

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

JULY 1, 2023–JUNE 30, 2024

FY 2024



Dear Tourism Partners,

Fiscal Year 2024 was a good year for our industry.

Visitor spending in New Castle County grew to \$3.1 billion — leading all three Delaware counties — and we took bold steps toward the future with the launch of our five-year strategic plan and a brand-new website.

VisitWilmingtonDE.com saw its second highest traffic year ever, and Brandywine Treasure Trail Passport sales surpassed the previous year's numbers by 6%. These milestones are even more impressive considering they were achieved with about 25 percent of the advertising budget we were working with the previous fiscal year.

In FY23, we had funding from the EDA grant we received from the State.

None of this would be possible without the passion, dedication, and hard work of our incredible team. Though small in size, they are mighty in impact with their unwavering commitment to showcasing the best of our destination. Their efforts are what drive our success.

To our team, our supportive board of directors, our tourism partners, and everyone who plays a role in making this destination extraordinary — thank you. I can't wait to see what we achieve together in the years to come.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Boes".

Jennifer Boes | Executive Director





GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Who we are and where we are going

OUR MISSION

To stimulate economic growth for New Castle County and elevate Greater Wilmington as a tourism destination by attracting visitors for leisure travel, events and conferences.

OUR VISION

FOR NEW CASTLE COUNTY TOURISM

To be a well-recognized and highly valued small tourism destination with big offerings, delivering unforgettable experiences based in history, culture and the natural world.



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OUR VALUES

> MOTIVATION

We are passionate about our destination and what we do. We want to spread our passion and positivity at every opportunity.

> PARTNERSHIP

We connect and collaborate very well as a team, bringing respect and integrity to our work. We also have a vested interest in connecting — and connecting with — our tourism partners so we all may succeed in bringing our industry to a higher level.

> KNOWLEDGE

We know Greater Wilmington and the Brandywine Valley intimately. We are motivated by curiosity and are always wanting to learn and experience what's new . . . and then share that knowledge out.

> INCLUSION

We believe that our strength as a team and as a destination comes from the diversity of our people, experiences, and perspectives, and this carries through in everything we do.



PILLARS

OUR AREAS OF FOCUS

> Promoter

Elevate the awareness of Greater Wilmington as a competitive choice of destination for Mid-Atlantic getaways, events and conferences.

> Convener

Create a forum for moving our tourism industry forward and stimulating connections.

> Advocate

Serve as a respected and valued champion of the tourism industry, regionally and state-wide.



NEW CASTLE COUNTY TOURISM BY THE NUMBERS



Data from 2023 Delaware Tourism Satellite Account, Tourism Industry Performance and Significance Study prepared by Rockport Analytics for the Delaware Tourism Office

\$3.1B +28%* Visitor Spending	22,210 +18%* Tourism Jobs	\$346M +21%* State & Local Taxes
* Compared with previous study conducted in 2021		

>> Estimated Visitor Volume: **12.6M**

VISITOR SPENDING BY CATEGORY

10% Hotel	1% Rental Home	13% Entertainment	29% Food & Beverage	23% Shopping	24% Transportation
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New Castle County public accommodation tax (PAT) collections grew **26.6%** to **\$19.3 million** in 2023 versus the previous reporting period of 2021.

FY2024 RESULTS

MARKETING

- VisitWilmingtonDE.com drew its second highest number of visitors of all-time reaching 762,230 user sessions in FY24.
- VisitWilmingtonDE.com appeared in over 24 million Google searches, a 190% increase over FY23.
- VisitWilmingtonDE.com created over 218,000 conversions — traffic driven to member websites, member events, newsletter signups, etc. — an increase of 117.8% YoY.
- Top 5 most visited pages:
 - Calendar of Events
 - Brandywine Treasure Trail Passport
 - Events This Weekend
 - Home Page
 - Family Friendly Things to Do
- Top 5 markets:
 - Pennsylvania
 - New York
 - Virginia
 - New Jersey
 - Maryland



Brandywine Treasure Trail Pass

- For the first time in the Passport's history, we launched sales, with a supporting radio and digital media marketing campaign, during the holiday season — six months prior to Passport activation.
- FY24 sales had reached 87% of the previous season's total sales by June 30, about halfway through the season. This was accomplished with only 25% of the FY23 Passport marketing budget, which had been funded through an EDA grant received from the State.
- In the end, FY24 Passport sales surpassed FY23 sales by 6.25%, with a total of 1,104 digital Passports sold.

- FY24 Passports were purchased by visitors from 24 different states, two countries and the District of Columbia.

Mobile Discount Pass

- Over 1,300 downloads, including visitors from 38 states, four countries and the District of Columbia.

Threshold 360

360-degree video program for member event spaces

- At the end of FY24, the Bureau had completed 38 360-degree videos from member locations.
- The videos garnered 9.8M views through Google, member websites, and direct links; this was a 333% increase YoY.

Clifford Brown Geofencing Campaign

Campaign Dates:
May 15 to June 22, 2024

Tactics + Targeting:

Using geo-farming, a method for finding individuals that visited a specific event within the previous 12 months, we targeted past jazz festivals in New York, Baltimore, Rehoboth Beach, Lake George,



the District of Columbia, and Newark, NJ. These individuals were then served digital display ads promoting the Clifford Brown Jazz Festival over a six-week period.

- Total Investment: \$5,000
- Total impressions: 541,743
- Foot Traffic Attribution (verified visitors that were shown an ad):
 - Persons visited: 813
 - Average dwell time: 28:58

Other Initiatives

- Launched a new website with advanced features and total visual redesign in the winter of 2024.
- Completed taping *Travels with Darley: Revolutionary Road* through a partnership with the Delaware Tourism Office; episode aired in winter 2025 and featured multiple Revolution-related locations in New Castle County



TONY TURNER

including the Hale-Byrnes House, Cooch's Bridge Historic Site, the University of Delaware campus, the Grand Opera House and others.

- Attended the New York Travel and Adventure Show, targeting leisure travelers, through a partnership with the Delaware Tourism Office and Southern Delaware Tourism.



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> SOCIAL MEDIA

- Grew our total social media following by 7.7% YoY to a total of 50.9K over five platforms.
- Reached 5.6 million social media impressions during FY24.
- Increased social media video views by 754.6% YoY to 2.15 million.

> SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS VISITS

- The Bureau hosted 10 diverse social media influencers during FY24.
- These 10 generated over 522K impressions, 389K views, and 24K engagements.
- Top three influencer visits for FY24:

@hunterhulbert — Peak and Epic Adventures

- Views: 108,582
- Engagements: 7,329
- Impressions: 107,448

@pustika_samaddar — Must Visit Places in DE

- Views: 91,881
- Engagements: 5,675
- Impressions: 107,937

@withsunshinesol — Pet Friendly Weekend in Wilmington

- Views: 67,440
- Engagements: 2,247
- Impressions: 136,005

> MEDIA RELATIONS

FY24 Coverage

- 64 pieces of coverage
- 136M audience
- 2.28K engagements

FY23 Coverage

- 95 pieces of coverage
- 1.19B+ audience
- 5.29K engagements



> MAJOR MEDIA PLACEMENTS

- BlackEnterprise.com
- CBS Sports Coffee with Coach
- Group Tour magazine
- History.com (The History Channel)
- InsideHook.com
- Insider.com
- MarthaStewart.com
- Richmond magazine
- SouthernLiving.com
- Yahoo.com



> MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS

Estimated Economic Impact = EEI

FY24

- 54 groups
- 11,579 room nights
- \$3,080,014 EEI

FY23

- 51 groups
- 16,284 room nights
- \$4,331,544 EEI

> TOP BOOKINGS

- African American Postal League (200 rooms, \$53,200 EEI)
- District 2 of the National Assn. of Parliamentarians (94 rooms, \$25,004 EEI)
- Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League Youth Professionals (80 rooms, \$21,280 EEI)
- NERAOC Conference (2275 rooms, \$605,150 EEI)
- PA Pipe Trades Softball (180 rooms, \$47,880 EEI)
- Universal Hagar Spiritual Church Convention (260 rooms, \$69,160 EEI)
- USA Muaythai (400 rooms, \$106,400 EEI)

> MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS MARKET SEGMENT BREAKDOWN

- 30 associations
- 16 sports
- 37 SMERF
- 29 corporate
- 6 legal
- 1 expo/tradeshows
- 2 government

Other Initiatives

- Helped host the largest meeting/convention the Bureau has hosted to date, the 2024 National High School Mock Trial Competition, bringing an estimated \$3M boost to Wilmington.
- Reignited the convention alert program.
- Attended:
 - three Smart Meetings marketplaces
 - Connect Specialty marketplace
 - Pharmaceutical Meeting Managers Summit
 - PCMA PHL Trade Show

> GROUP TOUR

- Continued to work with the Delaware Tourism Office on group tour initiatives.
- Attended Accent East marketplace.
- Attended the American Bus Association (ABA) annual marketplace, secured 50 appointments.
- Began planning for ABA marketplace '25, held in Philadelphia, partnering with the Delaware Tourism Office and Chester County Tourism.

> MEMBERSHIP

FY24

- Member Dues Collected: \$60,495.47
- New Members: 17
- Total Members: 412*

*started reporting total members in FY24

Other Initiatives

Events

- Hosted a Fall Mixer at the Chancery Market, *September*.
- Hosted our annual Holiday Open House at Torbert Street Social, *December*.
- Supported the DHLA through our annual Bowling Fundraiser, *February*.
- Held a Networking Happy Hour at Autumn Arch Brewery, *May* (National Tourism Week).
- Celebrated National Tourism Week with a pop-up event at the Wilmington Riverfront, *May*.

FY23

- Member Dues Collected: \$53,126.25
- New Members: 32

Webinars

- How to Work with the Bureau's PR Team, *March*.
- Introduction to Geofencing, *March*.
- Philadelphia's Plans for the 250th featuring Jen Nagle of the Philly CVB, *February*.
- 250th Anniversary Brainstorming Session, *September*.
- Introduction to CTV and OTT, *September*.

> VISITOR CENTER

- Fulfilled 2,398 visitor guide requests
- Community Services Building: 106 walk-in visitors
- Riverfront Visitor Center: 1,718 walk-in visitors



LES KIPP

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- Completed a five-year strategic plan for the Bureau, involving more than 50 industry stakeholders.
- Served on the Sports Tourism Capital Investment Fund commission, allocating nearly \$12M in funds to sports tourism capital projects.
- Joined Destination International's Small Destination Task Force.
- Provided guidance, training and resources to the new Brandywine Village Welcome Center.
- With the Delaware Hotel and Lodging Association, provided a \$3,000 award enabling three Delaware HBCU students to travel to the annual DI conference to accept their tourism and hospitality academic scholarships.



ESTO, the leading annual learning and knowledge-sharing forum for destination marketing professionals.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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CHTP, Managing Director and Adjunct Faculty, Courtyard Newark at the University of Delaware

Italo Carrieri-Russo
General Manager and Family Owner, V&M Italian American Bistro

Steven R. Chambliss
Senior General Manager, Christiana Mall

Gerald (Jerry) DuPhily
President, TSN Publishing/ Event Allies

Celeste K. Mozeik, Ed.D
Business Faculty, Del Tech Community College

John Sarro
Adjunct Assistant Professor, Coordinator of Music Management Studies, University of Delaware

Halsey Spruance
Executive Director, Delaware Museum of Nature & Science

Brad Wenger
General Manager, Christiana Hilton

> Directors

Christopher (CJ) Bell
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Tina Betz
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Laura Jury
Marketing Manager, Hagley Museum & Library

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Associate Professor, Hospitality Business Management Department, University of Delaware

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Public and Government Affairs Director, AAA Mid-Atlantic

The Honorable Elizabeth "Tizzy" Lockman
Delaware State Senator

Vicky Pettinaro Martelli
Pettinaro Relocation

Jennifer Oberle Howard
Deputy Director of Communications & Marketing, DRBA

Canon Patel, Deputy Director
President and Founder, Canon Hospitality Management

Jamar Rahming
Executive Director, Wilmington Public Library

John Sheehan
Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Operations, Office of the Governor

Scott Stein
Co-owner, Bardea Restaurants

Christopher Strand
Charles F. Montgomery Director and CEO, Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library

Quincy Watkins
Owner, Milk & Honey

Jessica Welch
Director, Delaware Tourism Office

James C. Williams
Small & Minority Business Development Manager, Mayor's Office of Economic Development

> GWCVB STAFF

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Jessica Horstmann
Digital Marketing Manager

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