

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



A LOOK AT OUR JOURNEY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3

A MESSAGE FROM
OUR PRESIDENT

4

CONVENTION SALES & SERVICES/
SPORTS COMMISSION

6

CONVENTION &
SPORTS SERVICES

8

NOTABLE EVENTS &
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

10

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS/
VISITOR SERVICES & FILM OFFICE

12

VISITOR
SERVICES

13

MARKET
RESEARCH

14

VK FILM
OFFICE



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

In last year's Annual Report, I noted that (like you) we had no idea how much our plans, expectations and lives in general were going to change. FYE20 changed four months of life as we know it in the hospitality and tourism industry and those changes went on to affect most all of FYE21. Like you, we're still navigating those changes - adapting and making use of the lessons we learned.

At the beginning of this fiscal year, VK's Sales and Sports Teams attended virtual trade shows. We developed Safe Services practices to assure planners that we were welcoming groups back safely. Groups like National Street Rod Association and Bassmaster were some of the first to return. We got back into the pace and process we know, and, by the end of the fiscal, welcomed in-person site visits, executed a sales blitz to the greater Nashville market and hosted events like the Visit Knoxville Open, the Mid-Atlantic CrossFit® Challenge and the USA Cycling Pro Road National Championships.

The Marketing & Communications Team also stayed busy throughout the year, adapting messaging and marketing tactics to promote safe travel to Knoxville and Knox County. In compliance with safety measures, we welcomed journalists to help tell the story of our region. During this time, the Marketing Team also merged with Visitor Services - a seamless transition that allowed us to rework the Gotta Know Knoxville program/tour and completely revamp the Visitors Center Gift Shop (the retail space and the online store). Since January, we've welcomed guests from all 50 states at the Visitors Center. We've also welcomed a variety of production companies through the Visit Knoxville Film Office.

In closing, thank you for your continued support of our united mission to connect with Meeting Planners, Sports Events Planners, Film Production Companies, and leisure travelers. This annual report touches on how we did that this past year. For details, I encourage you to view the quarterly highlights under MEDIA at visitknoxville.com. I continue to believe that the past year has revealed the true strength and importance of our industry.

Sincerely,

Kim Bumpas

Kim Bumpas, CDME, CMP
President
Visit Knoxville



CONVENTION SALES & SERVICES SPORTS COMMISSION

The Visit Knoxville Sales Team once again met several goals in an exciting yet unique year. Detailed information is listed below. These numbers include the activities of the Convention Sales Team and the Visit Knoxville Sports Commission (VKSC).

BOOKED EVENTS 133

Of the **133** events, **68%** were new business. **47** booked at the Knoxville Convention Center.

PRODUCED OVER \$95.9 MILLION
OF FUTURE ECONOMIC IMPACT

SUCCESSFULLY MOVED 26 GROUPS

AFFECTED BY COVID-19
TO FUTURE YEARS
REPRESENTING MORE THAN
\$33 MILLION
IN ECONOMIC IMPACT

TOTAL LEADS 354 (EXCEEDED GOAL OF 349)

Of this, **44% (156)** went to the Knoxville Convention Center.

HOSTED SITE VISITS 19

Among them Appalachian College Association, Signature EquipoVision, Tennessee Healthcare Association, Mid-Atlantic CrossFit® Challenge, and TSSAA. VK has booked **11** groups as a result.

EXECUTED 4 EVENT SCOUTING TRIPS

Completed **4** scouting trips this fiscal year. These trips included visits to AAU Girls Basketball Nationals, Fishers of Men, Bassmaster Elite and Bassmaster Classic.

ATTENDED VIRTUAL/ IN-PERSON TRADE SHOWS 14

328 appointments/meetings were conducted by Visit Knoxville Sales Directors and attending partners. Shows included Connect Diversity, Connect Sports, Small Market Meetings Conference, Convention South, TEAMS and Sports ETA. Visit Knoxville issued **22** leads resulting from show activity.



CONDUCTED 30 SALES APPOINTMENTS IN THE GREATER NASHVILLE METRO

Notable appointments included Tennessee Automotive Association, Tennessee Trucking Association, Associated Builders & Contractors Greater Tennessee Chapter, and Tennessee Cable & Broadband Association.

VK CONCIERGE VISITS 275

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.

Note: Due to COVID-19, Concierge visits only occurred Q2-4 this fiscal year.



CONVENTION & SPORTS SERVICES

The Convention and Sports Services Team enhances the overall planner and attendee experience with a focus on services designed to add value, maximize attendance, and retain group business. Providing planners and visitors with a high level of service positively influences the opportunities for repeat business and visits. The VK Convention Services Team provides services such as partner referrals, itinerary suggestions, visitor information, and off-site special event assistance for conventions, trade shows, sporting events and festivals utilizing a consultative approach based on the unique needs, specific goals, and attendee interests of each group.

SUPPORTED
109

CONVENTIONS, SPORTING
EVENTS, FESTIVALS & MEETINGS

PROVIDED
255

PARTNER REFERRALS

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

HOSTED **5**
PRE-PLANNING VISITS

Down 41% YOY due to
COVID-19 travel restrictions



KNOXROCKS SAFE SERVICES

Developed Safe Services practices in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to assure planners that we were welcoming groups back safely.

This included communicating state and city guidelines, hybrid/virtual meeting kits, assistance with restructuring registration and check-in, promoting 5 core actions and expanded digital offerings. Safety signage, digital thermometers, temperature check stickers and hand sanitizer stations were also provided to groups as needed.

TOTAL NUMBER OF
VOLUNTEER HOURS
1,980



TOTAL NUMBER OF
INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS
204

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

2021 Bassmaster Elite on the Tennessee River - VKSC hosted this tour stop on the Bassmaster Elite Series in February. The weigh-ins were split between Volunteer Landing and World's Fair Park. The 100 anglers fished all four days out of downtown on the Tennessee River.

2021 USA Cycling Time Trial, Criterium and Pro Road Nationals - VKSC hosted and managed this prestigious event for the fourth time in the past five years. This event will return in June 2022.

2021 AAU Girls Basketball All American Game - VKSC hosted and managed this marquee event at the Knoxville Convention Center. Teams from eight states were hosted over the Fourth of July weekend. This event will return in July 2022.



Created and utilized "Safe Meetings & Events" marketing campaign and resources to assist in the efforts to safely continue to solicit and book convention business during COVID-19. The marketing campaign, which appeared in print and digital outlets through the use of CARES Act funding, promoted Knoxville as a safe destination to host meetings while following safety protocols. The website landing page and other resources such as the "Safe Site Visit One-sheeter" helped Knoxville to book and safely host events including **National Street Rod Association**, **SignatureEquipo Convention**, **American Rabbit Breeders Association**, and **American Bell Association**.

NOTABLE EVENTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Executed the “For the Love of Knoxville” Campaign

The CARES Act campaign included three videos that promoted a variety of things to see and do safely throughout the area. These videos generated over **11.8 million** views. The full promotion included paid search, paid social, editorial content and influencer visits and delivered **38.5 million** advertising impressions for VK and its partners.

Served as the Title for the Visit Knoxville Open

Visit Knoxville partnered with the Korn Ferry Tour of the PGA to sponsor the Visit Knoxville Open. As one of the four original tournaments from the tour’s inaugural season in 1990, the Visit Knoxville Open is one of the oldest events on the Korn Ferry Tour. Golfer Greyson Sigg clinched his official PGA tour card by winning this year’s event held at Holston Hills Country Club.



Hosted Annual Street Rod Nationals South

Knoxville was excited to welcome the Street Rod Nationals South at Chilhowee Park, not once but twice in the year. The May 2020 event was rescheduled to October 2 – 4 and then the annual event resumed again April 30 – May 2.



Celebrated 225 Years of Tennessee Statehood

As part of the celebration at Blount Mansion with Governor Lee, Mayor Kincannon, Mayor Jacobs and other dignitaries, VK provided a retail/information booth and friendly staff member to greet guests. Leading up to the event, VK assisted with build-out of the event logo, webpage, and promotion of the event.



Completely Redesigned the Visitor Center Retail Space

As part of the make-over, VK partnered with more than **15** local makers to showcase their products in our gift shop and through our newly-designed online store (many of the products are exclusive to Visit Knoxville). Working with local makers, artists, and partners, allows us to incorporate items that speak to Knoxville’s cultural diversity and array of talent.

Hosted Mid-Atlantic CrossFit® Challenge

In May, the Visit Knoxville Sports Commission hosted the Mid-Atlantic CrossFit® Challenge, which served as a qualifier for the 2021 CrossFit® Games held in Madison, Wisconsin. This event drew over **1.8 million** views on YouTube, and featured elite athletes from all over the world, including 4-time CrossFit® Games Champion and Olympic competitor Tia-Clair Toomey.



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

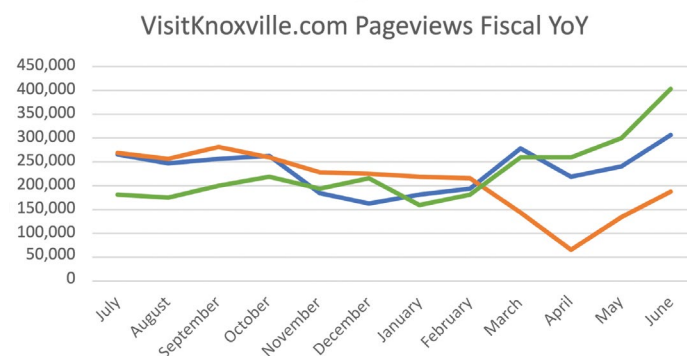
VISITOR SERVICES & FILM OFFICE

A key highlight of the year included some organizational restructuring that moved Visitor Services into the Marketing Department. Together, this new 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 event planners and film production companies. We accomplished this by utilizing a variety of marketing tools and strategies that direct people to VisitKnoxville.com.

While 2020 brought a drop in visitation due to the pandemic, the recovery has been impressive. Knoxville has seen a YOY occupancy increase of nearly 44% in 2021, with hotel revenues rising nearly 55%. Hotel bookings from Visit Knoxville's digital ad placement and organic website visitation have also experienced substantial YOY growth. The information found on the Market Research page of this report highlights Knoxville's bounce back in 2021. For ongoing updates on the recovery, please refer to the quarterly dashboards found under the [MEDIA](#) section of the Visit Knoxville website.

TOTAL NUMBER OF WEBSITE VISITS

1,355,048 (Up 3.1%)



TOP 10 LANDING PAGES

1. Home
2. Knox Still Rocks
3. Things to Do
4. Events
5. Attractions
6. Market Square
7. Free Things to Do
8. Restaurants
9. Sunsphere
10. Urban Wilderness

TOP 10 CITIES FOR WEBSITE TRAFFIC

1. Knoxville, TN
2. Nashville, TN
3. Atlanta, GA
4. Chicago, IL
5. Charlotte, NC
6. Memphis, TN
7. Indianapolis, IN
8. Washington DC
9. Raleigh-Durham, NC
10. New York, NY

ADDITIONAL WEBSITE UPDATES

1,107

NEW/UPDATED CALENDAR EVENTS

143

NEW PARTNER LISTINGS

104

BLOG POSTS
(ACCOUNTS FOR 10% OFF ALL WEBSITE TRAFFIC)

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

VISIT KNOXVILLE APP

1,730 Downloads

7,095 Sessions

The statistics in this section are related to the leisure market.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Hosted a Marketing & PR Team FAM (Familiarization Tour) for the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD) to showcase Knoxville attractions, hotels, and overall experience.

Partnered with DMA-Events' Walls for Women to honor 100 Years of women's right to vote with a new mural at Printshop Beer Co. installed by local artist Paris Woodhull.



Worked with PGA Tour media and marketing representatives to coordinate branded content videos promoting things to do in Knoxville. Videos were promoted on pgatour.com and PGA Tour's and Korn Ferry's social channels and shared via social by VK and partners involved. The videos amassed **2,575,086 total ad impressions** and resulted in **558 hotel bookings**, **1,227 total nights booked**, and **hotel revenue of over \$155,119**.

Created or shared over **652 stories** with several series throughout the year. One highlight was a week-long series honoring women with Knoxville connections as part of the 19th Amendment centennial celebration.

Launched a completely reimagined ecommerce platform in March 2021, highlighting new and updated products sold at the Visit Knoxville Visitors Center. In addition to the refreshed look, defined categories were added, and product photos and descriptions were updated. As a result, online store sessions for FYE21 were **up 140%** over FYE20 with a **384% increase in sales**.

Teamed up with the Knoxville Entrepreneurial Center on their Made for Knoxville campaign. The series highlights entrepreneurs via stories in the Knoxville Business Journal (and online). The March issue was hospitality focused and told not only the stories of our makers and entrepreneurs but Visit Knoxville and the industry as a whole.



Hosted a record number of **22** journalist visits including bloggers/influencers. These articles and others can be found [here](#).

Highlights include:

- Three *Lonely Planet* articles by Baily Freeman focused on traveling safely during the pandemic, an outdoor-centered itinerary, and a piece highlighting Knoxville as The Maker City
- Two stories by freelance writer Carolyn Eubanks, whose pieces have been published on *Tennessee River Valley Geotourism*, *October Mag*, and *Fifty Grande Mag*.
- Three stories by Lysa Allman-Baldwin, a freelance writer for *Authenticity & Purpose*, *Soul of America*, and *The Group Travel Leader*

Generated more than **\$1,060,103** in earned/unpaid media via PR efforts
(Up \$8,103 over FYE20)

VISITOR SERVICES

The Visitor Services Team serves as the face of Knoxville, guiding visitors and locals alike with information about our city. The Gift Shop is filled with locally made products, making gifts and souvenirs authentic to our city's culture. We are committed to providing the best experience for everyone we encounter by extending the resources that display Knoxville's offerings.

**DISTRIBUTED
VISITORS GUIDES**
196,854

RETAIL SALES
\$70,194

**TOTAL NUMBER OF
WALK-IN VISITORS**
16,950

**TOTAL NUMBER OF
BROCHURES PICKED
UP AT THE VC**
19,059

VISITOR CENTER GIFT SHOP

The Visitor Center Gift Shop has been remerchandised to include the work of local and regional artisans, allowing visitors to take home a piece of Knoxville made here in Knoxville. Since the remodel, sales goals for the year exceeded budget by **13%** for the year. The Visitor Center team continues to work closely with local attractions, vendors, and artists to incorporate items which speak to Knoxville's array of talent.

VISITORS GUIDE REQUESTED STATES

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

TOP STATES WELCOMED IN THE VISITORS CENTER

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

GOTTA KNOW KNOXVILLE

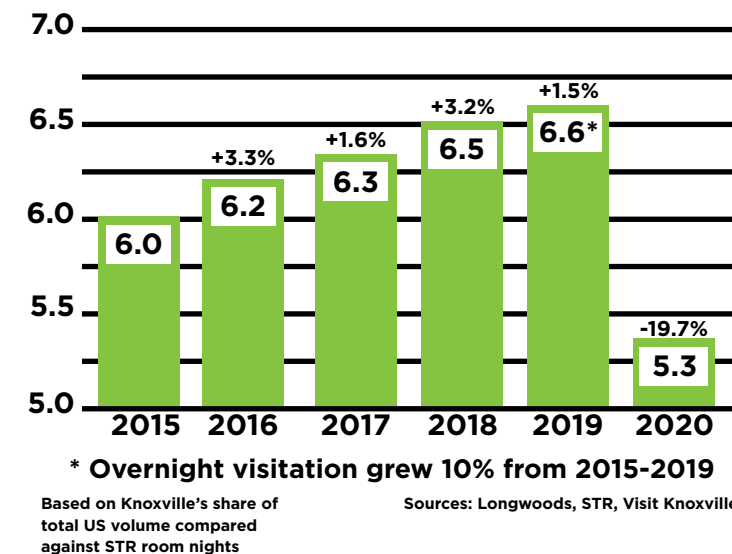
Gotta Know Knoxville has been restructured into a two-hour walking tour of the downtown footprint. With references to North, South, East, and West Knoxville, guests are introduced to the past, engaged with the present, and enlightened with future plans that tell the story of Knoxville. This year **72** GKK participants represented over **30** companies.

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 2020

5.3 Million



HOTEL DATA

YTD January - June 2021 vs 2020:

Knoxville is bouncing back quickly.

Occupancy	Up 43.9%
Room Demand	Up 41.4%
ADR	Up 9.5%
Room Revenues	Up 54.9%

Source: STR

TOTAL NUMBER OF ROOM NIGHTS

JULY 1, 2020 - JUNE 30, 2021

1,854,400

(Up 5.2% over last fiscal)

Source: STR

BOOKING DATA

Bookings tracked through VK's digital ad placement and organic website visitation showed a substantial increase over last fiscal.

60,558 bookings	Up 31%
133,465 room nights	Up 56.3%
\$14,928,426 revenue	Up 52.1%

ADARA tracks a 60-day booking window
The booking data above is current as of 7-19-21

TOP 10 BOOKING MARKETS

Atlanta	Knoxville*
Charlotte	Memphis
Chicago	Nashville
Greenville	New York
Indianapolis	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 feature films. The Film Office was again very active in recruiting and winning projects from large production hubs such as the feature film, *Banking on Christmas*, from Pureflix and Sony/Affirm Studios. Below are some highlights of the past year.

Continued to work with great local production companies like Jupiter Entertainment, Lusid Media, and Discovery by assisting with locations, permits, and city services for a variety of television shows that air on networks such as Oxygen, Discovery ID, Food Network, and TV One.



In December 2020, the VK Film Office welcomed Pureflix Entertainment to Knoxville for the filming of the feature film, *Banking on Christmas*, written and produced by Tommy Blaze. The film starred Katarina Hughes (*Queen America*), Eric Lutz (*Glow*), and Bai Ling (*Conjuring-Book of the Dead*). The Film Office assisted with locations, crew, lodging, permits and city services, and film incentives.

In November 2020, worked with The Lively Works on a video and photo shoot marketing campaign for American Eagle. The Film Office assisted with location scouting services, permits, crew, and help with lining up other resources such as vintage cars for the production.

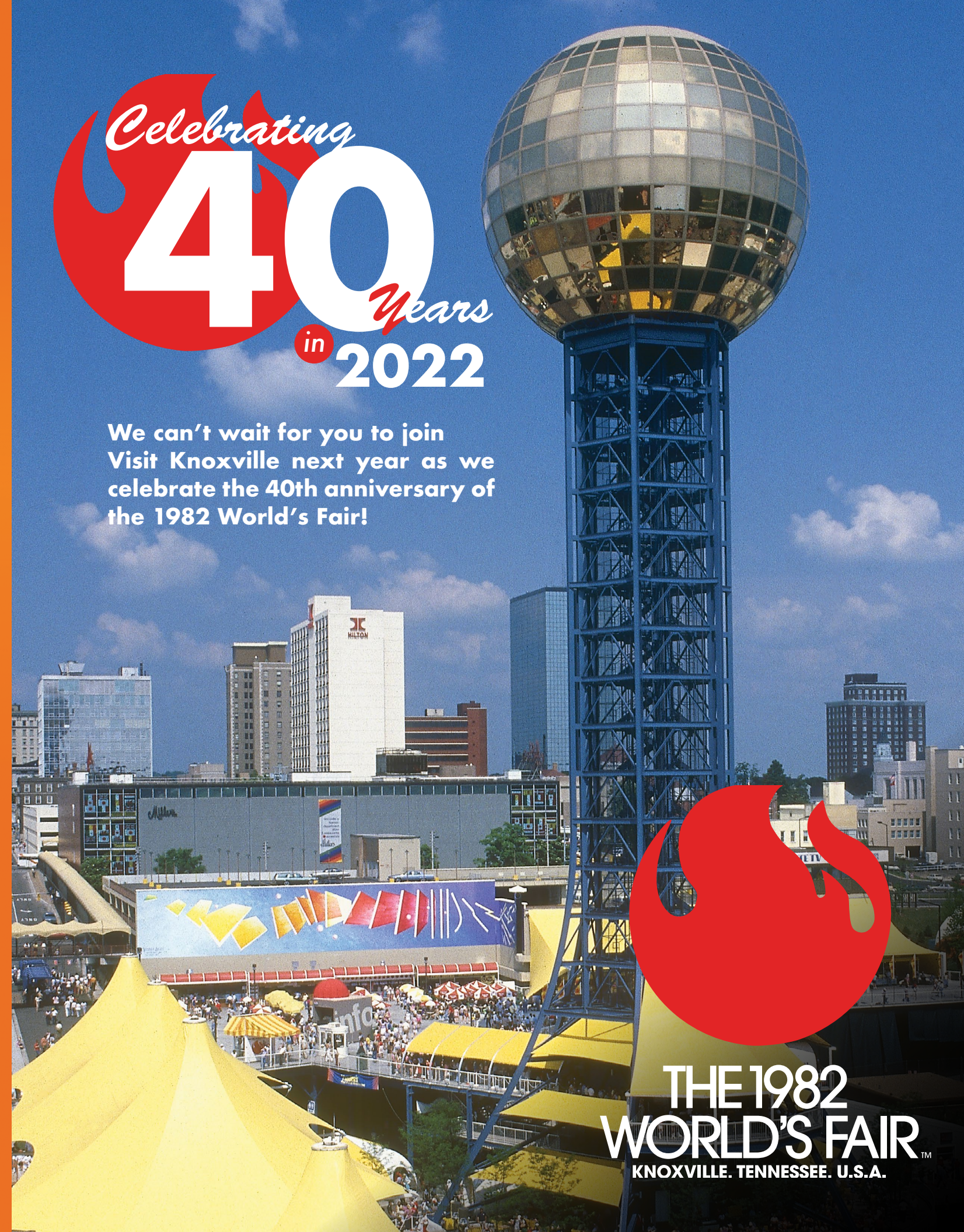
In February 2021, the feature film *A Hard Problem*, starring John Berchtold (*Manhunt*) and Catherine Kim (*Ballers*), had its World Premiere at the prestigious Cinequest Film Festival. The film wrapped in fall 2019. The Film Office recruited the project out of Los Angeles and assisted with locations, crew, lodging, permits, and film incentives.

In March 2021, the VK Film Office assisted with the production of country music star Kelsea Ballerini's music video "Half of my Hometown" with permits and lodging.

Worked with producers from feature films *Devil's Hollow* (starring Shular Hensley) and *Best Clowns* (starring Clayne Crawford and Thomas Lennon) by providing assistance with locations, permits, crew and film incentives. *Best Clowns* wrapped in July 2021 and *Devil's Hollow* will wrap in August 2021.

Celebrating
40
Years
in
2022

We can't wait for you to join
Visit Knoxville next year as we
celebrate the 40th anniversary of
the 1982 World's Fair!



THE 1982
WORLD'S FAIR™
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE, U.S.A.



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

#KNOXROCKS

301 S. Gay Street Knoxville, TN 37902
865-523-7263
VisitKnoxville.com

