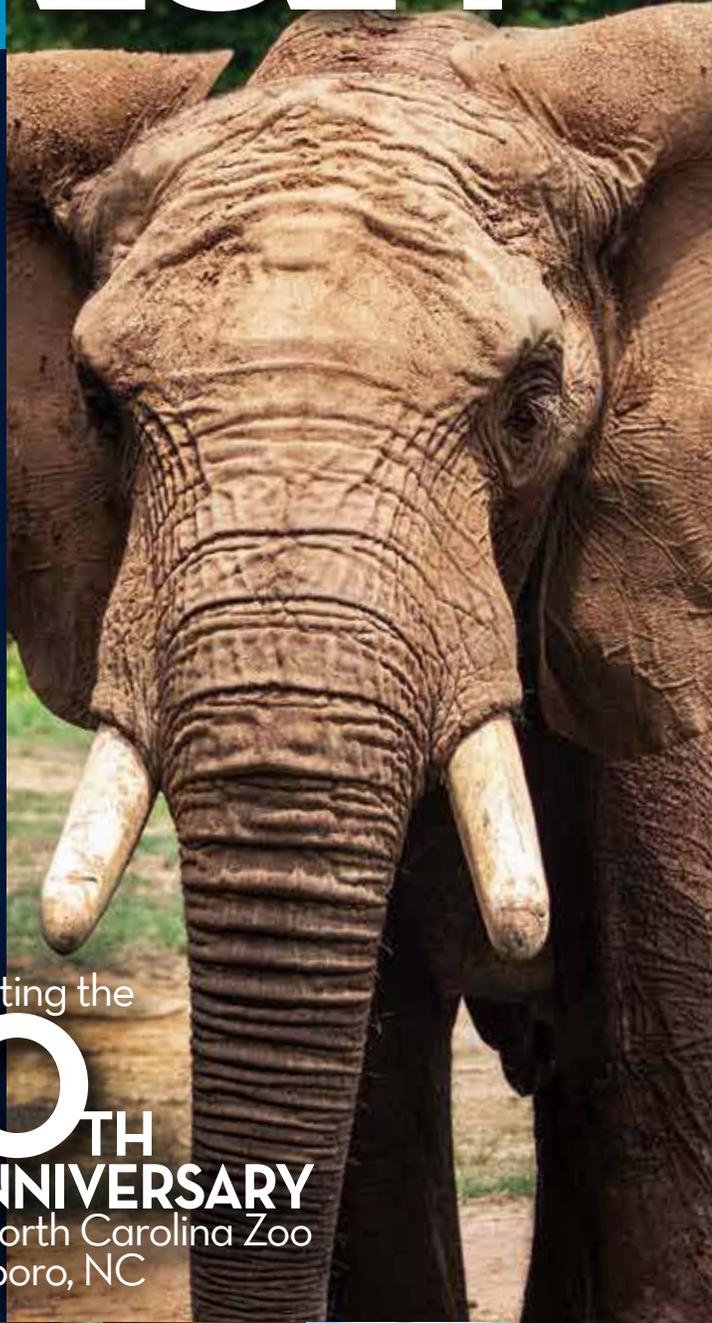


Randolph  
County  
Tourism  
Development  
Authority

# Annual Report 2024

Archdale  
Asheboro  
Franklinville  
Liberty  
Ramseur  
Randleman  
Seagrove  
Staley  
Trinity



Celebrating the  
**50<sup>TH</sup>**  
**ANNIVERSARY**  
of the North Carolina Zoo  
in Asheboro, NC





## Message from Executive Director - Amber Scarlett

### 2024 Successes and Outlook

This year's report celebrates our collective commitment to creating exceptional and unforgettable experiences for every visitor to our destination. It reflects our tireless pursuit of showcasing the unique attractions, vibrant culture, and warm hospitality that define our region and make it truly special.

Inside, you'll discover how we've enhanced the visitor journey through expansions at beloved attractions, new dining experiences, improved accessibility, and inviting family-friendly events, all while shining a light on our cultural assets and local stories. Our goal is to ensure that every visitor leaves inspired, with a desire to return and a profound connection to our community.

We sincerely value our tourism partners and the committed industry professionals whose passion and dedication are instrumental in bringing this vision to fruition. Together, we look forward to continuing to innovate and elevate the visitor experience, sharing the very best of our destination with the world.



## Overview

The Randolph County Tourism Development Authority (Authority) is a public authority governed by the terms of special legislation granted by the N.C. General Assembly on July 28, 1997 as House Bill 337, An Act to Authorize Randolph County to Levy a Room Occupancy and Tourism Development Tax under the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act. The current tax rate is set at five percent.



## Mission

The mission of the Authority is to unify and lead the County in developing the Heart of North Carolina as a family-friendly, affordable, and strategically located destination serving the leisure and business travel, group tour, meeting, and sports and recreational tournament markets.

## Vision

With a strong commitment to professional advocacy, we pledge to be a consistent, supportive, and accountable partner in marketing Randolph County as a destination by offering partners and stakeholders and communities enhanced exposure to visitor market opportunities.



# Economic Impact Numbers:

- \$93.48 tax relief to each resident of Randolph County as a result of visitor spending
- State Tax Revenues: \$8.6 million
- Local Tax Revenues: \$5.21 million
- Total payroll generated by tourism industry in Randolph County: \$44.83 million
- More than 1,164 direct tourism jobs in our county

# Visitor Spending:

Visitors spent \$199.86 million in 2024 (an increase of 5.4% from 2023 | \$189.5 million).

*(This data is provided by an annual study commissioned by Visit North Carolina, a unit of Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina by Tourism Economics.)*

# Occupancy Tax Revenues:

- Occupancy collections increased 5.3% compared to 2023
- ADR (average daily rate) increased 2.1% from 2023
- RevPAR (revenue per available room) increased 10.7% from 2023
- Demand for hotel rooms increased 8.4% when compared to 2023
- Revenues increased 11% when compared to 2023 as a whole.

*(\*This report analyzes a variety of tourism indicators and comparisons to previous years where applicable. While virtually every chain in the United States provides Smith Travel Research (STR) with data on almost all properties, there are still some hotels that do not submit data. However, every year STR examines listings and directories for information on hotels that do not participate. STR calls each hotel in the database every year to obtain "published" rates for multiple categories. Based on this information all hotels are grouped - those that report data and those that do not - into groupings based off price level and geographic proximity. They then estimate the non-respondents based on nearby hotels with similar price levels.)*

# Historical Growth in Revenues:

Overall tax revenue distributions to the Authority for calendar year 2024 were: \$1,523,584 compared to 2023 revenues of \$1,444,826; an increase of 5.45%.

*(\*Occupancy tax revenue reports are provided by Randolph County Finance Office)*



## NC Zoo Facts



The **North Carolina Zoo** in Asheboro is home to 1,700 animals of more than 200 species. It is also home to one of the largest chimpanzee troops of any zoo in America as well as the largest population of horned puffins in the USA.

# Destination Data –

## 32 attractions surveyed:

- 2024 Attendance #'s – **1,701,999** (8.6% increase from 2023)

## Domestic Top States:

- North Carolina
- Virginia
- South Carolina
- Florida
- Illinois
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- New York
- Michigan
- Wisconsin

## Domestic NC Metro:

- Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill/Cary
- Charlotte/Gastonia/Concord/Kannapolis
- Greensboro/Winston-Salem/High Point/Burlington
- Hickory/Statesville/Salisbury
- Fayetteville/Lumberton/Laurinburg
- Greenville/New Bern/Jacksonville
- Wilmington/Southport
- Pinehurst/Southern Pines
- Rocky Mount/Wilson/Roanoke Rapids
- Asheville/Brevard

## Requests from International Countries:

- Canada
- United Kingdom
- Italy

## Top Visitor Requests:

- Heart of NC Travel Guide
- Seagrove Pottery
- North Carolina Zoo
- Petty Family Attractions
- NC Aviation Museum
- Deep River State Trail Map
- Victory Junction
- Linbrook Heritage Estate
- Caraway Speedway
- Hotels/Accommodations Information

## I-73/74 Visitor Centers Statistics:

- **Greeted: 133,827** for a 22% increase from 2023's 109,353 visitors greeted
- **Distribution of Heart of NC Travel Guides: 40,000** - compared to 32,000 in 2023
- **Distribution of NCDOT Road Maps: 30,000** - compared to 33,750 in 2023
- **Distribution of NC Travel Guides: 28,450** - compared to 24,850 in 2023
- **Domestic Guest Registries: 2,933** - compared to 3,420 in 2023
- **International Guest Registries: 23** compared to 43 in 2023
- **Events:**
  - National Travel & Tourism Week
  - Operation Thank You
  - Visitor Centers Open House
  - 12 Days of Christmas Giveaway



Visitor Center Quarterly Staff Training & Development at Carolina Bronze Sculpture in Seagrove, NC



# NC Zoo Facts

The **North Carolina Zoo** in Asheboro is considered to be the largest natural habitat zoo in the world. It has 2,800 acres and 57,000 plants in its care and is in the process of expanding to include a habitat for the continent of Asia.

# Social Media Review & Website –



## Facebook – Heart of NC:

- **Total followers – 9,835; NEW followers: 1,600**  
(an increase of 18% from 2023)
- **Page visits – 38,300**  
(a decrease of 20% from 2023)
- **Page reach – 503,863**  
(a decrease of 70% from 2023)

## Instagram – Heart of NC:

- **Total followers – 4,128; NEW followers: 620**  
(an increase of 17.7% from 2023)
- **Profile visits – 3,300**  
(a decrease of 21% from 2023)
- **Profile reach – 80,567**  
(an increase of 3% from 2023)

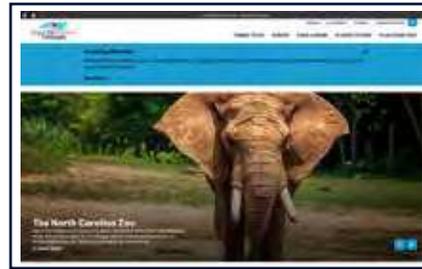
## Facebook – Seagrove, Pottery Capital of the US:

- **Total followers – 4,458; NEW followers: 866**  
(an increase of 19.44% from 2023)
- **Page visits – 11,673**  
(an increase of 43.9% from 2023)
- **Page reach – 174,456**  
(a decrease of 25.3% from 2023)



## Facebook – I-73/74 Visitor Centers:

- **Total followers – 1,931; NEW followers: 23**  
(a decrease of 1.2% from 2023)
- **Page visits – 845**  
(a decrease of 24% from 2023)
- **Page reach – 10,787**  
(an increase of 5% from 2023)



## Website Stats:

- **Number of Visits in 2024 – 281,000**
- **Page Views in 2024 – 1,326,325**

## Top 10 URLs & Pages:

- **Calendar Listings for the Heart of North Carolina**
- **50 Fabulous Finds in the Heart of NC**
- **Heart of North Carolina Official Source of Randolph County Tourism**
- **Seagrove Pottery - Pottery in North Carolina**
- **Things To Do Seagrove Pottery | The Heart of North Carolina**
- **Counting Miracles**
- **Request a Free Travel Guide - Form Completed**
- **Randolph County, NC - Heart of North Carolina**
- **Things To Do in The Heart of North Carolina**
- **Things To Do in Asheboro NC - North Carolina Things To Do**
- **Randolph County, NC Tourism - Heart of North Carolina**

## Links from External Pages:

- **Google.com**
- **(not set)**
- **Facebook.com**
- **Eastads.simpli.fi**
- **AsheboroNC.gov**
- **LibertyAntiquesFestival.com**
- **M.Facebook.com**
- **Bing.com**
- **CHSToday.6amCity.com**
- **linktr.ee**

## Top Key Phrases:

- **Cities and Towns - Asheboro**
- **Things To Do**
- **Things To Do - Seagrove Pottery**
- **Food and Drink - Local Dining**
- **Places To Stay - Hotels**
- **Heart of North Carolina**
- **Cities and Towns - Liberty**
- **Events**
- **Cities and Towns - Seagrove**



## NC Zoo Facts

The **North Carolina Zoo** in Asheboro has roughly five miles of walking trails to navigate and is one of two state-supported zoos in the United States, with the other being the Minnesota Zoo.



# Public Relations –

## Our Media Coverage in 2024:

- **265 Total placements (social media posts by media/influencers/content creators, broadcast, online, print, YouTube, email blasts)**
- **6.43 million: Total estimated views across all platforms** (excluding print)  
**Note:** This number takes the total possible views and readers and “estimates” how many may read it based on placement on website, social media shares, etc. (up from 2.34 million views in 2023–jump attributed to a significant international placement, some very strong statewide placements, strong social media traction with paid content creators, and pick-ups of our stories on MSN and Yahoo portals.)
- **85 Online placements with estimated views of 4.87 million** (up from 43 online placements with views of 1.4 million in 2023)
- **13 Print placements with total print circulation of 2.34M** (up from 1.6M circulation in 2023)
- **54 Average Domain Authority; with our highest at 99** (DA is a 1-100 score of the power/reach of the online media site the coverage appears on)
- **11 TV segments** (one statewide, remaining half in Raleigh and half in the Triad)
- **21 Media email blast inclusions** (8 were paid; up from 12 in 2023)
- **15 Links back to HeartofNorthCarolina.com in online media** (up from 7 in 2023)
- **71 Partners/small businesses featured** (same as in 2023)
- **15 Media hosted this year** (19 hosted in 2023)

## Social Media Generated by Media:

- **Social Posts from Media: 147 | Social Shares of Media Stories: 18.2K**  
**Instagram Reel Reach: 446K | YouTube Views: 2.37K** (up from 1.09K last year)  
**TikTok Plays: 51.9K** (down from 398K - last year focused more on Instagram)

## Media Highlights | Big Wins!

- **Counting Miracles** book launch in September 2024 offered a rare opportunity to invest in two of the state’s top influencers (NC Tripping and KateHikesNC) and garner awareness. One IG reel “Explore Downtown Asheboro” with mention of the book reached more than 100K replays. Helene hit a few days after this campaign went live, and many media turned their focus to Western NC.
- We completed our multi-city television sweepstakes with VisitNC/Sparks.
- Our cooperation with the North Carolina Zoo and their announcement of the white deer rekindled interest. We are aiming lots of PR firepower at the white deer next six months!
- Through our partnership with VisitNC, we received international coverage of Ben Owen III and Seagrove in the travel equivalent of USA TODAY in the U.K.
- **Family Adventure Tour** in April, 2024 with FAMILIES garnered 28 online, broadcast and social placements in the Triad, Raleigh, and Charlotte.
- Daylong Seagrove road trip during **Pottery Event Weekend** included a visit from the host of a nationally syndicated PBS cooking show and TravelandLeisure.com freelancer.
- We landed an Asheboro guide in **TravelandLeisure.com** as well as a Seagrove feature on **SouthernLiving.com**; Richard Petty and daughter Rebecca Petty Moffitt graced the cover of **Carolina Country Magazine** with a photo at the Petty Museum. **Our State** produced a five-page print and online story behind Kersey Valley Attractions for their 40th anniversary.
- We also placed the 50th anniversary of the Zoo and Franklinville Diner with **WRAL’s Tarheel Traveler**.
- Ongoing relationships with influencers and writers we worked with last year continued to offer new stories and engagement. We picked up coverage this year in new Triangle outlets such as **5 West, Midtown Magazine, and Triangle Family Magazine**.
- Most featured destinations (in frequency and/or reach) were the **North Carolina Zoo, Seagrove, Millstone Creek Orchards, Petty Museum, and the Franklinville Diner and Downtown Asheboro**.



# NC Zoo Facts

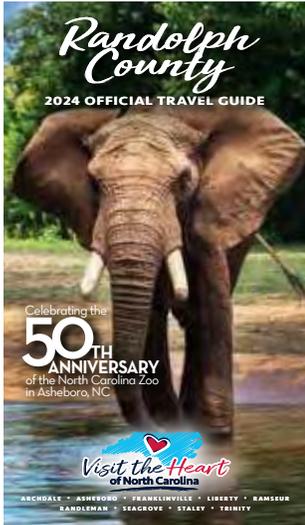
After 49 years of its existence, the **North Carolina Zoo** in Asheboro hit a milestone of 1 million guests for a single calendar year in 2023.



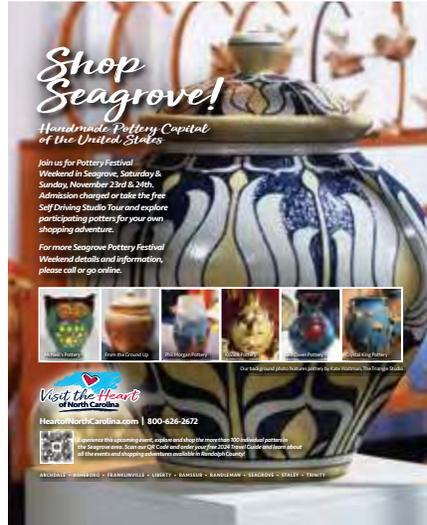
# Visual Advertising – (Over 150+ advertisements, both print & digital, designed and placed with a variety of advertisers for 2024 in addition to other print materials & photography)

## Advertising Partners + Print & Digital:

- American Legion Tournament Program
- Carolina Panthers Yearbook
- Carolina Traveler
- Chapel Hill Magazine
- Chatham Magazine
- Courier-Tribune
- DPAC & Tanger Playbill
- Durham Magazine
- Family Travel Magazine
- Military Families Magazine & Digitals
- NC Travel Guide
- O’Henry Magazine
- Our State Magazine
- QC Exclusive
- Raleigh Magazine & Digitals
- SAPA Pottery Programs & Potters Conference
- SportsEvents Magazine
- The Daily Downforce
- The Local Palate
- The Randolph Hub
- Triangle Weekender
- Triangle Digital Partners



2024 Travel Guide Cover



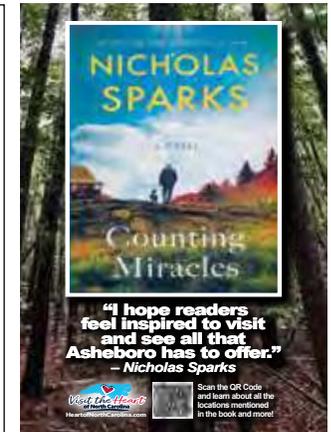
Full Page Ads - Chapel Hill, Chatham, Durham, O’Henry, Our State Magazines



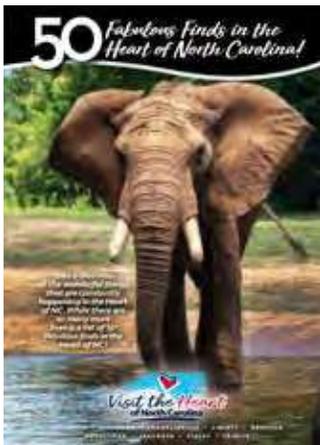
1/4 Page Ad - NC Travel Guide Ad



Heart of NC - Profile Sheet



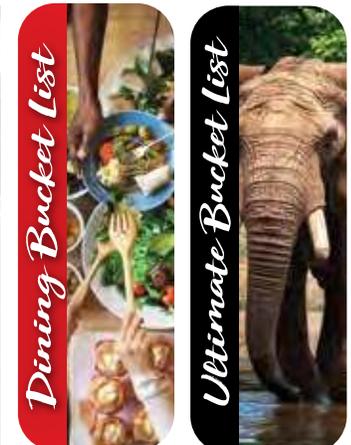
Counting Miracles Poster



50 Fabulous Finds - Stand-alone Print Piece & Insert in Triangle Media Publications



1/2 & 1/4 Page Ads - The Courier-Tribune & The Randolph Hub



Dining & Ultimate Bucket List - Bookmarks

# Award Winners for 2024:



**Hospitality Hero Award**  
**- Amber Scarlett -**  
*TDA Executive Director*



**Mary Joan Pugh Excellence in Hospitality Award**  
**- Dewey & Leslie Brown -**  
*Owners of The Liberty Showcase Theater*

## TDA Board of Directors:

- David Caughron, Chairman
- Rebecca Petty Moffitt, Vice Chair
- Leslie Brown
- Barbara Gallimore
- Luke Hollingsworth
- Ross Holt
- Shawn Patel
- Amy Struble
- Diane Villa

## Meet Our Team:

- Amber Scarlett, Executive Director
- Brooke Thomas, Director of Office Administration/Clerk to the Board
- Melody Varner, Tourism Marketing Coordinator
- Wes Alexander, Digital Content Coordinator
- Doyle Craven, Tourism Services Coordinator
- Annette Cagle, Director of Visitor Services & Information
- Matthew Jarrett, Tourism Information Coordinator
- Christy Kiser, Tourism Information Coordinator
- Part-Time Travel Information Counselors:  
 Mark Burks, Sherry Burks, JoAnne Higgins, Shelly LaCoss,  
 Benita McNeill, Rea Richardson, Alisa Routh, & Carole Thorsen

## Collaboration Team:

- Kenny Kidd, Liaison to the Board of County Commissioners
- Will Massie, Ex-Officio Finance Officer
- Susan Dosier, DK Communications Group
- Richard Schoenberger, Manor House Creative
- Mike Southard, Triad Hosting, Inc.



**Heart of North Carolina  
 Visitors Bureau**  
 500 Albemarle Rd, Asheboro 27203  
 800-626-2672  
 HeartofNorthCarolina.com

