The mission of Visit Annapolis and Anne Arundel County is to market the destination, provide economic prosperity, and enhance employment opportunities.
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Fiscal 2018 has been a stellar year of success following several years of growth. The Live! Casino, along with the now, Live! Hotel, in Arundel Mills for example, provided a great opportunity for us to develop a fresh approach to marketing a new product to a different target audience. Working in cooperation with the efforts in the north region, our partnership grew to include Park, Sleep & Fly packages that helped generate a 43% increase in visits to TheHotelsatBW1.com website. And we think many of those inquiries led to hotel revenues in that region during that period, because we saw a record 86.9% occupancy in June and a YTD of 77.4%. RevPar held strong at $100, a 4% increase YOY.

We saw both an uncertainty and an opportunity to venture further into the international market. The forecast predicts that the U.S. market share of global travel will continue to fall, down to 11.6 percent in 2022. But there is one bright light; Canada. Canadians continue to visit the US despite the strong dollar and some concern over the U.S. politics. So we ventured into Toronto with some very encouraging response from independent travel agents and journalists. We will expand that effort in the year to come.

Never shy, we took a look at the landscape of interactions by consumers with traditional offerings and saw an emerging trend. No one, from millennials to baby boomers, are joining a membership organization just because... it is a pay-to-play world. While younger folks may have begun the movement, mature folks have decided choice is pretty cool and they have increasingly learned how to get in the game of personalization. We believe our Storefront opportunity to purchase only the marketing tools you want, makes us the first of DMOs to be implementing this approach.

I continue to observe the passion and enthusiasm of our professional team at VAAAC. Because all the money in the world alone cannot make a program a successful one, I’d like to recognize them: Frank DiVenti, Dani Bottcher, Susan Seifried, Denise Bosmans, Tatiana Wells, Ronnee Zilonis, Karla Armstrong, John Fulginiti, Christine McNichols and our many volunteers. I am also indebted to the genius work of The Symmetry Agency. Their talents continue to amaze. Thank you! And thank you all again for the privilege of representing you to the world!

Connie Del Signore
PRESIDENT & CEO

In the past year, Visit Annapolis and Anne Arundel County has been recognized within the travel and tourism industry as an Influencer. What does that mean? It means that our colleagues and partners have reached out to Connie, our CEO, and her staff, for examples of best the practices, advice on activities in the marketplace, and bold suggestions for success.

Team members have served on panels, both national and international, to discuss the VAAAC’s progressive transition from a membership-centered organization, to a consumer-focused one. The successes to date for this bold move have resulted in over 650 partnerships with Annapolis and AAC businesses and attractions, and nearly 1 million interactions on our platforms by prospective visitors.

While the Team was full steam ahead executing projects from within their departments, Connie was able to continue her active involvement with the U.S. Travel Association board of directors and their Project Time Off Committee. And, as Chairman of the Board, I am delighted to report that the organization is in a very positive financial position due to a robust year of revenues generated from travel and tourism and partner involvement.

Let me finish by saying it is an honor to chair this organization that brings so much life and vitality to this destination, in addition to the revenues enjoyed by its constituents. I enthusiastically look forward to the year ahead!

Robert Clark
CHAIRMAN
AT LARGE MEMBERS

SALLY WERN COMPORT
Principal, Art at Large, Inc.

GENE CONDON
Vice President/General Manager, Arundel Mills Mall

MICHAEL HUGHES
Managing Partner, MH Media Strategies

GARY JOBSON
President, National Sailing Hall of Fame

ROB NORTON
President, Live! Casino & Hotel

BRIAN RIDDLE
President, Homestead Gardens

LAUREN RUSSELL
President & Creative Director, Maine Cottage

APPOINTED MEMBERS

FELICIA NOLAN | City of Annapolis
Special Projects Coordinator, Office of the Mayor

JULIE MUSSOG | AAEDC
President & CEO, Anne Arundel Economic Development Corp

USNA REPRESENTATIVE

CDR. DAVID MCKINNEY | USNA Representative
USNA Public Affairs Officer, United States Naval Academy

2017-2018 FY SOURCES OF FUNDING

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hotel Tax</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE</strong></td>
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EXPENSES

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<tr>
<td>Operating</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENDITURES FY2017</strong></td>
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The VAAAC invested $1.79 million in advertising and promotions in FY 18. Activities included: digital, broadcast, print advertising, point-of-purchase placements, social marketing, website promotions, search engine optimization, and local event promotion. $135,000 was invested directly in website development for our five websites and three niche blog sites.

**WEBSITE ENGAGEMENT**

| VISITORS | 991,850 |

All VAAAC activities generated 991,850 overall websites visits, a 9% increase YOY. Three niche blog sites: Foodie, Historian and Explorer generated 114,000 of those visits, a 60% increase. TheHotelsatBWI.com generated a 43% increase YOY. The Annapolis NOW mobile app has 6,605 total users, which is a 2.2% increase. VisitAnnapolis.org increased visits slightly at 12%. WeddingsInAnnapolis.com and MeetInAnnapolis.com generated over 44,000 visits. As we continue to refine our messages to niche markets through technology, we are pleased to see our strategy working.

**SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT**

Our social media platforms continue to generate additional engagement. Collectively, our follower reach is more than 125K, a growth of more than 14% over last year. Our Facebook fan based had a 12% increase to 98,648 over the previous period, Twitter fan base increased 10% to nearly 11K and Instagram increased 31% to more than 15K.
GROUP SALES ACTIVITIES & IMPACT

The group sales team booked 176 groups, a 3.5% increase over the previous year. These current and future bookings, when consumed, will generate an estimated 51,019 room nights with an estimated $15 million in economic impact to the community.

The sales activities that generated these strong results included: thirteen trade shows targeting various markets including: association, corporate, government and sports; client events; FAMs and partnerships with Discover Newport, TEAM MD, PCMA and UMBC.

$15M ECONOMIC IMPACT

COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS

The PR and Communications Department outreach efforts resulted in:

- 2,500 print, broadcast and online stories and mentions by domestic and international media outlets. This is 27% less than the 3,453 mentions generated in FY 2017.
- Total potential reach for FY 2018 was 4.2 billion, compared to 4.5 billion in FY 2017, a decrease of 6.7%.
- Total publicity value for FY 2018 was $4.44 million, compared to $3.41 million in FY 2017, an increase of 30%.
- VAAAC hosted 18 domestic and international journalists on press trips in FY 2018. This compares to 72 journalists in FY 2017 – a 75% decrease.*
- In addition to press trips, VAAAC provided 110 media assists in FY 2018, a 27% drop from the 151 media assists in FY 2017.

*In FY 2017, VAAAC hosted 31 journalists during pre- and post-IPW press trips. VAAAC did not participate in IPW in FY 2018.

NATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

- Coastal Living
- AAA
- Where to Retire
- Huffington Post
- Conde Nast Traveler
VISITOR SERVICES ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT

The most exciting news from this department was the expansion of our Visitor Ambassador Program. It continues to be appreciated by visitors, residents and local law enforcement. Each year, from Memorial Day through October weekend events, 6 trained and personable Ambassadors assist thousands of visitors as they attempt to navigate the city of Annapolis. Ambassadors interacted with 55,712 guests of the city in FY 18, distributing maps, answering questions, and directing visitors to particular restaurants, shops, and attractions within the city and Eastport. For other inquiries, visitors were directed to the Visitors Information Center and the City Dock Information booth.

An estimated 179,000 visitors were welcomed by the Ambassadors and 125 Volunteer Information Specialists at the Center, and seasonal information booth, a slight decrease YOY (it rained all spring!). New Volunteer Information Specialists were trained via shadowing, educational orientations, and bi-monthly FAM tours to Partner properties. Many achieved Master Class status.

We printed and distributed 120,000 Official Visitor Guides.

Ongoing enhancements of the visitors center and administrative offices continues.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Last fiscal year we hired a part-time Community Engagement Coordinator whose primary responsibility was to seek new opportunities for our Partners. Three major accomplishments have been: creating, selling advertising and distributing Annapolis discount coupons; scheduling seasonal weekend business setups providing Partners the opportunity to display and promote their business/attraction at the visitors center; and to promote Annapolis and AACO to hotel concierges in DC, Northern VA, Baltimore and National Harbor through regularly scheduled personal visits. Additionally, the Coordinator entered a new Canadian market and promoted Annapolis and AACO to high caliber Canadian travel agents. These Canadian agents were identified as placing special emphasis on booking U.S. and international travel inclusive of cruise packages (Baltimore) and destination weddings. VAAAC attended and exhibited at the Travel Marketplace show in Toronto, Canada in May 2018. This show attracted over 350+ travel agents specializing in the fully independent travel market.

MEMBERSHIP/PARTNERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

We ended the year with a total of 629 Partnerships and a retention rate of 89%.
Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County participated in the Maryland Department of Commerce/Maryland Destination Marketing Organizations 2016 Economic Impact Study performed by Tourism Economics. The research demonstrated that AACO continues to be a leader in the state in travel-generated revenues of $3.7 billion, a 2.1% increase.

VAAAC is implementing the Destinations International Economic Impact Calculator which provides a dynamic and credible industry standard to quantify an event’s full economic value and ROI to the community.

Smith Travel Research (STR) reports AAC had a fourth quarter 2018 average occupancy rate of 73.4%. BWI/Arundel Mills hotels enjoyed an average 77.4% occupancy rate, and RevPar hovered between $77-81, a slight increase.

**$3.7B IN TRAVEL GENERATED REVENUES**

**RECOGNITIONS & AWARDS**

Seventy-eight journalists from across the United States and Canada were invited to cast their ballots for the exhibitor they felt best represented his/her destination during the annual showcase. VAAAC was selected from a field of 67 destination marketing organizations and suppliers from the United States, Canada and Mexico.

**SCHOLARSHIP FUND**
The Scholarship Fund continues to identify students interested in travel and tourism jobs and provides funding for tuition.

**CONTACT INFO:**
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