

# JOHNSTON COUNTY VISITORS BUREAU

## A N N U A L R E P O R T

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### Johnston County Visitors Bureau selected “Small Bureau of the Year” for 2002



“We are thrilled to be recognized as the *Small Bureau of the Year* for the third year in a row. Our program of work continues to be recognized for the quality of our advertising program, our community involvement with Tourism Development Projects, and the volume of tradeshow and sales missions conducted to attract leisure visitors and groups to Johnston County.”

—Donna Bailey-Taylor, Executive Director

*Seated left to right:* Sheila Creech (Office Manager), Bud Andrews (Chairman JCTA), Donna Bailey-Taylor (Executive Director). *Standing left to right:* Karen Will (Sweetwaters Grille), Hank Daniels (Super 8 Motel), Deirdre Jersey (Meeting Details), Ruth Woodall (American Classic Charters & Tours), Debbie Elam (Johnston Community College). *Not pictured:* Ernie Brame, Stewart McLeod, Larry Stancil and Suzanne Cook.

The Johnston County Visitors Bureau competed with 40 bureaus around the state, with over 125 entries and 340 PDFs submitted for consideration by judges from all over the country including the Virgin Islands. No judges were from North Carolina as not to be too familiar with the different bureaus in NCACVB. Johnston County Visitors Bureau won in the following categories:

#### 2002 Bureau of the Year

The Bureau submitted an application for Bureau of the Year, based on the Bureau’s Leadership in the community, productivity, innovation and measurable results. Materials to support the application included the Annual Report, the Smithfield & Selma Advertising Campaign, and the *Official Johnston County Visitors Guide*.

#### Platinum—Local Constituents Communications: Annual Report

This four page report is completed in December and mailed to over 1600 contacts in Johnston County including members of six Chambers of Commerce, Elected officials local, county, state and national, the Visitor Industry businesses in Johnston County and some state contacts in tourism.

#### Platinum—Public Relations Placement: “Southern Roots” by Roberta Sandler

The JCVB hosted Roberta Sandler and her husband Martin in our community for a press trip. Several stories have been generated in the New Jersey and Florida markets, and one submitted for this competition, “Southern Roots,” appeared in the *Town & Country* Insert in *The Free Lance-Star* in Fredericksburg, VA. This article was a cover placement and four pages long on the Ava Gardner Museum, Bentonville Battleground, Atkinson’s Mill and the Tobacco Farm Life Museum.

#### Gold—Trade Advertising: NC Citizens for Business & Industry Ad

##### “Before You Get Down to Business, come by for a Visit”

The JCVB assisted with the editorial for the County Profile done last year by the NC Citizens for Business & Industry organization. The Bureau placed an ad to invite the business community to visit the county first to get a feel for doing business in Johnston County in the future. Ad design by Sloan Communications.

(Continued inside)



## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Donna Bailey-Taylor  
Executive Director

Finishing up the fiscal year 2002–2003 was quite an accomplishment due to the changes that took place at the Johnston County Visitors Bureau. In March 2002, the towns of Smithfield and Selma implemented a 1% Occupancy Tax that generated over \$80,000 in additional revenues for new marketing initiatives. As a direct result, the Bureau conducted marketing efforts for three communities in 2002/2003—Johnston County, Smithfield and Selma. At times, I have described this past year as the proverbial task of “keeping all the balls in the air.” Our year-long focus was to ensure that all three programs were moving forward, stayed on task, and met deadlines.

The Town of Selma’s marketing has undergone a complete overhaul in the past twelve months—including the refacing of ten billboards, adding four new billboards, a directional signage program to assist visitors from I-95 to the Uptown District, new Amtrak marketing efforts, a new street banner program, and a new Selma four-color brochure. In addition, a print advertising campaign was designed for *Our State Magazine*, *AAA Go Magazine*, *Antique Guides*, *Phone Books* and various publications. Also, the visitors Bureau assisted the town with a new event in the Spring—the *Antique Car Classic* and the completion and dedication of the Selma Union Station. The research and design of museum-quality exhibits for the Selma Union Station were completed and are currently awaiting installation.

Smithfield’s new marketing campaign included two new billboards and a direct marketing campaign for the Smithfield Ham & Yam Festival, and print advertising campaign in *Our State Magazine* and *AAA Go Magazine*. Brochure racks have been placed around both towns to distribute brochures for area attractions. Also, Smithfield will produce a four-color brochure in the Spring of 2004.

The result is a very positive impact; visitor inquiries are up, and distribution of materials have increased 10% from last year. The Bureau has added a part-time staff person to handle visitor inquiries, which average over 500 per week due to additional advertisement placements. I look forward to the coming year as we build on our past achievements and continue to grow in our efforts to serve the tourism community in 2004.

Donna Bailey-Taylor  
Executive Director

**For comparison** over the past three years, revenues have grown in some areas and due to competition in Harnett and Wilson counties, has suffered in other areas. The following is a breakdown of revenues by municipalities:

Occupancy Tax Revenues	2002	2001	2000
Benson	\$ 22,785	\$ 20,893	\$ 24,442
Smithfield	\$ 102,040	\$ 97,936	\$ 97,679
Selma	\$ 197,986	\$ 186,647	\$ 185,937
Kenly	\$ 44,219	\$ 43,580	\$ 48,486
Cleveland Community	\$ 76,373	\$ 78,666	\$ 64,577
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 443,402</b>	<b>\$ 427,749</b>	<b>\$ 421,103</b>
Total Hotel Revenues	\$ 14,780,006	\$ 14,258,300	\$ 14,036,767
4% State Tax	\$ 591,200	\$ 570,332	\$ 561,471
2% Johnston County Tax	\$ 295,600	\$ 285,166	\$ 280,735

JCVB Operating Expenses	FY 2002/2003	FY 2001/2002	Incr./Decr.	% of Operating
<b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b> (salaries & benefits)	\$ 101,471	\$ 98,467	.03%	23%
<b>OPERATIONS &amp; EQUIPMENT</b>	\$ 34,471	\$ 24,653	40%	8%
5% to Johnston County	\$ 22,116	\$ 21,777	.02%	.05%
3.5% to Selma/Smithfield Chamber	\$ 15,203	\$ 14,225	.07%	.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 71,790</b>	<b>\$ 60,655</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>ADVERTISING &amp; PROMOTION</b>				
Direct (billboards, magazines, newspapers)	\$ 123,941	\$ 126,311	<.02%>	28.2%
Indirect (grants, publicity, promotions)	\$ 17,847	\$ 21,475	<20%>	4%
Printing	\$ 47,578	\$ 50,917	<7%>	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 189,366</b>	<b>\$ 198,704</b>	<b>&lt;.05%&gt;</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>TRADESHOWS &amp; TRAVEL</b>	\$ 34,609	\$ 35,095	<.014%>	.08%
<b>CAPITAL GRANTS</b>	\$ 42,500	\$ 42,500	-0-	10%
<b>CONVENTION CENTER STUDY</b>	-0-	20,000		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 439,736</b>	<b>\$ 455,425</b>	<b>&lt;3.5%&gt;</b>	

### Who appoints the Tourism Authority?

Five Johnston County residents are appointed by the Johnston County Board of Commissioners to serve three year terms, in addition, five representatives from Chambers of Commerce in Benson, Four Oaks, Smithfield/Selma, Kenly and Clayton are appointed to three year terms. These two groups make up the ten members of the board who oversee the operation of the Johnston County Visitors Bureau.

### Who pays the occupancy tax?

In 1987, the North Carolina General Assembly approved HB 891, a local Johnston County Occupancy Tax of 3% county-wide which visitors pay when they stay in a hotel room or bed & breakfast in the county. Five municipalities, Benson, Four Oaks, Smithfield, Selma, Kenly and the unincorporated area at 40/42 are the sources of revenue.

### How is the Occupancy Tax Revenue Spent?

The Johnston County Visitors Bureau operated on a \$439,736 budget in 2003, excluding the expenditures for the Towns of Smithfield and Selma. Approximately 51% of the revenues were used for advertising and promotion and attending tradeshow to attract visitors to Johnston County.

### JOHNSTON COUNTY TOURISM FACTS

Ranked 36th in North Carolina's 100 counties for tourism spending

\$67.9 Million Dollars spent in 2002

\$13.04 Million in Payroll expenditures

\$4.0 Million in State Tax receipts

\$1.68 Million in Local Tax Receipts

\*These figures provided by the NC Department of Commerce, based on a tourism model for the NC Division of Tourism.

## 2003-2004 TOURISM AUTHORITY

### Officers

**Larry Stancil**, Chairman

Stancil Oil Company

P.O. Box 188, Selma, NC 27576

**Deirdre Jersey**, Vice Chairman

Meeting Details, LLC.

1464 Garner Station Blvd., Suite 144, Raleigh, NC 27603

**Debbie Elam**, Secretary

Johnston Community College

P.O. Box 2350, Smithfield, NC 27577

**John Massey**, Ex-Officio

Johnston County Finance Director

P.O. Box 1049, Smithfield, NC 27577

**Ernie Brame**

Travel Centers of America

923 Johnston Parkway, Kenly, NC 27542

**Suzanne Benton Cook**

Benton Card Company

P.O. Box 369, 105 S. Wall Street, Benson, NC 27504

**Hank Daniels**

The Village Motor Lodge

198 Mallard Drive, Smithfield, NC 27577

**Lee Jackson**

Dees, Jackson, Watson & Associates, PA

P.O. Box 1249, Smithfield, NC 27577

**Amanda Lynch**

Clayton Chamber of Commerce

P.O. Box 246, Clayton, NC 27520

**Karen S. Will**

Sweetwater's Grille & Cheesecake Co.

112 S. Raiford Street, Selma, NC 27576

**Ruth S. Woodall**

American Classic Charters & Tours, Inc.

2516 Little Divine Road, Selma, NC 27576



New board members, Amanda Lynch (Clayton Chamber of Commerce) and Lee Jackson (Dees, Jackson & Watson, Associates) have joined the Tourism Authority as Chamber representatives.



JCVB recently recognized outgoing board members Bud Andrews and Stewart McLeod for their dedicated service to the Visitors Bureau's mission to attract and serve visitors to Johnston County.

### Small Bureau of the Year

*(Continued from cover)*

#### Gold-Consumer Print Advertising: Smithfield Billboard

The Bureau submitted the Smithfield Billboard design that promotes "Ava & Outlets and Lodging & Dining." Ad Design by Sloan Communications.

Over the past three years, the Visitors Bureau has won fourteen Destination Marketing Achievement Awards. The Visitors Bureau has a full-time staff of two; Donna Bailey-Taylor (Executive Director) and Sheila Creech (Office Manager) along with two part-time staff members; Frankie Brown (Sales & Marketing) and Dee Jay Worley (Visitor Services).

The Visitors Bureau is a public authority funded by the 3% hotel room tax paid by visitors to the county. Funds are used for promotion and advertising to attract and serve leisure, business and meeting visitors to the county. Tourism is the third largest industry in Johnston County with visitor spending exceeding \$70 million dollars, and providing over 4500 jobs throughout the community in hotels, restaurants, attractions, festivals and events, meeting facilities and transportation services. ●

## 2002–2003 HIGHLIGHTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



The Hinnant Farms Winery opened May of 2003.



The Selma Union Station Renovation Project was completed in 2002.



25 new restaurants opened in 2002, including: Sweetwaters Grille, Riverside Coffee Shop and Gandolfos NY Deli.



Ava Gardner Museum opened the Bert Pfeiffer exhibition in October of 2002.

- The accomplishments listed in this annual report reflect the efforts of the Visitors Bureau staff, partners in the Visitor Industry community and the JCVB Board of Directors.

### DIRECT SALES & PROMOTION

- Attended 32 tradeshows and sales missions selling Johnston County as a destination for leisure and group tour companies from Canada to Florida. Hosted six familiarization tours for Travel Writers, NC Division of Tourism Canadian Group and NC Welcome Center Staff from across the state. New billboard designs for the Johnston County Leisure Campaign.
- New group tour itineraries for Johnston County sales efforts—including “Dinner and a Movie with Ava,” “Down on the Farm,” “Sweet Sounds of Christmas,” and “1865 to the Present.”

### VISITOR INQUIRIES & MEDIA

- Visitor Information distributed in 2003 increased by 10% over 2002. In 2003, 140,217 collateral pieces were distributed to inquires, AAA offices and visitor centers, compared to 128,428 pieces in 2001.
- The Johnston County Visitors Bureau produced 24 media stories on events and tourism development projects and submitted them to local, regional, national and international press.

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Attended 215 community meetings, festivals and events. Assisted in development of Agri-tourism programs with the NC Cooperative Extension office in Johnston County.
- The Bureau Executive Director served on the following boards: Tobacco Farm Life Museum, Ava Gardner Museum, Bentonville Battleground Historical Association, the Downtown Smithfield Development Board, Johnston County Educational Foundation, Keep Johnston County Beautiful, and the NC Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus as Secretary.
- Over 1000 people attended the 5th Annual Taste of Johnston County held on May 14th during National Tourism Week, co-sponsored by the Town of Selma.
- Assisted area attractions in writing grants with the following results: Ava Gardner Museum awarded \$5,000 from Covington Foundation, Tobacco Farm Life Museum received \$5,000 from the NC Arts Council, and Downtown Smithfield Development Corporation received \$25,000 for the Neuse River Walk Project.