoky Mountains, Knoxville is very good at doubling for other locales. We were very impressed with majestic locations like Ijams Nature Center – particularly Meads Quarry and nearby Augusta Quarry. Knoxville is just a beautiful place, and an affordable one. A filmmaker could make a great life there by working on big productions while setting aside money to make their own."

- Tim Molloy, Editor-in-Chief of Moviemaker Magazine

Also in January, the VK Film Office met with Regal where it was decided that they will be our producing partner on a new film festival, FILM FEST KNOX, that will take place November 2023. With great partners like Regal and Public Cinema and having the festival in downtown Knoxville, we are confident that we can quickly grow FILM FEST KNOX into one the premiere festivals in the southeast.

Additionally, the Film Office continued its initiative of reaching out to the community by speaking to the Pellissippi State Video Production class in February on opportunities that exist locally in the production industry. The Film Office also attended and spoke at a production mixer in February along with Knox County Mayor, Glenn Jacobs, sharing what the Film Office does and the economic impact we have on the Knoxville Community.

Looking ahead, the Film Office continues to recruit great projects to Knoxville as it looks to be another busy year for feature films in our area.

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 4th Floor Observation Deck of the <u>Sunsphere at World's Fair Park</u>. The Team works with more than 80 local Makers to provide a variety of quality retail items in the <u>Gift Shops</u> at both locations.

The Visitors Center updated curb appeal this quarter with a Spring design incorporating our VK Marketing tagline. The VK Gift Shops completed over \$45,000 in sales in 3Q. This quarter marked one year of operating the Sunsphere as a paid attraction, welcoming over 59,000 guests from all 50 states and 40 different countries. In celebration of the one-year anniversary, the attraction is now open 7 days a week.

3Q Goals:

- <u>Promote the Sunsphere attraction via Real Knoxville Music Radio Station</u> The Visitor Services Team has been working with RKM on weekly radio segments that inform listeners about local events and how to visit the Sunsphere. This quarter, 12 segments were submitted and aired. The Visitor Services Team continues to grow relationships that help reach a broader audience outside of the Visitor Center and Sunsphere attraction.
- <u>Continue to source local product for the Visit Knoxville</u> <u>Visitors Center Gift Shop, recruiting at least 3 new items</u> <u>into inventory</u> – During 3Q, four new makers were added alongside existing partnership growth, resulting in over twenty-five new products.

 Work with the VK Marketing Team on creating a Downtown Knoxville Foldable Map that includes
 offerings of the area – The Downtown Knoxville Foldable Map is undergoing final edits and will be going to print next month. The map includes shopping and dining options for Market Square, The Old City, Gay Street, and the University of Tennessee. The Green Line trolley route and trolley information are displayed on the map, in addition to Sunsphere Tickets and VK's Downtown Audio Walking Tour promotion.

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

- Visitors Center Traffic Over 6,800 guests were greeted in person. Top 10 states (in addition to Tennessee) of visitors checking into the Visitors Center were:
 - o Florida
- VirginiaIndiana
- New YorkNorth Carolina
- Indiana
 South Carolina
- North Carolina
 California
- o Illinois

o Ohio

- o Wisconsin
- Visit Knoxville Gift Shop VK's Visitors Center and Sunsphere Gift Shops completed over \$45,000 in sales during 3Q, averaging around \$500 for daily sales. The Visitor Services Team continues to support Knoxville's Maker community and artists with over 80 existing partnerships. In addition to the Visitors Center and Sunsphere, these products can also be found at VK retail booths at community events and festivals. A few additions introduced this quarter include: EJ Clay Co. (earrings, necklaces, keychains), Owltopus (custom Sunsphere t-shirt and keychains), and Proper Popcorn. The Visitors Center windows were updated during



3Q with a Spring design painted by local artist Amanda Smith, owner of The Paper Heron.

• Special Events & Partnerships – This quarter, the Visitor Services Team connected with



B.A.S.S.'s Organizational Development Manger to coordinate VIP packages for the Bassmaster Classic. VK provided items from local makers Honeymouth Leather, 865 Candle Co, and Tennessee's Best. VK established a corporate account with Yeti LLC to gift custom load out

buckets to the anglers participating in the Classic.

The Visitor Services Team

staffed a retail booth at the Bassmaster Classic Expo. Long standing partnership with Riot Printing and Made in Tennessee Apparel proved to have popular items with the Patagonia inspired design "Knoxagonia". This retail booth grossed over \$3,500 in sales over the 3 day Expo.





Also during 3Q, the Historic House Museums of Knoxville and East Tennessee Historical Society launched the PastPort: Your Key to the History of Knoxville, Tennessee. The PastPort grants admission to all seven Historic House Museums as well as the Museum of East Tennessee History for \$40.00 (an \$80 value). PastPorts can be purchased at most of the Historic House Museums, the Museum of East Tennessee History, and Visit Knoxville.

- 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, 47 custom welcome messages and highlighted events were featured.
- The Sunsphere During 3Q, the Sunsphere celebrated its one-year anniversary of being reopened as a paid attraction. Since reopening in February 2022, we have welcomed over 59,000 guests from all 50 states and 40 countries, including Norway, Israel, and Argentina. In celebration of being open one year, the Sunsphere extended operating hours and is now open 7 days a week! The Visitor Services Team also created a Cash for Tickets Process which allows cash payments now. Both improvements have increased visitation and allowed more guests to experience the Observation Deck.

Sunsphere Tours – Private tours have been a popular option for large groups looking to view the observation deck. In 3Q the Sunsphere hosted 11 different private tours with over



300 guests. One notable tour included the Sunsphere Cadet Squadron, members of the Civil Air Patrol. The squadron presented Kim Bumpas with the official Sunsphere Cadet Squadron Badge. We were also honored to host this year's Leadership Tennessee Class as they experienced Knoxville. Mayor Kincannon, along with her classmates, toured the Observation Deck, then headed up to the Sunsphere Event space to conclude their afternoon.

Filming – After multiple inquiries, filming on the Observation Deck is a new offering for businesses and individuals. During 3Q, the first filming contract was booked with a local realtor filming a segment focused on the Sunsphere and its history. Former Mayor Randy Tyree was featured in their interview.

Social Media & Branding – This guarter, the Visitor Services Team created the official social media channels for the Sunsphere. Since launching in February, the Instagram platform has gained a following of over 650 accounts. Follow the Sunsphere on Instagram @sunsphereknox and on Facebook at The Sunsphere Observation Deck. These accounts have allowed Visit Knoxville to further inform the public about Sunsphere FAQs, promote special events, and engage with the public.



"Tyree Trivia" has been a popular segment on the Sunsphere

Instagram story (pinned to highlights). Former Mayor Randy Tyree quizzes followers each week with trivia about the 1982 World's Fair and the Sunsphere. Followers can engage and place their vote before Randy reveals the correct answer.



Sunsphere Structure Updates – In collaboration with PBA and Apex Window Cleaning, the exterior windows of the 4th floor were cleaned during 3Q. Up until this point, these windows were inaccessible. Visitors enjoyed seeing the window washing during the weeks they were getting cleaned.

At the base of the Sunsphere, four planters were added to the area to help guide visitors to the informational Aframe and elevator entrance.

VK completed a series of meetings with East Tennessee Community Design Center during 3Q, obtaining plans

and receiving quotes for the Sunsphere paint job and third floor Visitors Center. Continuing to grow the Sunsphere as an attraction and implementing special activations listed through this report will bring these plans to fruition via The Sunsphere Fund.

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

- Tennessee 0
- North Carolina 0
- Georgia 0
- South Carolina 0
- o Indiana

0

- Virginia Ο
- Kentucky 0 Ohio
- Florida 0
- Illinois 0

During this quarter, there were 4.972 pageviews to the View Digital Visitors Guide page. VK distributed 6,877 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 47,718 Visitors Guides were distributed via outlets including the following:

- 8,850 through State Welcome Centers
- o 12,459 through brochure racks within the region, including attractions and hotels.
- 26,409 distributed through other locations including the Visitors Center, satellite centers, UT, and airport.
- Visitor Information Centers located within attractions, shops, and restaurants throughout Knoxville are supplied with visitor materials such as Visitors Guides, maps, and attraction brochures. VK connects with these partners monthly to gather input about resource needs and requests. VK provides and maintains visitor materials for displays at the Sunsphere, Knoxville Museum of Art, THE TENNESSEAN Hotel, KCC, Tommy Trent's, Outdoor Knoxville, The Pinnacle at Turkey Creek, Tennessee Theatre, Knox Brew Hub, UT Visitors Center, World's Fair Park Security Office, and the Farragut Community Center. During 3Q, three Visitor Guide racks were added to the KCAC. The KCAC has been added to Visitor Information Centers list and will be stocked monthly.
- 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 and the release of the 2023 Knoxville Visitors Guide during this quarter's concierge visits. Each member of the concierge team provided their assigned properties with a bag of Hershey's Kisses, two tabbed 2023 Visitors Guides, a box (50) of Visitors Guides, two Knoxville Festival flyers, 2 Bassmaster Classic Flyers, and 2 Bandwango Apps Promotional Flyers. VK continues to receive wonderful feedback on this program and can see the return on our efforts through increased participation and engagement from our industry partners.

- Additional distribution materials include:
 - o **5,835** Downtown Pad Maps
 - **4,155** Dining/Trolley Maps
 - **11,538** UT Visitor Guides

- **Brochure additions** allow the Visitors Center to stay up to date with available attractions and activities. This quarter, additions include:
 - Niswonger Performing Art Center
 - Pivot Point Gallery
 - The Muse
 - Knoxville Children's Theatre
 - o Urban Air
 - o Bush Beans Visitor Center
 - Tuckaleechee Caverns
 - Forbidden Caverns
 - o Ripley's Aquarium
 - Oak Ridge Visitor Guide Pad Map

- o Visit Farragut
- o Tennessee Wine Trail
- Addison's Book Shop



• 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 Beck Cultural Center Silent Auction, Beardsley Farm Snow Day, 4H Club Foundation Fundraiser, and many more. To improve VK's donation request process, a Jotform has been created for donors to submit their requests via the VK website beneath Contact. Donation requests are then evaluated weekly by the VK Leadership Team and fulfilled by the Visitor Services Team.

• VK loaned assets (e.g., radios, coolers, ice chests, tables, tents, etc.) to Dogwood Arts and Tennessee Miracle Spring Classic this quarter.

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 3,043 people attended these events. Of those polled, the geographical attendance breakdown was as follows:
 - o 2,422 Knox County
 - 343 Regional
 - o 278 Out of Region

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 Cheri Doane of The Teal Violet
- **February** Tracye Sowders Art
- March Hannah Zechman Pottery

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

• **K-Town Connect** – The <u>K-Town Connect</u> 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:



#KNJXROC-

- Hospitality assistance: This includes but is not limited to helping others use parking meters, suggesting places to eat or shop, and answering questions about events, etc. Assisted 1,586 people.
- Graffiti/Sticker/Bill removal: Graffiti, stickers, or bills on a public fixture do not remain up for long. Ambassadors removed 393 of these.
- Litter collection: Teamwork makes the dream work. Ambassadors assisted with picking up 3,028 pieces of litter around downtown.
- Welfare check: Rain or shine, the Ambassador program checks on the vulnerable populations throughout the day. During 3Q, 577 individuals were approached to ensure their well-being. Referrals and further assistance are provided as needed.
- Directions provided: Ambassadors helped 627 people get where they need to be.
- Scooter relocation: Ambassadors have moved 767 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 162 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 daily from 7a.m. to 3:30p.m. Additional hours have extended to 3:30pm to 11:30pm Wednesday through Sunday.