



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2022-2023



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A MESSAGE FROM OUR  
PRESIDENT



**A record-setting year.** That’s how I would describe this past fiscal – not just for Visit Knoxville, but for everyone who is fortunate enough to be part of Knoxville/ Knox County tourism industry. From record-setting attendance at the 2023 Bassmaster Classic to record-setting traffic at [visitknoxville.com](https://www.visitknoxville.com), the numbers back up the stories we hear from a variety of partners talking about their hotels, museums and attractions. Last year was awesome and it was just setting the tone for what’s been achieved over the past 12 months. It was a wild ride, but one we completely enjoyed taking alongside you.

It was also **a special year** for Visit Knoxville as we celebrated our 10th Anniversary as the Official Convention and Visitors Bureau for the City of Knoxville and Knox County. We’ve witnessed and contributed to incredible growth in this community over the past 10 years. What we’ve accomplished together is truly amazing. A highlight of our tenure was the 40th anniversary celebration of the 1982 World’s Fair, something for which Visit Knoxville was recently recognized. The Middle East Tennessee Tourism Council honored us at their Excellence in Tourism Awards with The Tourism Trailblazer Award. This award is not given annually but is reserved for an event that is truly unique, or a once-in-a lifetime occurrence. It was only the third time the award has been given.

Our team was also pleased to accept Pauly Awards from the Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association. These included Special Event of the Year for the Bassmaster Classic, Rising Star of the Year for our Sr. Director of Visitor & Retail Services, and Tourism Property of the Year for The Sunsphere. Since reopening in February 2022, the Sunsphere has welcomed more than 76,000 guests from around the world. It’s a great honor to manage this beloved attraction for visitors and locals alike.

Overall it’s been a **very rewarding year** for all of us. As you read this report filled with key activities like hotel bookings, trade shows, site visits, volunteer hours, FAMs (familiarization tours), website traffic, film productions, journalist visits and blog posts, know that it just scratches the surface. You can find detailed information on the past year, as well as previous ones in the quarterly highlights under MEDIA on our website.

On behalf of the entire Visit Knoxville team, thank you for the ongoing support and encouragement you provide. The incredible support of our board and stakeholders is what makes this nature-loving-adventure-seeking-artsy-kind-of-town all that it is for visitors and locals alike.

Sincerely,  
*Kim Bumpas*  
Kim Bumpas, CDME, CMP  
President  
Visit Knoxville



## CONVENTION SALES & SPORTS COMMISSION

The Visit Knoxville Sales Team once again met several goals in another exciting 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  
**205**  
(EXCEEDED GOAL OF 160)

Of the **205** events, **67%** were new business. **42** booked at the Knoxville Convention Center.

HOSTED  
**26**  
SITE VISITS

Among them USA Diving, Association of College Honor Societies, Eagle Wings Motorcycle Association and National Society of Black Physicists.

PRODUCED OVER \$131.1 MILLION  
OF FUTURE ECONOMIC IMPACT

TOTAL LEADS  
**574**  
(EXCEEDED GOAL OF 410)

Of this, **38% (219)** went to the Knoxville Convention Center.

EXECUTED  
**6**  
EVENT SCOUTING TRIPS

These included CrossFit Regionals, USA Diving, Korn Ferry Tour and Chattanooga Jet Ski Club.

ATTENDED  
**19**  
TRADE SHOWS

**511** appointments/meetings were conducted by Convention Sales team, Sports Commission Sales team and attending partners. Shows included Connect Marketplace, Connect Sports, Cvent Connect, TEAMS, Sports ETA Symposium and Conference Direct.

**372**  
VK CONCIERGE VISITS

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



CONDUCTED  
**23**  
SALES APPOINTMENTS IN THE  
GREATER NASHVILLE METRO

Notable appointments included Tennessee Municipal League, Tennessee Turf Grass Association, Southern Business Group, Association of Chiefs of Police, Academy of Family Physicians, Southern Baptist Convention and African Methodist Episcopal.

# 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 attendance, and retain group business. Providing planners with a high level of customer service and visitors with enhanced experiences 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  
**379**  
CONVENTIONS, SPORTING  
EVENTS, FESTIVALS & MEETINGS

PROVIDED  
**414**  
PARTNER REFERRALS  
Partner Referrals are meeting planner requests for suppliers, products, vendors, and services in the community.

PARTICIPATED IN  
**19**  
EVENTS & WEBINARS FOR  
CONTINUING EDUCATION



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

TOTAL NUMBER OF  
VOLUNTEER HOURS  
**1,508**

TOTAL NUMBER OF  
INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS  
**193**

PARTICIPATED IN  
**4**  
COMMUNITY CAREER  
FAIRS TO RECRUIT  
NEW VOLUNTEERS

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

September 6 - 11, Knoxville once again proudly welcomed the **Congressional Medal of Honor Society Celebration**, the largest annual gathering of Medal of Honor Recipients. Recipients reunited to enjoy regional cultural attractions and share their stories of service with local students, veterans, active-duty military and community members.



The **Visit Knoxville Open** returned to **Holston Hills Country Club** May 21 - 28 continuing the Korn Ferry Tour tradition and promoting our community's pride as one of the four remaining original tour events. Rico Hoey won the 2023 VK Open with a score of -14.

We kicked-off fall with a Sunsphere-themed corn maze at Maple Lane Farms. To wrap the six-month celebration of the **40th Anniversary of the 1982 World's Fair**, Visit Knoxville organized a **Closing Dinner and Live Auction on October 28**. The event was held at the Foundry, which served as the Strohaus during the '82 World's Fair. The evening featured a menu, cocktails, stories and merchandise that were a true celebration of the world coming to Knoxville 40 years ago!



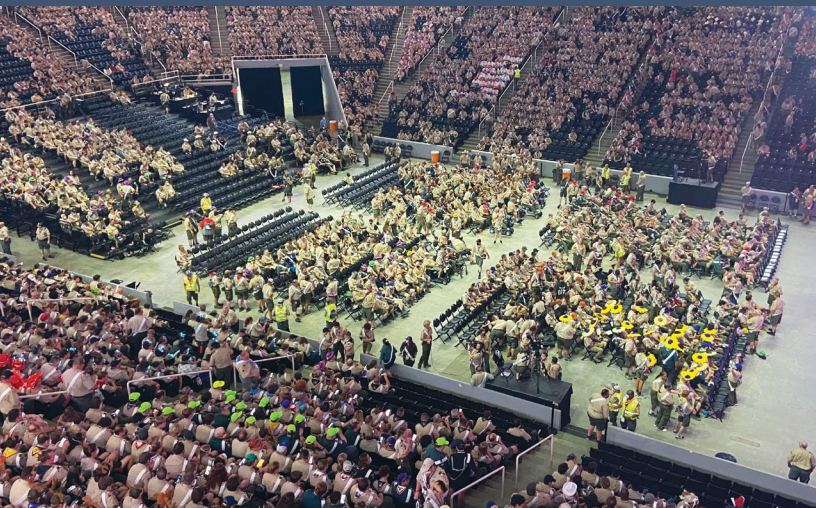
Organized and hosted a community festivals meeting with a focus on event safety and active shooter training in conjunction with the Knoxville Police Department. A total of 12 local festivals/events were represented as well as City of Knoxville Special Events Office and Public Building Authority.

For the first time, the Convention Services Team participated in **Event Service Professionals Association's (ESPA) Celebrate Services Week**, which took place the week of August 1 - 5. This was an opportunity to thank and recognize services professionals in our key city venues. It was also a chance to celebrate the collaborative effort it takes to make Knoxville a premier destination for conventions, meetings, and sporting events.



Partnered with the University of Tennessee Athletic Department on Market Square Madness to promote the upcoming seasons for Men's & Women's Basketball. Teams showcased their skills and signed autographs for the hundreds of fans in attendance.

# NOTABLE EVENTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM VISIT KNOXVILLE'S 10<sup>th</sup> YEAR



## Boy Scouts of America National Order of the Arrow Conference

As the National Order of the Arrow flagship national event, the conference welcomed over 8,000 Arrowmen from throughout the country. The conference took place July 25 – 29 at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville Convention Center and World's Fair Exhibition Hall.

## Bassmaster Classic

Knoxville broke the attendance record for what's known among fans as "the Superbowl of Bass Fishing" as we welcomed 163,914 guests for the 2023 Academy Sports + Outdoors Bassmaster Classic presented by Toyota. Coverage on FOX and FS1 reached 4.5 million viewers coverage leading to the most-watched Bassmaster telecast on any network since 2009\*.

*\*according to Nielsen numbers provided by FOX*



## Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Girls Basketball World Championships

More than 180 2nd through 8th grade teams competed over the course of four days across 19 basketball courts at the Knoxville Convention Center and World's Fair Exhibition Hall the week of June 22 – 26.



## USA Cycling Pro Road National Championships

Visit Knoxville has been home to USA Cycling since 2017. For this year's "final ride" Knoxville's cycling enthusiasts showed up big for the USA Pro Road and Criterium National Championships. With the Time Trials Championships in Oak Ridge, a total of six national champions were crowned June 22 – 25.



## Sunsphere Visitation

Since reopening the 4th Floor Observation Deck in February 2022, Visit Knoxville has welcomed over 76,000 guests from all 50 states and 49 countries. As visitation increases and the Sunsphere Fund grows, improvement projects are in the early stages to upgrade the structure and maximize the guest's experience.

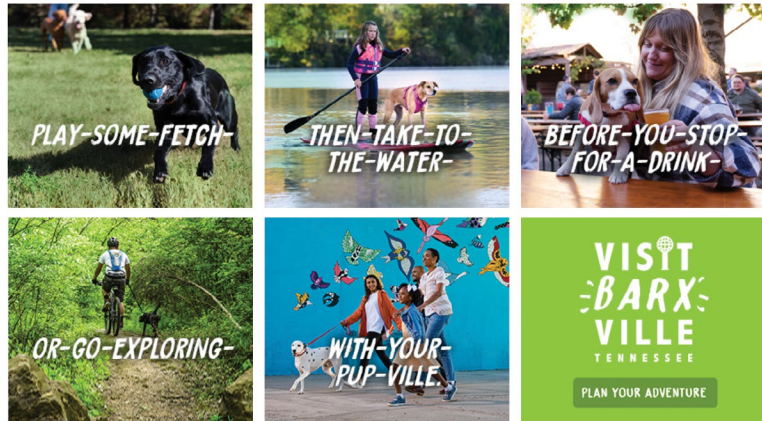
## VK Film Office Film Premieres

The Film Office hosted the premieres of two films at Regal Riviera in downtown Knoxville. In September, Sony/Affirm studios partnered with the Film Office for a red-carpet screening of, *Nothing is Impossible*, a feature film shot in the summer of 2021 for the Pureflix platform. In October, the Film Office hosted a red-carpet premiere of *Memento Mori*, a film shot in Knoxville in the fall of 2021. Both films were recruited by the VK Film Office.



# MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

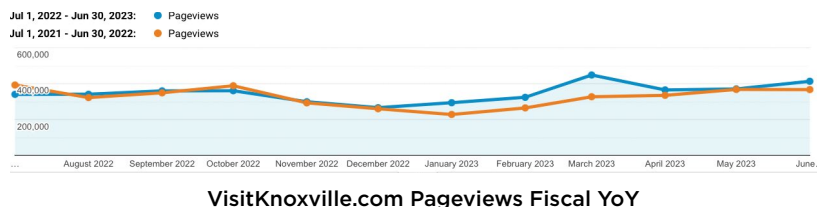
This past year, alongside marketing Knoxville as a nature-loving-adventure-seeking-artsy-kinda-town, we began marketing Barxville, nature-loving-adventure-seeking-belly-scratching-kinda-town. Since the campaign launched in February, the ads have generated 3,844 hotel bookings with an average stay of 2 nights. Top markets include Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, and South Carolina. As with all VK marketing campaigns, digital placement for Barxville directs to [visitknoxville.com](https://visitknoxville.com).



The Visit Knoxville website continues to perform at and above tourism industry standards thanks to fresh, updated content and images, social media links and search optimization.

## TOTAL NUMBER OF WEBSITE VISITS

**2,183,751**  
(UP 12.02% OVER FYE22)



## TOP 10 LANDING PAGES

- |                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Home                  | 6. Free Things to Do   |
| 2. Things to Do          | 7. Attractions         |
| 3. Concerts & Live Music | 8. Events this Weekend |
| 4. Events                | 9. Market Square       |
| 5. Sunsphere Tickets     | 10. Sunsphere Listing  |

## TOP 10 CITIES FOR WEBSITE TRAFFIC

- |              |                  |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1. Knoxville | 6. Charlotte     |
| 2. Atlanta   | 7. Ashburn, VA*  |
| 3. Nashville | 8. Columbus      |
| 4. Chicago   | 9. Raleigh       |
| 5. New York  | 10. Indianapolis |

\* Amazon AWS Data Center Location

## ADDITIONAL WEBSITE UPDATES

**1,951**  
NEW/UPDATED CALENDAR EVENTS

**188**  
NEW PARTNER LISTINGS

**100+**  
BLOG POSTS  
(ACCOUNTS FOR 13% OFF ALL WEBSITE TRAFFIC)

**13.7%**  
INCREASE IN NUMBER OF USERS OVER FYE22

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Co-hosted two international media FAMs with TDTD. A total of 19 attendees from UK, France, Italy, Brazil, Australia, and Germany included freelance writers published in Nat Geo Traveller, Reach PLC (one of Britain's biggest newspaper groups), PA Media (syndicate with regional titles across the UK) and more. Several attendees arrived in Knoxville after an International Showcase in Louisville, KY hosted by Travel South USA, the official regional destination marketing organization of the Southern USA. These FAMs contributed to a total of 50 journalists/bloggers/influencers visits – tying the record set last year.



Joined forces with Chattanooga, Franklin, the Smokies, Memphis and Nashville for a statewide promotion coordinated by TDTD. **“Little Tennessee”**, a free 4-day event held June 13-17 in Toronto, provided a little taste of Tennessee's biggest flavors, including live music, authentic southern eats and a variety of activities.



Partnered with the Knoxville History Project to install eight informational markers at World's Fair Park to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the 1982 World's Fair.

Created the Insta Knox Passport, a mobile-exclusive passport of curated attractions, retailers, restaurants and more. The Passport allows locals and visitors to explore, share photos and “check in” for prizes along the way. Download at [Instaknox.com](https://instaknox.com).

Collaborated on “Cities of the SEC,” a free, digital passport partnership between the destinations that are home to the schools in the Southeastern Conference. The passport is on Visit Knoxville's Gameday page: [goodolrockytop.com](https://goodolrockytop.com). For more information, visit [visitttheseec.com](https://visitttheseec.com).

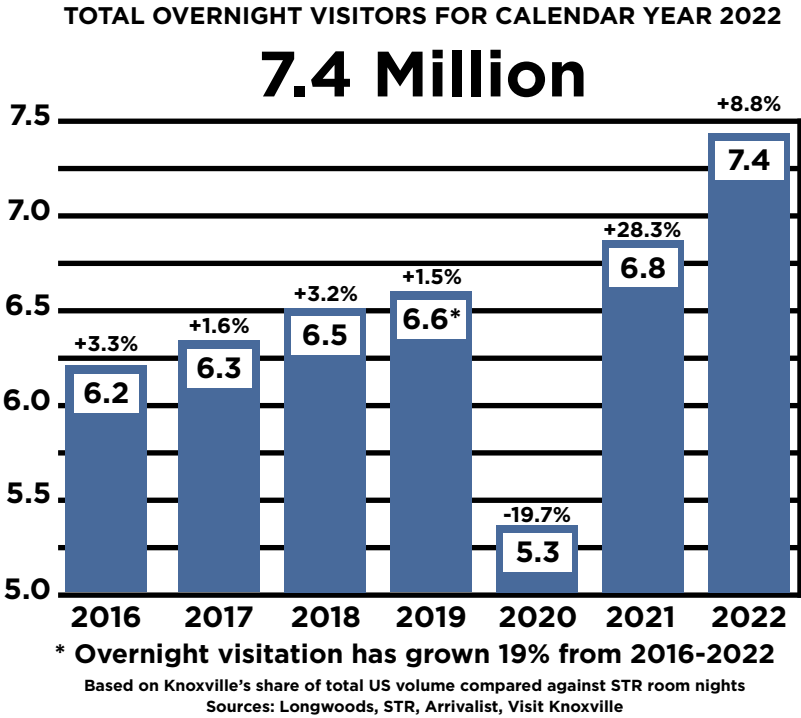
Partnered with the University of Tennessee's Department of Undergraduate Admissions to produce the UT Visitor Guide. A total of 85,000 guides are distributed at the UT Student Union and Admissions, the Knoxville Visitors Center, the Sunsphere, 15 information centers, and 14 state welcome centers as well as all Knox County hotels.

Created or shared over 760 Instagram stories with several series throughout the year, including helpful “In the Neighborhood” series, Maker markets, Tennessee Whiskey Trail stops; event promotion including Where's Waldo Scavenger Hunt, Tennessee Songwriters Week, Dogwood Arts Festival, and many others; new exhibits such as rotating First Friday exhibitions, the Tennessee Triennial Exhibition at the Knoxville Museum of Art and the Candoro Marble Building via Tri-Star Arts, the East Tennessee History Center's History Headquarters, and more.

**Generated more than \$2,943,640 in earned/unpaid media via PR efforts (an increase of more than 190% over FYE22)**

# MARKET RESEARCH

Visit Knoxville collects and analyzes data from sources including Longwoods International, Smith Travel Research (STR), ADARA, and Arrivalist to compile information related to Knoxville’s travel market. A quarterly Tourism Dashboard is available under Public Notices in the Media section of [visitknoxville.com](https://www.visitknoxville.com).



## HOTEL DATA

TOTAL ROOM NIGHTS  
JULY 1, 2022 - JUNE 30, 2023

**2,444,782**  
(UP 6% OVER FYE22)

Occupancy Up 1.5%  
ADR Up 9.7%  
Room Revenues Up 16.3%

Source: STR

## BOOKING DATA

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

### HOTEL BUSINESS GENERATED BY WEBSITE VISITORS

Bookings	23,570
Room Nights	62,480
Average Rate	\$146.72
Hotel Revenue	\$9,166,861

### HOTEL BUSINESS GENERATED BY DIGITAL AD PLACEMENT EXPOSURE

Bookings	17,003
Room Nights	34,918
Average Rate	\$130.66
Hotel Revenue	\$4,565,357

ADARA tracks a 60-day booking window. The booking data above is current as of 7-18-23.

## TOP 10 BOOKING MARKETS

Atlanta • Charlotte • Chicago • Greenville • Knoxville\*  
Nashville • New York • San Francisco • Tri-Cities • Washington, D.C.

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

# FILM OFFICE


The [Visit Knoxville Film Office](#) actively promotes Knoxville and Knox County as a premiere filming location. 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 addition to the premieres mentioned in the Notable Accomplishments, the Film Office...

Continued its successful run of recruiting feature films to our area with *ROOF*, *Grounded* and *Smoky Mountains Romance*. Euclid Origins Pictures out of Los Angeles filmed *ROOF*, starring Bella Heathcote and Asif Ali. The survival thriller was shot over two weeks with their prime location being on the roof of the Riverview Tower downtown. The project had a great write-up in *Deadline Magazine*, and the film will be released in 2023. *Grounded* filmed for nearly a month and had the largest budget of any film shot in Knoxville since *October Sky*. The project stars Robert Taylor (*Longmire*), Adam Bartley (*Night Sky*), and Radha Mitchell (*Run Hide Fight*). It tells the true story of a man and his quest for purpose after losing the first two loves of his life. Shadowboxer Films from Los Angeles came to the area to shoot the feature film *Smoky Mountains Romance*, a romance film shot partially in Knox County.

Partnered with the East Tennessee History Center on their feature exhibition *Lights! Camera! East Tennessee!* telling the history of film in East Tennessee.

Participated in the “Making a Living in the Film Industry” panel at the Knoxville Film Festival.

Attended the Nashville Film Festival, participating in the “Creating in Tennessee” panel along with Tennessee State Film Commissioner, Bob Raines.



PRESENTED BY VISIT KNOXVILLE & REGAL

Announced [FILM FEST KNOX](#), a new film festival produced in partnership with Regal and Public Cinema. The festival will take place November 9 – 12 in downtown Knoxville at the Regal Riviera Theater with the goal of quickly growing FILM FEST KNOX into one the premiere festivals in the southeast.

The VK Film Office was 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 - our highest placement yet.

*“Knoxville and the Visit Knoxville Film Office are known for their versatility and experience – they make productions from all over the world feel welcome.”*

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



## VISITOR SERVICES

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 Sunsphere at World's Fair Park. The Team works with more than 80 local Makers to provide a variety of quality retail items in the Gift Shops at both locations.

VISITORS CENTER GUESTS  
**33,000+**

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



VISITORS GUIDES  
**209,000+**

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



SUNSPHERE GUESTS  
SINCE FEBRUARY 2022  
**76,000+**

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

TOP VISITING STATES FOR  
JULY 1, 2022 - JUNE 30, 2023

RETAIL SALES  
**\$225,000+**

A YOY increase of **14%** - includes Visitors Center Gift Shop, Sunsphere, Online Sales and 9 off-site Retail Booths!

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Created two new visitor resources in house: Downtown Knoxville Audio Walking Tour powered by Voicemap (40+ downloads) and the Downtown Knoxville Shopping/Dining Folding Map. In addition to these resources, the Visitors Center recruited 46 new brochures this year.

Extended the operating hours of the 4th Floor Observation Deck at the **Sunsphere to 7 days a week** on the one-year anniversary of functioning as an attraction. Introduced a process for Private Tour bookings including field trips, filming opportunities, family reunions and more. Since launching, **18 private tours** have been conducted, hosting **800+ total guests!**

The Greater Knoxville Hospitality Association awarded the Sunsphere the 2023 Pauly Award for **Tourism Property of the Year**.



Launched official Sunsphere Social Media platforms on Instagram and Facebook with combined **1,000+** followers. Insights since launching in February include: 50+ posts and 100+ stories. Pinned highlight stories include the **Tyree Trivia** segment, where former Mayor Randy Tyree quizzes followers on trivia surrounding the 1982 World's Fair.

Partnered with staple businesses along the Gotta Know Knoxville walking tour footprint to enhance the tour experience and engage attendees with local attractions. Partners include The Emporium, Maple Hall, Tennessee Theatre, and Blount Mansion. GKK hosted **160 participants** this year.



Honored **Visit Knoxville's 10-year anniversary** by hosting a celebration on the 4th Floor Observation Deck. As a keepsake from the celebration, VK gifted partners and staff a locally made ornament featuring the Knoxville skyline in aluminum, the traditional anniversary gift for 10 years.

The Visitor Center and Sunsphere Gift Shops partnered with **100+** vendors this year curating Knoxville inspired products. A few notable new partnerships include:

- |                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Owltopus                     | • West Knox Pots      |
| • Meghan McCrary               | • Saw This Did That   |
| • Ester Sitver                 | • June Bug Dog Treats |
| • Proper Popcorn               | • The Teal Violet     |
| • The DW Designs               | • EJ Clay Co.         |
| • Smoky Mountain Spice Factory | • Heather Whiteside   |





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

**#KNOXROCKS**

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[VisitKnoxville.com](http://VisitKnoxville.com)

