

Johnston County

VISITORS BUREAU

2018 Annual Report

HIGHLIGHTS OF BUREAU ACTIVITIES AND FINANCIAL REVIEW



CAPITAL GRANTS

\$225,282 AWARDED TO 12 TOURISM PROJECTS

VISITOR SPENDING

SPENDING BY VISITORS OVER \$239 MILLION IN 2017

VISITNC AD CAMPAIGN

BROADSLAB DISTILLERY FEATURED IN NATIONAL ADS

Summary...

BY DONNA BAILEY-TAYLOR

The message for this year's Annual Report is two-fold, first, this has been a bridge year of occupancy tax growth, and second the Visitors Bureau awarded a record dollar amount in Capital Grants for tourism related projects.

What do I mean by a "bridge year"? The record revenue growth of 2016-17 due to Hurricane Matthew was 12.35 percent, and growth in 2017-18 seems to pale in comparison. The county's hotels exceeded revenues over the previous year, but only by 1.74 percent. The windfall revenues from the hurricane leads into my next point, as the Tourism Authority decided to invest the extra funds right back into the community, awarding \$225,282 in Capital Grants to projects around the county.

Popular "tourism trends" articles today are often about the shift of tourism organizations from "marketing" to "management" of destinations. For a small, rural DMO that has believed in tourism development for more than 30 years, I am proud we are ahead of the "trend". Our mission has always included building the tourism infrastructure to give visitors more reasons to stop along the highway, spend more time in our towns, and therefore spend more money.

If I had to be critical of our Visitors Bureau, our internal communication to citizens and elected officials is not strong enough. Many do not know all that we do to promote the county and how tourism dollars are invested in local parks, museums, events, and more! So to share in detail what we do for our larger tourism towns of Benson, Clayton, Kenly, Selma and Smithfield, we wrote, printed and mailed out 400 "Mini-Annual Reports" to our tourism partners and elected officials in each town. Reports showcased each town's ad campaigns, PR, social promotion, sales missions, grants and more. These reports can be found on our website: www.johnstoncountync.org/Town-Annual-Reports



Photographer Jamaal Porter works around the county capturing images for JCVB.

Visitor Spending...

Visit North Carolina announced that domestic visitors to and within Johnston County spent **\$239.09 million** in 2017, an increase of **2.75%** from 2016.

Tourism impact highlights for 2017:

The travel and tourism industry directly **employs more than 1,860** in Johnston County.* Total payroll generated by the tourism industry in Johnston County was **\$39.29 million**.

State tax revenue generated in Johnston County totaled **\$13.41 million** through state sales and excise taxes, and taxes on personal and corporate income. About **\$6.08 million** in local taxes were generated from sales and property tax revenue from travel-generated and travel-supported businesses.

Visitor spending generated **\$19.49 million in state and local taxes**, which reduces taxes per household in Johnston County by **\$305 dollars**.

*This study is not customized for Johnston County assets like Carolina Premium Outlets' retail sales and outlet shopping employment numbers.

Mission...

The mission of the Johnston County Visitors Bureau is marketing our destinations to visitors, thereby encouraging utilization of accommodations, retail outlets, restaurants, heritage sites, museums, entertainment, and recreation venues for the community's economic benefit.



Marketing & PR

BY ASHBY BRAME

The JCVB participated in the VisitNC organized Canadian Media Mission in February of 2018. Canada is VisitNC's largest international visitor market and is therefore the focus of many VisitNC press, sales, and trade opportunities. Quebec in particular accounts for a substantial amount of the international visitors to Johnston County due to the I-95 corridor. Both media trips, which include appointments with journalists in Toronto and Montreal, have resulted in tremendous return. Johnston County has appeared in stories printed in the *Toronto Sun* and Toronto's *Metro News*.

To capitalize on media exposure in the market, the JCVB purchased advertising in the greater Toronto and Montreal area for the first time; digital advertorial and social posts were included in the campaign through *Zoomer* magazine, a lifestyle magazine for Canadians 45 years of age and older. In addition, the Canadian Media Mission in 2017 led to the first ever Canadian FAM tour in Johnston County, organized by VisitNC.

In March of 2018, VisitNC unveiled their marketing campaign for the 18-19 fiscal year titled **Firsts That Last**. The campaign covers print, TV, digital, trade, social, and PR initiatives and includes Broadslab Distillery in Benson, NC. The work done by the JCVB in the last year to expand marketing and communications efforts into the Canadian market, as well as Broadslab's inclusion in this year's VisitNC campaign, positions Johnston County front and center in the minds of Canadian media. This has already led to multiple recent visits from interested journalists to the area. More exposure through VisitNC, both in the domestic market and internationally, will mean an increase in media visits to the area which increases JoCo's brand awareness as a North Carolina destination.



Media Trips

Charlotte, Atlanta, Toronto/Montreal and New York

Total Press Releases Sent - 43

Total HARO (Help a Reporter Out) pitches - 17

Ad Value Equivalency on JoCo related stories (not including print) - \$2.3 million

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram Followers - 57,900

Top Media Outlets

MSN.com, Huffington Post online, USA Today
Metro (Canada), Business NC, Our State

Top Inquiries for Info via Print Ads

Compass Media - 5,287

Southern Living - 2,018

AAA Go - 692

JCVB Blog Posts (Top Blogs for 2018)

Racing in JoCo, GALOT's Schedule - **2,552**

STS Selects 301 Endless Yard Sale as Top 20 Event
- **1,825**

Unique Festivals and Events in JoCo - **1,405**

NC Travel Industry Association - Awards

Public Relations: **GOLD**

Ava Receives Historic London Blue Plaque

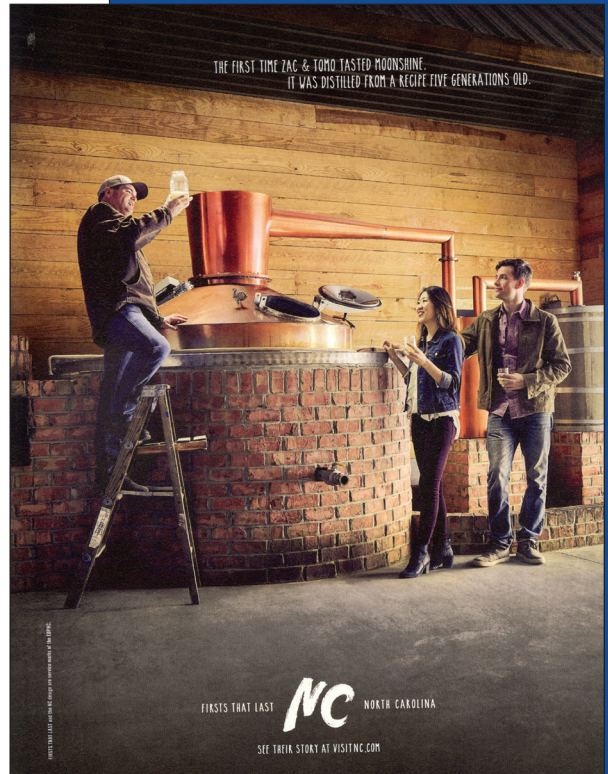
Online Communications: **PLATINUM**

Beer, Wine, Shine Trail Video

**Launched the Beer, Wine, Shine
Travel App**

**Designed and installed Benson Dog
Park Billboard Campaign and new rack
brochure**

**2017-18 Website hits for partner listings:
1,890,360 hits/48,260 coupon hits**



The VisitNC ad campaign features Jeremy Norris and Broadslab Distillery as a "first that lasts" experience in North Carolina.

Leisure & Group Sales

BY SARAH CAMPBELL

The JCVB participates in several sales missions throughout the year, including being more involved with professional organizations like the Society of Government Meeting Planners (SGMP). This year's strategy focused on hosting several site tours and meetings with members of SGMP. The JCVB hosted the March 2018 SGMP meeting at The Barn at Broadslab Distillery in Benson. As a result of these visits, three meetings have been booked at local sites.



The JCVB attended the Association Executives of North Carolina annual trade show in December to promote meeting facilities and hotels to meeting planners from around the state. Other AENC events attended were the Annual Meeting in Winston-Salem and the Spring Conference in Raleigh.

The JCVB attended the Washington DC Travel & Adventure Show which had 22,234 attendees and partnered with Visit NC to attend the New York Times Travel Show in January with 32,398 attendees and the Philadelphia Travel & Adventure Show with 12,542 attendees. After each show, follow up email blasts were sent offering free gifts with additional information on upcoming events, weekend packages and offers from tourism partners.

Each year multiple visits are made to the NC Welcome Centers to promote Johnston County to visitors, as well as, displays are rotated in the centers featuring attractions. The staff also takes tourism partners to the centers during National Tourism Week which gives them a chance to meet and talk with visitors traveling through NC on I-95.

Hospitality Heroes, a self-taught customer service course, underwent a transformation and is now available on the JCVB website. The course is accessible at any time for new hospitality employees. After completing the course and a short 10-question quiz, students receive a graduation packet with a Hospitality Heroes certificate, lapel pin, vouchers to local attractions, and more. The link is found on the footer of the website: www.johnstoncountync.org/hospitality-heroes.

Group Services Distribution

Visitors Guide	16,006
# Sports Bags	3,516
Gift Bags	29
Girlfriends	31
Sip & Stay	2

Visitors Collateral Distribution

Visitors Guide	33,134
BWS Trail	17,938
Bike	12,242
Run JoCo	5,947
301 Yard Sale	54,517
Smithfield Walking	1,310
Geocaching	1,444

Visitor Brochure Inquiries

VG Mailed	10,711
Top State Requests	NC - 2,378
Top City Requests	Raleigh-Durham - 561
Web-Downloads	
Visitors Guide	658
BWS Trail	435
Bike	34
SS Map	25
Smithfield Walk	10
Geocaching	30

Web Requests

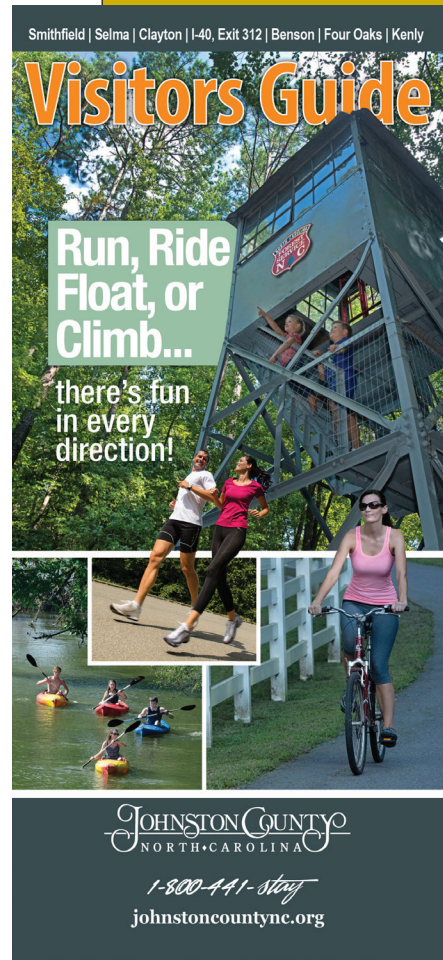
Visitors Guide	501
BWS Trail	341
Bike	163
SS Map	320
Smithfield Walking	307
Geocaching	169

Other Direct Mail Campaigns

AAA Holiday Mailing	529
AAA Summer Mailing	58
AAA Office Request	19 offices (2,298 Items)
Group Tour Packages	177
Premier Travel Media Leads	38
Motorcoach	139

Hospitality Heroes Graduates 35

JoCo Heritage Geotrail Completions 35
Geotrail Economic Impact in Fiscal Year \$11,733.40



JCVB prints 50,000 Visitors Guides annually for distribution, visitor inquiries, services, and sales missions.

Staff News...

Sarah Elizabeth Campbell received her **Travel Marketing Professional (TMP)** certification from Southeast Tourism Society, which was a three-year educational program for tourism leaders.



Sarah was also awarded the **2018 Supplier of the Year** from the Society of Government Meeting Professionals. This honor is awarded to someone who represents excellence in the government meeting planning profession, contributes to chapter events and operations, and works to further the mission of the chapter.

Donna Bailey-Taylor was named a **Heritage Hero** for her volunteer work on area museum boards and donation of design services for exhibits at the Heritage Center, Ava Gardner Museum, Johnston County Airport and the Benson Museum of Local History.



Bailey-Taylor was also selected as the **"Spirit of the County"**, by the *Johnston Now Magazine's*, first *Johnston Now Honors Awards* held at the Historic Howell Theatre in Downtown Smithfield.

Tourism Authority

Scotty Henley, Chairperson
The Clayton Center

Rick Childrey, Vice-Chairperson
Retired

Lynn Daniels, Secretary
Sleep Inn & Suites Smithfield

Rick Heilmann, Marketing Chairperson
Country Superstars 102.3 WKJO-FM

Ernie Brame, Special Projects Chairperson
Kenly 95 Petro

Matthew Zapp, Sports Council
Town Manager - Benson

Keith Brinson
Nationwide Insurance

Cheryl Lane
Double Barley Brewing

Paul Boucher
Small World Travel

Randy Capps
Johnston Now Magazine

Chad McLamb, Ex-Officio
Johnston County Finance Director

Tourism Grants...

The 2017-18 grant recipients and description of grant projects are as follows: (alpha order)

Ava Gardner Museum - \$30,000

New exterior wall to the museum building to correct moisture issues and replace the roof.

Benson Foundation for the Arts – W.J. Barefoot Auditorium - \$12,000

Replacing lighting system with new LED lighting, software, interface, and all equipment needed.

Benson Parks and Recreation Department - \$9,360

Asphalt ADA accessible walkways at the Benson Civic Center connecting the parking area to the ballfields.

Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site - \$7,000

A ravine to expand the sites walking trail system and interpretive signage for the trail extension.

The Clayton Center - \$10,000

Auditorium digital upgrade of video projection and equipment to provide live streaming, simulcasting, and information presentations on global platform.

Johnston Community College, Howell Woods - \$50,000

Two-room cabin with meeting space at Howell Woods to accommodate more hunters, bird-watchers, and meeting attendees.

Johnston County Heritage Center - \$5,650

Five historical markers that will be placed at visible sites for tourists with a guidebook for visitors.

Max G. Creech Historical Museum - \$2,000

To purchase archival quality conservations materials to store and protect the artifacts in the museum.

Tobacco Farm Life Museum - \$9,272

To hire a professional pest management team to tent and treat the Packhouse and workshop buildings and artifacts inside for powder post beetles.

Town of Selma – Civic Center - \$25,000

Renovations of this historic building to provide meeting space and an event venue for the Town.

Town of Wilson's Mills, Clayton Rugby Association - \$15,000

To assist with the project costs to develop a three rugby fields and at the community recreation park.

Town of Wilson's Mills, Parks & Recreation Picnic Shelter - \$50,000

Construction of picnic shelter that includes bathrooms and a storage room at the new community park.



Financials...

The following is a comprehensive review of the Johnston County Visitors Bureau financials for the year 2017-2018.

NET INCOME

The Johnston County Visitors Bureau is funded by a 3% Room Tax paid by visitors staying in accommodations in the county, which generated **\$851,576.78** in revenues for 2017-18.

Month-by-month 3% collections for FY July 2017 to June 2018 were:

July	\$71,019.07
August	\$75,474.14
September	\$72,106.25
October	\$69,450.21
November	\$65,330.08
December	\$63,025.20
January	\$55,574.62
February	\$58,482.45
March	\$78,654.12
April	\$81,854.18
May	\$77,732.20
June	\$82,874.26
	\$851,576.78

In addition, the 301 Endless Yard Sale cooperative program and JoCo Hospitality Association equaled **\$9,668.44** in reimbursements and misc. income. Additional investment income is noted from interest bearing accounts, equaling **\$632.46**.

JCVB 2018 financials are audited by the Johnston County Finance Department with a completed audit available in December.

The Towns of Smithfield, Selma, Kenly and Benson also have a 2% Room Tax which is dedicated to each town's individual marketing campaigns. The following collections were made in each town and remitted to the Tourism Authority:

Smithfield	\$ 257,892.19
Selma	\$ 114,333.16
Kenly	\$ 27,299.25
Benson	\$ 9,440.31

Revenues not expended on behalf of each town are held in Fund Balance Reserves for future marketing or tourism-related projects approved by each town.



The new dog-friendly Hampton Inn Benson opened in June, 2018, next to the Dog Park.

	2018	2017	2016	2015
INCOME SOURCES				
JOHNSTON COUNTY 3%	841,195.23	839,102.05	753,544.57	705,451.29
TOWN OF BENSON	8,436.26	12,231.83	9,524.57	9,480.79
TOWN OF KENLY	25,332.20	27,089.11	24,339.47	26,097.72
TOWN OF SELMA	98,621.12	114,242.75	102,117.52	94,754.07
TOWN OF SMITHFIELD	248,463.55	243,851.30	212,154.25	218,176.49
MISC. REV.	2,250.02	3,071.42	-0-	5,888.40
REIMBURSEMENTS	7,418.42	2,741.29	8,939.98	2,372.25
INVESTMENT INCOME	632.46	595.49	659.43	566.88
TOTAL REVENUES	1,232,349.26	1,242,926.24	1,111,279.79	1,062,787.89

HUMAN RESOURCES

SALARIES & WAGES	282,972.48	272,122.68	255,556.20	228,808.10
LONGEVITY PAY	2,280.00	1,350.00	1,200	1,500.00
TRAVEL - PER DIEM	5,100.00	5,100.00	5,100	5,100.00
FRINGE BENEFITS	90,975.88	85,279.57	76,604.10	67,353.08
TOTAL HR	381,328.36	363,852.25	338,460.30	302,761.18

OPERATING EXPENSES

CONTRACT/PROF FEES	5,375.00	4,936.42	13,281.25	5,100
TELEPHONE	7,159.95	4,366.43	4,313.37	4,777.83
POSTAGE	10,363.03	8,294.05	5,222.21	10,152.23
PRINTING	39,766.79	29,834.67	21,033.03	43,285.76
UTILITIES	1,817.27	2,623.64	2,908.37	3,671.50
TRAVEL & TRADESHOW	32,286.26	35,275.55	21,728.40	17,260.50
EQUIP/BUILDING LEASE	45,127.88	38,634.84	36,990.91	35,317.67
JOCO/COOP ADVERTISING	252,343.69	247,848.10	156,836.78	146,212.84
OFFICE/DEPART SUPPLIES	53,831.12	20,351.19	4,461.28	2,695.55
SOFTWARE PURCHASES	9,800	7,300.00	6,719.99	4,129.00
BENSON MARKETING	29,524.50	5,483.79	5,818.92	5,836.47
KENLY MARKETING	17,270.81	14,513.35	18,331.81	19,245.93
SELMA MARKETING	67,651.26	64,328.96	54,695.21	58,195.02
SMITHFIELD MARKETING	119,566.80	133,780.41	133,476.19	162,729.22
DUES & SUBSCRIPTIONS	27,010.50	18,774.00	18,478.00	16,999.00
INSURANCE	647.00	176.00	400.00	400.00
5% JOHNSTON FEE	42,074.81	41,955.16	37,581.99	35,051.73
MISC. EXPENSES	-0-	5,556.90	4,439.86	6,774.51
RESEARCH	-0-	-0-	-0-	25,000.00
GRANTS	218,090.34	28,587.61	52,300	43,951.79
TOTAL OPERATING	979,707.01	697,533.46	599,017.57	760,026.71
TOTAL HR+OPERATING	1,361,035.37	1,076,473.32	937,477.87	956,220.69
NET +/-	-128,687.11	+166,452.92	+173,801.92	+106,567.20



**Johnston
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NOR

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VISITORS BUREAU

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