



NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN TOWNS OF CASHIERS,
CHEROKEE, DILLSBORO AND SYLVA

To: TDA Board

From: Nick Breedlove, TDA Executive Director
Caleb Sullivan, TDA Sales & Marketing Manager

Date: November 18, 2020

Subject: Updates for TDA Board

Executive Director Report – Nick Breedlove

1. The TDA was successful in the application and receipt of three Federal CARES Act Grants
 - a. \$88,000 for Recovery Marketing
 - b. \$15,000 for COVID-19 related Marketing & Reimbursements
 - c. \$10,750 for COVID-19 related Marketing & Reimbursements

I submitted three separate applications and expeditiously worked with Rawle Murdy, our Chamber Directors, and other partners to quickly utilize these funds, which must be expended by Dec. 30, 2020 due to federal guidelines. We have several great projects which we will detail in our Nov. 18 Board presentation. I will be working on grant reporting and metrics related to the expenditures later this week as required by the NC Pandemic Recovery Office, VisitNC and EDPNC.

2. We have nominations before County Commissioners for their Dec. 8 meeting to fill board seat vacancies. Board member Kathy Korb is no longer with the Laurelwood Inn and this week we were notified Anna Thomas is no longer with the Comfort Inn. We presented a slate to County Commissioners and are proposing the following new board members:
 - Craig Smith, GM of Bear Lake Reserve which also operates almost 70 homes in its Vacation Rental Program
 - Daniel Fletcher of Hotel Cashiers;
 - Scott Greene from GM of High Hampton will be seated in current board member Brad Herman's board seat to transition him into our organization.

We greatly appreciate our outgoing board members for their significant contributions to our collective work.

3. In Industry relations, I was re-appointed as North Carolina's representative to Southeast Tourism Society's Board of Directors for a term ending in 2022. Also, I was recently appointed as Co-Chair of Destination International's Small DMO Committee. I am proud to represent our DMO, our state, and the Southeast at these important organizations.
4. Staff attended the Skift Global Forum, Destinations International Marketing Summit, Destinations International Advocacy Summit, and the eTourism summit. I will attend the Destinations International CEO Summit in December. All of these events have been virtual due to COVID-19, allowing us excellent learning opportunities at a fraction of the cost.
5. In Jackson County related endeavors, I have been engaged with the CREATE Bridges project, that helps rural counties work together to develop and implement an economic development plan for their multicounty region. CREATE BRIDGES is a multi-year economic development initiative sponsored by Walmart and facilitated by NC State Extension and is focused on strengthening the retail, accommodation, tourism, and entertainment sectors in the region.

I have also worked with our Economic Development Director, Rich Price, and am assisting from the tourism perspective on the update to our County Economic Development Plan & Strategy.

1. I've participated several interviews related to tourism and the success of our efforts in Jackson County. NC State University is compiling a study on the effects of COVID-19 on travel and interviewed me for their case study. I spoke with Speaking of Travel, a regional podcast, about COVID-19 travel and how our county is positioned well as a naturally socially-distanced outdoor region. The NC League of Municipalities has a case study planned for later this year on how collaboration in our County has contributed to our success and interviewed me for that feature. Smoky Mountain News has an excellent feature on tourism growth in Jackson County, which I worked with them on. Today's (Nov. 18) Sylva Herald also has a feature I was interviewed for about the growth of tourism. It is important for us to take every opportunity to share the good work we and our partners do and advocate for how our work benefits the community.

Link to Smoky Mountain News Article:

<https://www.smokymountainnews.com/news/item/30023-rural-allure-strong-hospitality-sector-set-jackson-county-up-for-success-amid-pandemic>

6. We are working closely with Friends of Panthertown to help mitigate visitors utilizing Cedar Creek Road to access Panthertown. A portion of Cedar Creek Road is washed out from recent heavy rains and flooding and we've placed an advisory on our website that will remain until repairs are made which are expected by December.

7. Our Strategic Plan Committees will resume their work starting in early January. Since March TDA staff have focused our efforts solely on the recovery of our hospitality industry to preserve jobs and the livelihoods of our small businesses, their employees, and our community. While COVID-19 is still here, we do recognize the need to shift focus to our committee work and hold those meetings virtually so that our sights are still set on carrying out our Strategic Plan. Draft dates are included on our Nov. 18 agenda materials.
8. For Board Members who are in the accommodation industry, we are still seeking travel deals for our Lodging Specials page. We understand it's a difficult time for many to offer deals, however, as a reminder, our Lodging Specials page sent significant traffic to accommodations last year for those partners who participated. The page was viewed 19,000 times last year, and people used the 'Call Now' or 'Book Now' feature 2,636 times. Our goal with this page is to drive traffic January – March when our lodging accommodations need demand the most. Please send me any specials by email and we will get them listed.

Social Media & Blog Status Report – Caleb Sullivan

Cross Channel Report October 1 – 31 vs. September 1 – 30

- Total Audience Growth increased by 1.3 % MOM (2,941) (227,227 total)
 - Total Instagram Followers (19,672)
 - Total Facebook Page Likes (205,455) – Organic Increase of 2,507 (147.7%)
- Total Impressions increased by 109% MOM. (4,788,738) (367% Increase YOY)
- Total Engagement increased by 267% MOM (447,435) (599% Increase YOY)
 - Consistent posting of high-quality fall photos contributed to this significant increase
 - These numbers are the highest in JCTDA History and doubled that of July, 2020, our previous best month to date.
- Facebook Post Link Clicks decreased by 17.9% (21,825)
 - Decrease was due to a Facebook error, blocking our ads account, as most of our link clicks are generated by ads.

Google Post/Event Platform

- Total Impressions for October totaled 68,305
- Total Engagements for October totaled 3,282

Instagram Stories

- Instagram Story Impressions totaled 11,834 for October.



Pinterest

- Total Impressions for October totaled 26,204.
- Total Engagements for October totaled 688.


Updates

- In early October, our Facebook Ad Account was suspended for 17 days, due to a Facebook error. Even with this error, we recognized significant increases in organic impressions, engagements, and reach, allowing for a record-breaking month.
- Attended Destinations International Marketing Outlook Forum (virtually)
- Began work for the Southeastern Tourism Society Networking Pillar Committee.
- On October 30, I completed my first Discover Jackson NC Day. I spent the day exploring Cherokee including Mingo Falls, Soco Falls, Chasteen Creek Falls, and drove every mile of the Jackson County portion of the Blue Ridge Parkway.



Top Performing Posts for October

  discoverjacksonnc
Wed 10/7/2020 7:40 am PDT

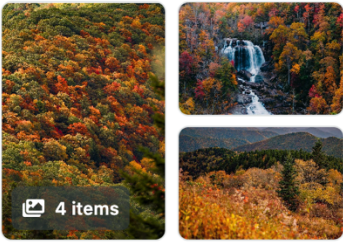
Waterfalls take on a new look as the leaves change. 🍂🌲🏞️ Looking for an autumn adventure? Check out our Top





Total Engagements	1,649
Likes	1,508
Comments	18
Saves	123

  discoverjacksonnc
Tue 10/27/2020 9:37 am PDT


These beautiful hues won't last much longer. 🍂🌲🏞️ Our leaf season spans through the first week of November, so




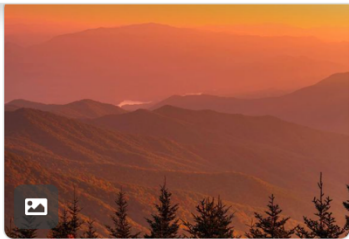

Total Engagements	1,445
Likes	1,375
Comments	15
Saves	55

  discoverjacksonnc
Sun 10/4/2020 5:16 am PDT

The Golden Hour glow in the NC Mountains is breathtaking. 🌅🏞️ Check out our 'Top 8 Golden Hour Spots' on c



Total Engagements	1,271
Likes	1,230
Comments	4
Saves	37

PLAY ON North Carolina Mountain ... Sat 10/10/2020 6:56 am PDT	PLAY ON North Carolina Mountain ... Sat 10/17/2020 6:59 am PDT	PLAY ON North Carolina Mountain ... Sat 10/24/2020 6:58 am PDT																																				
<p>Waterfalls take on a new look as the leaves change. 🍂🏞️ Looking for an autumn adventure? Check out our 'Top</p>  <table border="1"> <tr><td>Total Engagements</td><td>128,480</td></tr> <tr><td>Reactions</td><td>80,461</td></tr> <tr><td>Comments</td><td>4,560</td></tr> <tr><td>Shares</td><td>16,499</td></tr> <tr><td>Post Link Clicks</td><td>4,375</td></tr> <tr><td>Other Post Clicks</td><td>22,585</td></tr> </table>	Total Engagements	128,480	Reactions	80,461	Comments	4,560	Shares	16,499	Post Link Clicks	4,375	Other Post Clicks	22,585	<p>Waterfalls take on a new look as the leaves change. 🍂🏞️ Looking for an autumn adventure? Check out our 'Top 10 Must-See Waterfalls in the NC Mountains': https://jax.onl/TopFallWaterfalls</p>  <table border="1"> <tr><td>Total Engagements</td><td>105,390</td></tr> <tr><td>Reactions</td><td>73,661</td></tr> <tr><td>Comments</td><td>3,502</td></tr> <tr><td>Shares</td><td>10,580</td></tr> <tr><td>Post Link Clicks</td><td>982</td></tr> <tr><td>Other Post Clicks</td><td>16,665</td></tr> </table>	Total Engagements	105,390	Reactions	73,661	Comments	3,502	Shares	10,580	Post Link Clicks	982	Other Post Clicks	16,665	<p>Waterfalls take on a new look as the leaves change. 🍂🏞️ Looking for an autumn adventure? Check out our 'Top 10 Must-See Waterfalls in the NC Mountains': https://jax.onl/TopFallWaterfalls</p>  <table border="1"> <tr><td>Total Engagements</td><td>42,602</td></tr> <tr><td>Reactions</td><td>30,232</td></tr> <tr><td>Comments</td><td>886</td></tr> <tr><td>Shares</td><td>4,902</td></tr> <tr><td>Post Link Clicks</td><td>634</td></tr> <tr><td>Other Post Clicks</td><td>5,948</td></tr> </table>	Total Engagements	42,602	Reactions	30,232	Comments	886	Shares	4,902	Post Link Clicks	634	Other Post Clicks	5,948
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Blogs

Completed two blogs for October:

[Safe Travels to the NC Mountains](#) – Posted 10/23/20

[Top Fall Hikes in the Smokies](#) – Posted 10/9/20

E-News

Completed Electronic Newsletter for October. Deployed by Rawle Murdy on 10/6/2020:

[It's Fall Y'all!](#)