



2021 SUCCESS SCORECARD

A Year in Review

a message from
Stephanie Klett:

The World is Officially in Awe of Lake Geneva!



There's one thing that never gets old for the team here at VISIT Lake Geneva and that's seeing the reaction of travel writers and social media influencers who are visiting the community for the first time. We had a front row seat to many of those "awe" moments and "awww" reactions in 2021 from reporters and bloggers hailing from near and far. And by near we mean Wisconsin, by far we mean Europe. Thank you to all the businesses in the region, tourism and otherwise, who generously hosted and toured reporters. That good work is coming back to the local tourism economy in the form of glowing feature stories and wonderful reviews. I can confidently say reporters now know there is a Lake Geneva in Wisconsin, not just one in Switzerland, and that our destination is just as stunning.

When you have the kind of special tourism experience that we have here, there's opportunity to thrive, even when staring down a pandemic, and that's what this scorecard confirms.

Stephanie Klett

President & CEO of VISIT Lake Geneva

Marketing



PR and Advertising

Lake Geneva has an incredible story to tell and tell it we did.

- We made strides in growing our PR presence in Milwaukee and Madison, while continuing to serve up story ideas to travel writers and editors in Chicago and at national and international news outlets.
- We're now in a rhythm of creating three dedicated media kits per year - spring/summer, fall, winter. And each media kit is chock full of story angles and compelling visuals.
- The community did a terrific job of hosting travel editors, freelance writers, TV reporters, and social media influencers. Same goes for another hugely successful Geiger & Associates PR familiarization tour for 15 writers who cover a wide swath of topics, including golf, outdoor adventures, food, romantic travel, luxury travel, history, and business travel.
- We're learning that Lake Geneva is still new to lots of travel writers, so feeding them story ideas is key to getting them to visit and write about our destination. For those who know and love Lake Geneva, nurturing those long-term relationships is also an important strategy.
- In case you hadn't heard the thrilling news, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism selected Lake Geneva as one of the featured destinations for their 2022 Travel Wisconsin integrated advertising campaign. Film and photography crews made stops on the water, at a safari, in a historic mansion, and on the golf course. The spots will air as part of their 2022 summer campaign.
- Our paid advertising schedule - supporting leisure, meetings, golf, and weddings markets - was heavy on digital in 2021, with placements spanning a variety of channels including Google Display, Search, and Social Media, and creative executions that included a mix of seasonal display, remarketing, video, and prospecting ads. We also expanded the geographic reach of our digital campaign to reach audiences within a six-hour drive to capitalize on new traveler sentiments and displaced air travelers. Collectively, the 2021 digital advertising campaigns resulted in 25.3 million impressions. We continued our strong radio presence on WTMJ in Milwaukee and WLKG locally. Participation in print travel guides including Travel Wisconsin and VISIT Milwaukee also broadened our reach to potential visitors in 2021.
- The ever-popular "Discover Wisconsin" TV series came to town - more than once we might add - and delivered the Lake Geneva vacation message in a multitude of ways. There was a digital story short promoting fall travel, a full TV episode covering winter activities, placement on their popular podcast, and a golf short set to air in the spring. "Discover Wisconsin" runs in eight states and on major streaming services including Roku, Apple TV, Amazon, and Chromecast.
- Paid placements with a feel of organic content included a feature on the 2021 Impact Award winners that appeared in the Lake Geneva Regional News, plus a highly entertaining monthly column in the same paper penned by VISIT Lake Geneva CEO Stephanie Klett and spouse Bill Barth, Wisconsin Newspaper Association Hall of Famer.

Cause for Celebration & Media Coverage in 2021



The stunning renovation of The Riviera.



The remarkable variety of culinary experiences in the community.



The significant work being done to open Yerkes Observatory to the public.



One-of-a-kind finds including indoor glamping, a Dungeons and Dragons destination, a poppy sculpture, and even a pair of giraffes.

Reporters & Influencers are Wild about Lake Geneva



99 In 2021, nearly 100 stories appeared on Lake Geneva. Here's a sampling of headlines.

- "26 most beautiful towns in America"
—Condé Nast Traveler
- "Scenic Midwest road trips perfect for families"
—USA Today
- "Visit an outdoor winter wonderland"
—Chicago Tribune
- "Four holiday road trips"
—Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
- "Lake Geneva snow sculptors win national titles"
—ABC Chicago
- "Midwest destinations to visit with your family"
—Chicago Parent Magazine
- "Magical main streets"
—Midwest Living Magazine
- "America's 20 greatest summertime lake towns"
—Thrillist.com
- "20 best getaways for 4th of July weekend"
—Readers Digest
- "A breakout summer"
—Wisconsin State Journal
- "Great family resorts for fall foliage fun"
—Frommer's

And Now for the Numbers

Tracking is a two-way street—digest the data for trends, then turn that intel into even stronger marketing strategies.

Social Media Channels

- Facebook = 52,330 followers
- Instagram = 8,363 followers
- Twitter = 3,403 followers

Website Traffic

- Website visits up 67% over 2019
- 1,403,579 visitor sessions
- 3,349,530 pageviews
- 1,018,130 unique users
- 43,239 issue visits and 433,879 pageviews of the digital Visitors Guide

Email Marketing

- 52,129 opt-in subscribers



Brand Evolution



We gave our brand a freshen-up to make sure it synced up with all that makes this community a much-loved tourism destination.

- We completed a website refresh in 2021 that focuses on serving more content to users, with engaging design changes on the homepage guiding visitors to those compelling stories. The addition of user-generated content, including an Instagram feed, provides some of the best testimonials we could ask for. For our co-op partners, we're including more ads in more places—both on our website and the mobile site—that deliver more impressions and greater value for the dollar.
- For reporters, we're now consistent in describing the Lake Geneva brand as the “Newport of the West” and the “Hamptons of Chicago,” with pristine Geneva Lake, the historic mansions that circle it, and the many resorts, restaurants, boutiques, attractions, and outdoor pursuits all giving the community a seacoast-style appeal all its own.
- We're devoting more resources than ever before to growing our photo and video libraries, knowing today's consumers lean heavily on visuals when choosing a destination. In 2021 alone we completed nearly a dozen photo and video assignments covering all four seasons. You may be interested to know that the people featured in many of our photos, including the wake surfer on the cover of the 2022 Visitor Guide, are not models but rather “real people” and even include some of our own local residents.

Grant Awards

We were in the grant application business, so to speak, in 2021, with significant dollar awards already helping the local tourism economy bounce back stronger.

- VISIT Lake Geneva received \$327,904 from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism Badger Bounceback Destination Marketing Organization Grant Program, with those dollars going toward marketing.
- A \$10,950 grant to support the Winterfest Ice Sculpture Walk was provided by the Lake Geneva Tourism Commission, with 26 downtown businesses participating in the sculpture walk.

Events



Celebrating Togetherness with the Return of Cherished Events

- Winterfest 2021 drew some 50,000 people to see snow sculpting teams from around the country, including a first-ever team from Florida, compete for national honors. Bonfires on the beach, hovercraft rides on the lake, and a downtown ice sculpture walk added to the frosty festivities.
- Twenty-six eateries participated in the 2021 Restaurant Week. Along with lots of visiting Midwest foodies, we also had international travelers from the U.K. and Japan enjoying our cuisine. This year's Charity Check sponsor was Tito's Handmade Vodka and, with a sponsorship increase to \$9,000, we were able to award cash donations ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 to five local charities. Winners included: Agape House, Side by Side, Inc., Walworth County Food & Diaper Bank, Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy, and the Walworth County Dementia Friendly Community Initiative.
- With loads of small-town charm and big city talent, the Concerts in the Park series returned, with locals and visitors gathering on seven evenings to listen to their favorite performers.
- The Electric Christmas Parade returned, and it was difficult to tell whose smiles were wider, those of the children or Santa and Mrs. Claus. For the first time in the parade's 46-year history, we had a presenting sponsor, Kunes Auto Group. The \$500 award for best float by a nonprofit went to the Geneva Lakes YMCA.

Operations



New Hires

This year's staffing news points to how we're serving our tourism partners and the community at large.

- We hired two new staffers: Nan Elder, Events Manager, and Shelli Gulbransen, Bookkeeper/Office Manager.
- We also hired a technology management company, Midwest IT Solutions, whose responsibilities for VISIT Lake Geneva include cyber security, technology upgrades, and maintenance.
- On a side note, the wonderful art now gracing the walls of our offices on Center Street is the work of local artists.

Visitor Center

The Visitor Center, the heart and soul of this organization, received the attention and resources it deserved.

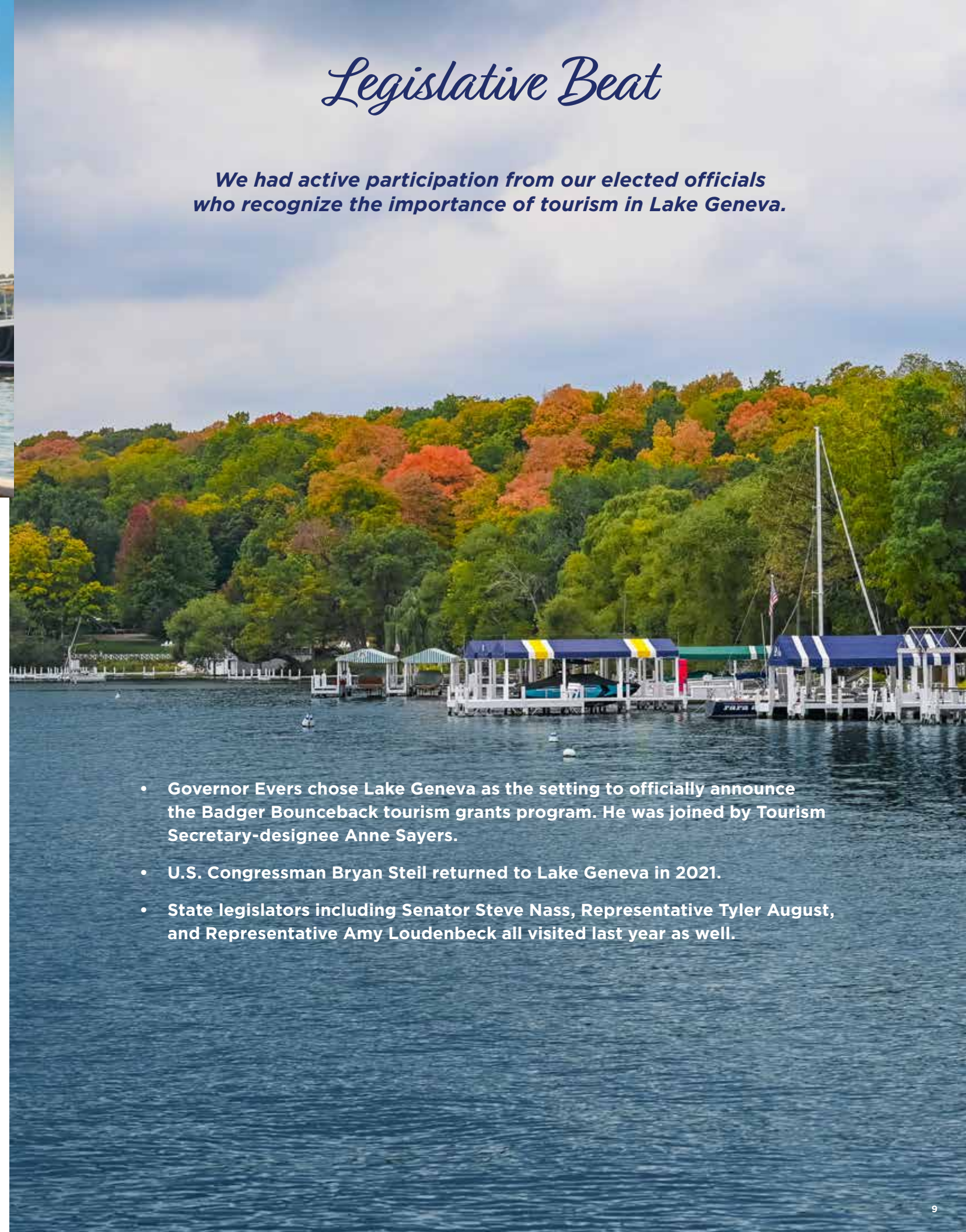
- We wrote an operations manual specifically for the Visitor Center outlining policies and processes, from everyday tasks to more nuanced visitor interactions.
- New Visitor Center employees completed a training protocol to learn about different visitor personalities and profiles to help them best serve the needs of travelers to the community.
- What better way for staff to familiarize themselves with all the community has to offer than to experience it for themselves, so tours of local tourism businesses became a regular occurrence for Visitor Center employees and will continue.
- Lou Ann Anderson is now Visitor Center Manager, a title that reflects both her longtime contributions and the importance of this communications channel.

And Now for the Numbers

- Visitor guides mailed: **9,775**
- Phone calls answered: **3,802**
- Emails returned: **8,670**
- Walk-ins assisted: **13,698**

Legislative Beat

We had active participation from our elected officials who recognize the importance of tourism in Lake Geneva.



- **Governor Evers chose Lake Geneva as the setting to officially announce the Badger Bounceback tourism grants program. He was joined by Tourism Secretary-designee Anne Sayers.**
- **U.S. Congressman Bryan Steil returned to Lake Geneva in 2021.**
- **State legislators including Senator Steve Nass, Representative Tyler August, and Representative Amy Loudenberg all visited last year as well.**

Partner Outreach



Lifting up both tourism and non-tourism businesses was top of our Partner Outreach agenda.

- We implemented a CEO/Partnership Manager Outreach plan that includes weekly phone calls and in-person visits to build relationships.
- The new “Running with Scissors” program includes ribbon-cutting events at new businesses and business spotlights for partners celebrating significant new developments.
- VISIT Lake Geneva staff attended the Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce annual meeting and the Wisconsin Fall Tourism Conference.
- Additionally, we’re producing a new guide that exclusively features local services; look for that in 2022.

And Now for the Numbers



- **New partners: 47**
- **Total active partners: 327**
- **Training and educational workshops presented: 12**
- **Monthly partner meetings: 12**
- **Business After Hours networking events: 4**
- **Ribbon cuttings: 8**
- **Partner visits: 150+**
- **Staff familiarization visits to Partner locations: 15**
- **Lake Geneva Region Visitor Guides distributed: 80,000**
- **Big Bundle Up warm winter items distributed: 466**





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