

- VISIT MILWAUKEE'S 2013 -

Annual Report



MISSION STATEMENT

VISIT Milwaukee's mission is to market the greater Milwaukee area as the destination of choice for conventions, events, and leisure travel, thereby increasing the economic impact of tourism.

VISION STATEMENT

VISIT Milwaukee is recognized as the chief image and tourism marketing organization of the greater Milwaukee area, and continues to be recognized as a major contributor to a thriving tourism economy that supports job creation and the growth of our convention and tourism infrastructure.





IT WAS A GOOD YEAR
FOR TOURISM IN THE
GREATER MILWAUKEE
AREA IN 2013.

In Milwaukee County, total tourism business sales grew 4.0 percent to over \$3 billion. Total tourism employment grew to 30,375 full-time positions with more than \$1 billion in labor income.

Hotel revenues showed strong growth in 2013, up 7.3 percent in Milwaukee County and 11.5 percent in the City of Milwaukee. A record convention season, along with increased business and leisure travel, resulted in record occupancy and room rates for the downtown Milwaukee hotels.

The record year for conventions was highlighted by two large events that started and ended a busy summer season: Moose International over the Memorial Day weekend and the Harley-Davidson 110th Anniversary celebration over Labor Day weekend. In between, the National Governors Association, the USA Triathlon and our important annual events, the Bead and Button Show and Northwestern Mutual's Annual Meeting, added to a very busy summer.



Convention room nights for 2014 are estimated to be higher than average with the convention booking pace entering 2014 at 115 percent of our normal booking pace. The first half of our convention year is particularly strong with a new event, Pheasants Forever, and the return of the NCAA Men's Basketball Championship. With the anticipated short-term demand, we also expect to exceed our historical demand in the second half of the year. Spending estimates for the convention groups booked for 2014 are also very good with a strong revenue year budgeted for the Wisconsin Center.

Travel experts and consumers are reporting more vacation and short leisure trips in 2014. Value destinations and travel for events will continue to see increased demand, which will position Milwaukee well for 2014. To insure we capture our fair share of the leisure market, we will continue to increase our marketing spend and improve our targeting in the drive-to market with an even greater focus on Northern Illinois. Public Relations will also continue to focus heavily on this important market as well as looking for every opportunity to gain earned media regionally, nationally and internationally.

Hotel supply in the Milwaukee market will continue to grow in 2014 with the opening of Potawatomi's new hotel in late summer. The hotel supply added the past few years has all been focused on the leisure and business traveler with negligible impact on our ability to attract conventions. In 2014, we will continue to work with the WCD to advocate for the expansion of the Wisconsin Center. The study completed by HVS supports such an expansion, estimating substantial growth in events and room nights would result.

In the meantime, increasing our marketing impact in the leisure segment to grow overall demand and mitigate the supply growth is important. With our limited dollars, we will continue to carefully balance our convention marketing and sales spending with our leisure marketing spending. A healthy tourism economy long-term depends on Milwaukee continuing to grow both leisure and convention spending.

2014 will be another busy tourism year. Working with all of our community partners, we will look to maximize tourism visits and spending. By collaborating with community leaders on key issues, such as a new sports and entertainment arena, an expanded convention center and strong cultural and recreational institutions, we hope to insure a healthy tourism economy well into the future. ■

PAUL UPCHURCH

President & CEO

VISIT Milwaukee

PAUL MATHEWS

Chair

VISIT Milwaukee Board of Directors



THE CONFERENCE FACILITIES ARE TERRIFIC, AS ARE THE HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS. EVERYONE IS FRIENDLY AND SERVICE IS GREAT.”

- MICHAEL HOSTAD,

*HighEdWeb
Professionals Association*

The sales team booked 198,059 convention room nights for 2013 and future years, 102 percent of the goal. The team generated 714,706 lead tentative room nights, 110 percent of the goal.

An aggressive approach to pursuing short-term bookings resulted in 34,754 convention room nights booked in 2013 for 2013 - a 9 percent increase over 2012.

In 2013, the department achieved 231,064 actualized group room nights, representing \$121 million in economic impact.

The sales team continued to build on its core convention sales strategy of bringing meeting planners to experience the destination, as studies have shown that the likelihood of securing business significantly improves when planners visit Milwaukee. The team conducted 95 individual site tours and one major familiarization tour.



In August 2013, the department hosted Connect Marketplace, which drew more than 500 meeting planners to Milwaukee. The conference was an extraordinary opportunity to showcase the city as a meeting destination and has resulted in three definite bookings (Estimated Economic Impact: \$3.9 million), eight tentative bookings (\$7m) and 32 prospects (\$26.8m) to date. This convention will continue to pay dividends in the form of future bookings for years to come.

When meeting planners weren't able to visit Milwaukee, the sales staff brought Milwaukee to the meeting planner, participating in more than 21 trade shows, 16 industry events and 12 sales events throughout the United States.

The convention sales department expanded on strategic partnerships with key third parties, producing 11,000 room nights and \$1.5 million in room-night revenue from Conference Direct, and 9,600 room nights and \$1.3 million in room-night revenue from Helms Briscoe.

A focus on key tertiary markets continues to produce positive results with the sports market, delivering more than 32,000 room nights. Major strides were made with national governing bodies (NGAs) within the USA Olympics. Events like USA Fencing and USA Triathlon all brought participants and spectators from across the country to Milwaukee.

These results contributed to both Milwaukee County and the City of Milwaukee experiencing a 5 percent occupancy growth, and Milwaukee Downtown achieving a record 65.7 percent annual occupancy. Demand grew by 8.5 percent, outpacing a supply growth, which ended the year up 8 percent. Lastly, the Milwaukee MSA RevPar ended at \$59.12, up 9.3 percent and second in our nine-city competitive set. ■

“OUR PEOPLE LOVE
COMING “HOME” TO
MILWAUKEE EACH
YEAR.” -JIM LAVOLD
Northwestern Mutual

The Convention Services Department assisted 582,701 attendees at 288 events, meetings and conventions.

In 2013, 96 percent of meeting planners who held events in Milwaukee rated the Convention Services staff as “Excellent” or “Very Good” on post-event surveys.

For the 12th year, the Services Department was awarded the 2013 Pinnacle Award by Successful Meetings Magazine for “setting the standard for others to follow.”

For the seventh consecutive year, the Convention Services department was awarded the Meetings and Conventions Gold Service award, presented to CVBs that are “dedicated to meeting professionals”.

Visitor Information assisted more than 33,000 visitors.

Successful recruitment strategies increased the number of active volunteers to more than 200 to assist with events in 2013, especially Harley-Davidson’s 110th Anniversary and USA Triathlon.



Convention Services welcomed several large, national conventions and events to Milwaukee in 2013, including:

- American Association of Bovine Practitioners
- American Philatelic Society
- Lutheran Education Association
- Connect Marketplace
- Moose International
- National Governors Association
- United States Institute for Theatre Technology

Convention Services team maximized relationships with event planners of annual meetings to ensure their continued success in Milwaukee and their return for future years, including:

- Wisconsin Association of School Boards
- Wisconsin Emergency Medical Services Association
- Wisconsin State Reading Association
- Fidelity National Information Services FIS
- Kalmbach Publishing Bead and Button Show
- Kohl's
- Wisconsin Restaurant Association
- Northwestern Mutual's Annual Meeting of Network Professionals



“MILWAUKEE IS A CITY
THAT EVOLVES SLOWLY...
THE RESULT IS A CITY THAT
POSSESSES A RENEWED
VITALITY WHILE STILL
HOLDING ON TO AN OLD
WORLD CHARACTER.”

-ROBERT SIMONSON

NewYorkTimes.com

The Public Relations Department told Milwaukee’s story in regional, national and international media outlets, exceeding the department’s goal and resulting in almost \$20 million in public relations advertising value. For a city with a marketing budget that is lower than its peer cities, this is a great way to compete and get the Milwaukee story out.

PR outreach to leisure travelers resulted in nearly 200 stories - 28 appearing in the Wisconsin market and 17 in the secondary market of Northern Illinois and the Chicagoland area, totaling more than 162 million impressions.

The department successfully targeted publications including *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, *Huffington Post*, *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times*.

To better facilitate VISIT Milwaukee partner mentions in these articles, the department designed itineraries for and hosted 42 travel journalists and attended four media tradeshow.



Convention and meeting planners learned why Milwaukee makes a premier destination through 24 stories in trade publications including *Convene*, *Meetings & Conventions*, *Connect*, *Successful Meetings*, *Meetings Focus Midamerica*, *USAE* and *Black Meetings and Tourism*.

THE VISIT MILWAUKEE SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE HAS CONTINUED TO GROW IN 2013

The team launched four quarterly promotions that received roughly 28,000 entries.



FANS
↑ 61%



FOLLOWERS
↑ 57%



In its second year, DearMKE launched new films to critical acclaim and proceeded to grow its social media presence on Facebook and Twitter. DearMKE continues to penetrate the Milwaukee marketplace and flourish through local events, such as the joint fundraiser with Hunger Task Force that raised over 600 pounds of food and a substantial cash donation.

Finally, in 2013, the public relations department rolled out a GeoTour, “Discover Milwaukee’s Neighborhoods.” The tour took local, national and international geocachers on a high-tech treasure hunt around Milwaukee to 15 different locations, which have seen great success. One of the VISIT Milwaukee “travel bugs” even made it to Poland! The department is looking to add new locations in 2014. ■



“MILWAUKEE IS LOADED WITH TERRIFIC ATTRACTIONS THAT ARE ESPECIALLY SUITED TO FAMILIES. ITS MANAGEABLE SIZE, COMPACT CORE & WELCOMING MIDWEST VIBE EQUALS FUN & EASY EXPLORATIONS.”
-ALISON TIBALDI

Mommy Poppins

In 2013, VISIT Milwaukee reviewed and hired a new advertising agency, Jigsaw LLC. The marketing department produced a completely new advertising campaign that positioned Milwaukee as “fun” and “easy”, which coincides with the State Department of Tourism’s campaign. To measure the success of the campaign, Jigsaw used research conducted by Probe both pre- and post-campaign.

Marketing generated more than 62.6 million impressions targeted at the leisure market. The department reached meeting planners with a strategic campaign that generated 9 million impressions. Both were well above goals.

To coincide with the 2013 advertising campaign, the marketing department worked with Jigsaw to produce four videos, including three leisure videos (on things to do in the city, dining experiences and Milwaukee’s “walkability”) and one video marketing the city as a convention destination to meeting planners. Finally, VISIT Milwaukee completed 10 in-house produced videos of conventions hosted in Milwaukee for promotional purposes and as an added benefit to meeting planners.

With Jigsaw’s newly developed look and feel, the marketing team successfully completed four new microsites for the City of Wauwatosa, the RiverWalk, Harley Davidson 110th Anniversary and Milwaukee’s multicultural roots.



Along with producing microsites, the marketing team helped to support events such as Indy Fest, the Air & Water Show and the Harley Davidson 110th Anniversary. With VISIT Milwaukee's help, the Air & Water Show drew over 100,000 visitors per day, and Indy Fest drew over 28,000 and was televised to a live audience of 640,000 people. The marketing team supported the Harley-Davidson 110th Anniversary by producing and distributing 160,000 Official Biker Guides. A microsite was developed to support ongoing marketing efforts and proved invaluable as a place to help anniversary attendees find accommodations.

Since the launch of Milwaukee365.com in 2012, the local event calendar has received over 225,000 page views and promoted over 6,500 events from over 920 organizations.

VISIT Milwaukee's website (VISITMilwaukee.org) received nearly 726,000 page visits, up 23 percent over 2012, and total page views were up 14 percent at 3.2 million. In September 2013, VISITMilwaukee.org reached 28 consecutive months of year-over-year traffic growth.

Finally, the marketing team executed 15 targeted leisure newsletters to promote Milwaukee to a mailing list of over 100,000 people. One such newsletter in the fourth quarter featured the Green Bay Packers. The "Pack for Milwaukee" contest was sent to 163,000 email addresses generating 70,776 page views. ■



Air & Water Show "Blue Angels"



Harley Davidson 110th Anniversary



“THE DOWNTOWN AREA IS A GREAT MIX OF RESTAURANTS, NIGHT LIFE AND HISTORY. THERE ARE PLENTY OF THINGS TO DO AND INTERESTING PLACES TO GO.” -KIM DICKERSON

FIS

In promoting the Greater Milwaukee area to the Group Tour, Leisure and International markets, VISIT Milwaukee attended more than 17 travel industry conferences, including events like:

- American Bus Association
- National Tour Association
- Ontario Motorcoach Association
- GLAMER
- Bank Travel
- IPW (PowWow)

Attending these conferences generated 2,817 Group Tour prospects for our hotels and attractions.

Group Tour marketing efforts generated 5,647 group-lead room nights. More than 84 group leaders visited Milwaukee on familiarization tours, including tour operators from Illinois, Minnesota, Ohio, Michigan, Missouri and Ontario, Canada. Direct results include Milwaukee participation in five “Circle Lake Michigan” tours in 2013 and multi-day tours to the Greater Milwaukee area in 2014.

Group Tour hosted seven “Explore Milwaukee’s Best” (EMB) meetings with an average of 41 partners attending each meeting.

Group Tour achieved 849,810 advertising media impressions in industry publications. ■



“PARTNERSHIP IS THE “KEY-WORD” AND VISIT MILWAUKEE HAS DEFINED IT WELL WITH ITS MEMBERS. VISIT MILWAUKEE IS A TOP-NOTCH ORGANIZATION.”

2013 Partner Satisfaction Survey

In 2013, close to 90 Milwaukee businesses became new partners of VISIT Milwaukee. The Partnership Department conducted an in-depth analysis of its partner data and partner relations to continue to promote its traditional areas of strength and identify places that require improvement.

The department began a benchmarking study of hospitality businesses in the greater Milwaukee area. The results of the study will tell the story of how well the team penetrates the potential market of partners and how well it is able to engage with the hospitality community.

VISIT Milwaukee shifted its data to a stronger CRM platform, Simpleview, which allows partnership to create helpful communications and store data regarding past, present and prospective partners.

The Partnership Department’s 89 percent retention rate shows that the majority of its partners are pleased with the service provided at all levels of the organization. The team continues to strengthen its partner relations, as well as relations with other Milwaukee leaders, through its leadership of the Milwaukee Area Business Association Leaders group.



VISIT Milwaukee helped strengthen its partners' marketing skills through innovative, interactive educational sessions on relevant topics such as "How to Be Yourself on Camera," "Marketing to the Meeting Planner" and "Writing for Social Media." Over 170 partners took advantage of these learning opportunities.



Grand Geneva Resort - The Highlands

In addition to educational sessions, the department hosted a partner showcase to expose local partner businesses and, along with Greater Hotel and Lodging Association, a golf outing that helped raise \$15,000 for GMHLA Scholarships and VISIT Milwaukee's educational fund. ■



“BIG CITY WITH
SMALL TOWN FEEL.”

-ANNIE ZELLMER,

*Daydream Production
Midwinter Gaming*

VISIT Milwaukee, a private, non-profit corporation, was incorporated in 1967 as a 501(c)6 tax exempt organization. Governed by an independent board of directors, the President/CEO leads a full-time staff of thirty-four, as well as additional part-time and seasonal staff members.

VISIT Milwaukee is a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO). The role of a DMO is to market and sell the destination’s convention facilities, hotels, attractions and other hospitality industry businesses to meeting planners and leisure visitors. In addition, VISIT Milwaukee works to enhance the image of the Greater Milwaukee area on a national level.

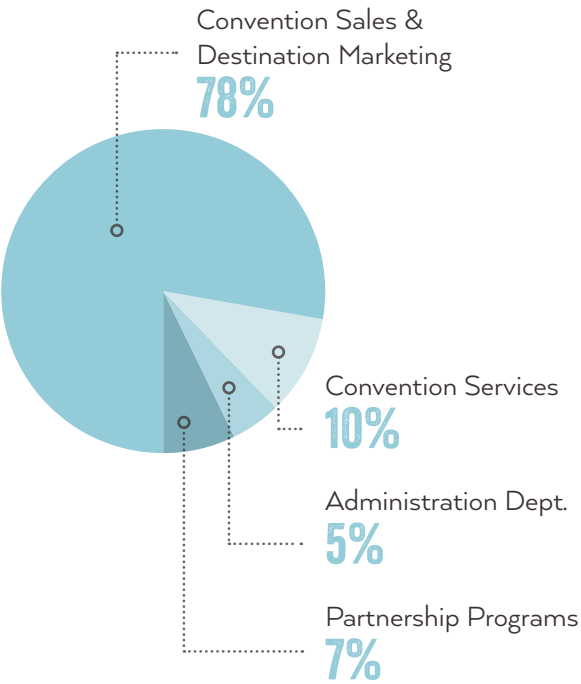
To accomplish this mission, VISIT Milwaukee’s main funding source is the occupancy tax, also known as “room tax” or “bed tax”, an industry-imposed tax paid by overnight visitors. Currently, VISIT Milwaukee receives a portion of occupancy taxes from the City of Milwaukee (through a contract with the Wisconsin Center District) and the City of Wauwatosa.

VISIT Milwaukee had annual budgeted revenues of \$8 million in 2013, of which 82 percent was derived from the occupancy tax and other public funding. In 2013, total City of Milwaukee occupancy taxes were \$11,395,906. VISIT Milwaukee receives approximately 46.5 percent of the total city taxes collected. The balance of the occupancy taxes are retained by the Wisconsin Center District in order to pay the bond debt on convention facilities.

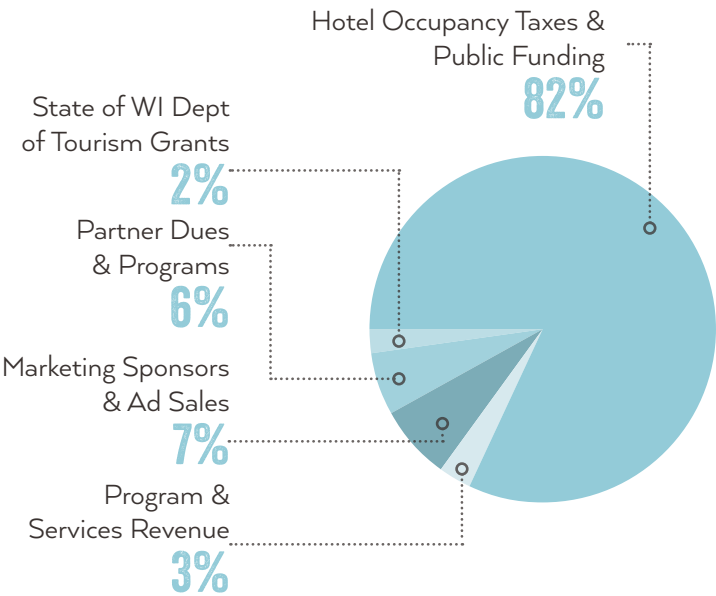
The balance of our funding comes from additional public support and tourism grants, marketing sponsorships, advertising sales, partner dues and programs, and other program and services revenue.

VISIT Milwaukee’s financial operations are reviewed by a seven member Audit/Finance Committee of the Board of Directors, led by the Secretary/Treasurer. In addition, VISIT Milwaukee retains an independent audit firm, Ritz Holman CPAs, to conduct an annual financial audit of the organization’s financial operations and internal controls. ■

PROGRAM EXPENDITURES



FUNDING SOURCES



Destination Marketing Association International DESTINATION MARKETING ACCREDITATION

VISIT Milwaukee achieved its seventh year of accreditation through the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program, sponsored by Destination Marketing Association International.

Successful Meetings – PINNACLE AWARD

VISIT Milwaukee celebrates its standing as an 11-time winner for unparalleled superiority in levels of service and the quality of its facilities.

Meetings & Conventions – GOLD SERVICES AWARD

The prestigious Gold Service Award by readers of Meetings & Conventions magazine recognizes meeting properties, catering departments and CVBs that excel in their dedication and service to meeting professionals.

Smart Meetings – PLATINUM CHOICE AWARD

Platinum Choice Award winners are chosen based on a broad range of excellence in industry standards.

SportsEvents - DESTINATIONS TO WATCH

SportsEvents readers named Milwaukee among destinations they consider to be one of its “Annual Planners & Places to Watch.”

State Department of Tourism Grants

Category: Joint Effort Marketing

IndyFest, June 14-15, 2013: \$39,550,

DearMKE Image Project for 2013: \$39,550

Category: Ready, Set, Go!

USA Triathlon Age Group Championship, August 10-11, 2013: \$15,000

Category: Meetings Means Business

Connect Marketplace, August 22-25, 2013: \$20,000,

Int'l Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis, June 23-26, 2014: \$20,000

Category: Tourist Information Center (TIC)

VISIT Milwaukee Visitors Information Center, January 2013: \$4,000, July 2013: \$3,000

Additional Grant: Google Ad Words Grant, \$10,000 a month, totaling \$120,000 per year

PARTNER ACCOLADES:

- Milwaukee's General Mitchell International Airport ranked in the top 10 on Travel + Leisure's list of "America's Best Airports." The airport also made Forbes list of "10 Best Airports."
- In Nov. 2013, Colectivo Coffee made Fodor's list of "America's 15 Best Indie Coffee Shops."
- Festa Italiana was named one of the "Best Italian Festivals in America" by 10Best.com, a division of USA Today Travel.
- For the third straight year, the readers of Conde Nast Traveler named the Iron Horse Hotel one of the "Best Hotels in the Midwest." Another recent accolade also earned it a spot on the list of Men's Health Magazine's "20 Manliest Hotels in America."
- The Captain Frederick Pabst Mansion made Complex Magazine's list of "20 Must-Visit American Homes."
- Draft Magazine featured Palm Tavern, Roman's Pub and Sugar Maple in its "America's 100 Best Beer Bars: 2013" list.
- Milwaukee's PrideFest earned the city a spot on TravelNerd's "Top 10 Destinations for Gay Travelers."
- Lakefront Brewery brewed its way to the top of the "10 Best Farm-to-Pint Breweries in America" by FarmFlavor.com

CITY ACCOLADES:

- A study released by CreditDonkey included Milwaukee among the "Top 10 Best Cities for Money-Savvy College Grads."
- In May 2013, Movoto Blog created criteria that determined which U.S. cities have the most zest for a full life, landing Milwaukee in the #7 spot on its "The 10 Most Exciting Cities in America" list.
- Milwaukee was listed on OpenTable's "Most Romantic Cities" in Feb. 2013.
- Techie.com put Milwaukee on its list of "10 Most Unexpected Cities for High-Tech Innovation."
- Milwaukee was named among the "Top 10 Best Cities for Urban Forests" by American Forests, the oldest national nonprofit conservation organization in the country.
- MSN.com calls Milwaukee one of the "10 Coolest Cities in the Midwest." A nod to Milwaukee's Summerfest – the world's largest music festival – is also listed as "What's Cool" about Milwaukee.
- ArtPlace, a coalition of major foundations and the National Endowment for the Arts listed Milwaukee on its "Top 12 ArtPlaces in America" list.
- Away.com's listing of "30 Things to do Before You're 30" included, "Eat an iconic city meal." Having "a beer in Milwaukee" joins experiences such as enjoying Philly's cheesesteak, Boston's clam chowder and Memphis's BBQ.

Rafael Acevedo
Greater Milwaukee Foundation

Tyler Barnes
Milwaukee Brewers

Joe Bartolotta
Bartolotta Restaurant Group

Bill Davidson
Harley-Davidson Museum

Mary Dowell *
Johnson Controls, Inc

Mayor Kathy Ehley *
City of Wauwatosa

Paulette Enders
City of Wauwatosa

Rick Frenette
Wisconsin State Fair

Jeremy Fojut
Clever/ART Milwaukee

Cecilia Gilbert
City of Milwaukee DPW

Alderman Willie L. Hines, Jr. *
City of Milwaukee

Dana Jones *
VISIT Milwaukee

Dan Keegan
Milwaukee Art Museum

Lynda Kohler *
SHARP Literacy, Inc.

Aldo Madigrano *
Beer Capitol Distributing

Steve Magnuson *
Marcus Hotels & Resorts

Paul Mathews *
Marcus Center for the Performing Arts

Harold Mester
Milwaukee County/General Mitchell International Airport

Rose Murack
Radisson Hotel Milwaukee-West

David Murphy
Marquette University

Ron Olstad *
Hyatt Regency Milwaukee

Alderman Bobby Pantuso
City of Wauwatosa

Laurette Pettibone
Potawatomi Bingo Casino

Omar Shaikh *
SURG Restaurant Group

Don Smiley
Milwaukee World Festivals, Inc.

Karen Spahn
Milwaukee Public Museum

John Steinmiller *
Milwaukee Bucks

Paul Upchurch *
VISIT Milwaukee

Teig Whaley-Smith *
Milwaukee County

Rick Wiegand
Ambassador Hotel

Chuck Wikenhauser
Milwaukee County Zoo

Alderman Terry Witkowski
City of Milwaukee

* denotes Executive Committee



PREMIERE

- City of Wauwatosa
- Potawatomi Bingo Casino
- Spirit of Milwaukee
- Wisconsin Center District

CORPORATE PARTNERS

- American Society for Quality
- Aurora Health Care
- Beer Capitol Distributing Company, Inc.
- BMO Harris Bank
- Cousins Subs
- Delta Air Lines
- Harley-Davidson Motor Company
- Johnson Controls, Inc.
- Kohl's Department Stores
- Levy Restaurants at the Harley-Davidson Museum
- Levy Restaurants at the Wisconsin Center District
- Marcus Hotels & Resorts
- Marquette University
- MillerCoors
- Milwaukee Brewers Baseball Club
- Milwaukee Bucks
- Northwestern Mutual
- Palermo's Pizza
- Rockwell Automation
- Summerfest
- University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee
- We Energies



For more information,
call 1.800.554.1448 or go to VISITMilwaukee.org

