

*City of Alexandria, Virginia*13
2-13-01

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 7, 2001

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: RECEIPT OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2000 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
ALEXANDRIA CONVENTION AND VISITORS ASSOCIATION

ISSUE: Receipt of the FY 2000 Annual Report (July 1999 - June 2000) of the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council receive the report.

DISCUSSION: As indicated in the attached annual report, FY 2000 was a very good year for the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA), and for tourism and business travel in Alexandria. For ACVA, all key statistical measures that it tracks related to tourism and the hotel industry improved in FY 2000 in comparison with FY 1999. Tourism spending was estimated by ACVA to have increased at a higher rate than that experienced either by the Washington, D.C. region, or nationally, where both the regional and national economies were strong.

During the year, the number of hotel rooms in the City increased from 3,655 to 3,984 as new properties, such as the King Street Hilton, came on line. Even with this growth in the number of hotel rooms, overall hotel occupancy increased to 73% (up from 69% in the prior year) and the average daily rate (ADR) achieved per room increased by 3% to \$93.24. The end result of the higher occupancy and room rates was an increase of 9% in the average daily revenue (RevPar) achieved per room from \$63.07 to \$68.56. The increase in hotel revenue earnings then led to \$4.4 million in transient taxes paid to the City. This represented a 7% increase over FY 1999, although the transient tax rate had been decreased by 0.15% from 5.65% to 5.5%. In addition, the City collected some \$0.8 million in new transient taxes attributable to the new \$1 per night room tax. Other local taxes paid by tourists and business travelers, as well as local residents, also increased during FY 2000, with meals tax revenues increasing by 12% to \$7.9 million, and retail taxes increasing by 7% to \$19.8 million in FY 2000.

Activities of the AVCA to promote Alexandria included the circulation of a record 400,000 *Official Visitors Guide to Alexandria* to potential tourists and business travelers. This *Guide* featured new walking tours, family activities, and sample itineraries for visitors. During FY 2000 some 120,000 visitors signed the guest book at the Ramsay House. This was a 10% increase from the prior year. The City's 250th birthday celebration also contributed to the increase in tourism spending in FY 2000.

ACVA membership continued to grow during FY 2000, with membership increasing by 14% to 148 members. ACVA continued three successful marketing programs initiated during FY 1999. These include: *Summer on the Fun Side*, *Fall for the Arts & Antiques*, and *Twinkling Lights and Historic Nights*. ACVA also partnered with American Express, the Virginia Tourism Corporation, and the Jaguar Motor Car Company in various promotional efforts.

ACVA participated in selling Alexandria to professional meeting planners and group tour operators by participating in several national show events. For the first time, ACVA sponsored its own sales mission and met with AAA agency counselors in the Mid-Atlantic States. During FY 2000, ACVA continued to work with the media, including hosting 77 travel writers whose publications reach 40 million readers. Ninety articles about Alexandria were published in 11 states and four foreign countries.

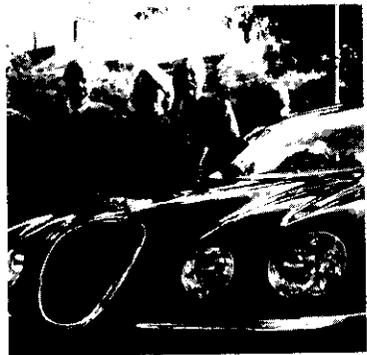
During the first three quarters of FY 2000 (prior to changing its Internet service provider), ACVA's web site (www.funside.com) measured 1.2 million hits, which was over double the prior year's hits. During the year, ACVA planned to update and improve its web site with a FY 2001 launch. FY 2000 was also the second year of the Fun Side Forum sponsored by ACVA. This Forum is aimed at pulling together business people, association representatives, citizens and other stakeholders on a monthly basis to discuss tourism related issues and to share ideas on how to improve tourism in the City.

The attached fifteen page report from ACVA discusses FY 2000 and its activities in more detail.

ATTACHMENT: Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association FY 2000 Annual Report to Members

STAFF: Mark Jinks, Assistant City Manager

ALEXANDRIA



Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association FY '00 Review ... Fast Forward

Annual Report to Members
FY 2000 July 1999 – June 2000



ACVA Mission and Goals

The mission of the Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association is to increase tourism and conventions that generate revenues and promote the City of Alexandria and its assets.

The goals of the Association are:

- To market Alexandria as a destination for regional, domestic and international business, meeting and leisure travelers.
- To increase City tourism revenues by encouraging business and leisure travelers to patronize Alexandria facilities, attractions, businesses, and events.
- To develop tourism marketing and promotional programs offered in conjunction with Alexandria's hospitality industry and local businesses.
- To target these programs to meeting planners, tour operators, and travel writers.
- To work cooperatively with state and regional governmental and travel trade agencies in joint tourism marketing projects.
- To bring City marketing, advertising, and promotional efforts on par with competing state and local jurisdictions.
- To provide visitors to Alexandria with tourism services at appropriate locations in the City.
- To maximize the historic uniqueness of Alexandria.



THE FUN SIDE OF THE POTOMAC



From the Chairman

Dear Board of Governors, Fellow Members, and Friends of the ACVA,

It was a very good year.

When the ACVA closed its books on FY 2000, all statistical measurements had improved over the year before. What's more, Alexandria booked a higher percentage of its available hotel rooms than other destinations in the local region, and also generated a greater percentage of revenue per room.

Our mission is "to generate tourism and conventions that increase revenue and promote the City of Alexandria and its assets." What our mission doesn't state, but is equally important, is that through our marketing initiatives we add to the quality of experiences our visitors have, and therefore, the quality of life for our residents. This aspect of our mission is inherent in everything we do. As we work to increase visitation, we are sensitive to issues that may result. Through our Fun Side Forum, we encourage dialogue among the businesses and residents of the community, so that we are working toward the same goal—making Alexandria a positive experience for all who live, work, and visit here.

As you read through this year's Annual Report, I am confident that you will find this evident in how we approach each initiative that we undertake. The ACVA is committed to the belief that what is good for Alexandria's visitors is good for its residents as well.

This is a sign of a maturing organization that works in harmony with its environment.

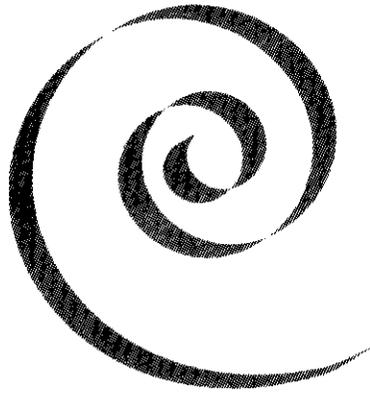
I now pass the gavel to a very strong leader who will guide the ACVA through its next two years. Dan Rosenblatt, Executive Director of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, has served on the Board of Governors for several years and has the appropriate skill set and experience to guide a maturing organization like ACVA. As I step down from the Chair's role, I thank you for the opportunity to serve the organization and help it move forward.

Peter Greenberg
Chair
ACVA Board of Governors



...Alexandria booked a higher percentage of its available hotel rooms than other destinations in the local region, and also generated a greater percentage of revenue per room.





From the Executive Director

Dear Members and Friends of the ACVA,

In the fall of 1999, the ACVA Board of Governors established its priorities and direction for the Association during the FY 2000 fiscal year. Three strategic goals laid the foundation for work to be accomplished by the Association through the efforts of its members and the ACVA professional staff. These included: expansion of the Fun Side Forum, development of corporate sponsorships, and leadership in the community and region.

The accomplishment of these goals is presented in this Annual Report to Members, which is a report card of our best efforts as an organization. Certainly, we are proud of the financial statistics that say we surpassed both our local region and the nation in several measurements of tourism success. We expanded our reach and effectiveness by forging a new business relationship with American Express, in partnership with other Northern Virginia tourism organizations, and on our own behalf for Alexandria. Through our winter marketing program *The Jaguar Winter Prowl*, aimed at bringing local and regional visitors to Alexandria to shop and dine, we worked closely with Jaguar Cars Inc. and WGMS radio, both respected corporate names regionally and nationally. Serving as president of the Northern Virginia Visitors Consortium, I led their efforts throughout the year.



The Fun Side Forum completed its second year as the region's only community tourism marketing forum and expanded both its attendance and its commitment to the industry. Through the ACVA, the forum will soon launch a tourism training program for frontline employees. The Forum holds provocative discussions on developing creative marketing programs and shares ideas for continuing beautification of the city, improving transportation within the city, and other topics related to tourism.

However, I consider the ACVA Board's third goal of taking a leadership role in the community and region to be the most important and far reaching. Both *Ladies Home Journal* and *Business Development Outlook* cited Alexandria as one of the top cities in the nation for its quality of life. It is this quality of life that attracts people to our City to live and to visit. It is our responsibility as leaders in tourism to see that our success in building Alexandria's tourism industry is balanced with maintaining a quality of life for both its residents and those who are here for only a short while and who may return to live. It is a delicate balance. A robust tourism industry brings in literally millions of dollars in much needed revenue for the City. But our assets are precious. And so, as responsible leaders in tourism, we must work in partnership with City government, business and civic leaders, and residents to maintain and improve the quality of life that we know is unique to Alexandria, the *Fun Side of the Potomac*.

"A healthy economy, an increased interest in urban heritage tourism, and an aggressive and focused tourism marketing program built around the *Fun Side of the Potomac* theme all contributed to Alexandria's healthy tourism industry in FY 2000."

Jo Anne Mitchell
Executive Director

Jo Anne Mitchell
ACVA Executive Director



ACVA's Executive Director honors Pat Gaffney as ACVA Partner of the Year for his support of the association throughout FY 2000. Pat is Director of Operations for Union Street Public House and an ACVA Board member.



The Year in Review



Alexandria Tourism Figures Surpass Region and Nation

The Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association completed FY 2000 having met its performance goals as the premier marketing agency for the City of Alexandria. It was the first year in which the association executed its marketing plan with its budget fully funded. It was the third year in which the City experienced an increase in tourism dollars spent and direct taxes generated. Tourism figures surpassed the region and the nation in several categories.

A nearly \$1.3 million budget was approved in late May 1999 for the fiscal year beginning July 1999, thanks to the joint efforts of Alexandria's City Manager, the Alexandria Mayor and City Council, and the Alexandria Hotel Association (AHA). At the close of FY 2000, the City showed a 13 percent increase in direct tourism taxes and a 17 percent increase in estimated tourism spending.

The ACVA credits the AHA for their role in helping to create this good news. Statistics show that in FY 1998 and FY 1999, significant increases in tourism spending and tax revenue directly correlated with incremental increases in the City's marketing budget for tourism. Convinced that additional marketing dollars would lead to an even greater increase in tourism spending and taxes, the ACVA and AHA designed a way to fully fund the ACVA's marketing plan. The AHA proposed a \$1 a room night charge for each guest staying in their hotels that took effect beginning in FY 2000. The proposal was accepted. Despite a .25 percent (.25%) reduction in the hotel room tax rate, resulting figures were up by a significant amount. The additional revenue generated by the hotel surcharge amounted to \$848,887.00, which nearly covered the City's budget allocation to the ACVA.

Among the most important measurements used by the ACVA to determine the year's performance are hotel occupancy rates. FY 2000 hotel occupancy rates increased by 5 percent in FY 2000, at the same time that new hotel rooms were added in the City. This increase is greater than both the nation and local region experienced during this period.

Additionally, Alexandria hotels surpassed both the nation and the region in the amount of revenue per available room (RevPar). Transient lodging tax increased by 9 percent (at a time when the rate decreased by .25 percent.) Closing FY 2000 statistics showed regional hotel occupancy up by 1 percent and revenue generated per room (RevPar) at a plus 7 percent. Alexandria food taxes increased by 11 percent and gross retail sales were up 4 percent.

While a robust national economy served as a favorable backdrop to this strong record, the fact that Alexandria surpassed most regional and all national figures during this period of time is indicative of a solid marketing plan being effectively executed.



"The important role of tourism in sustaining Alexandria's strong financial health was a contributing factor in the City's reaffirmed AAA bond rating."

**Phil Sunderland
City Manager of Alexandria
At the ACVA Annual
Membership Meeting**



FY 2000 ECONOMIC IMPACT

SPENDING		DOLLARS	LOCAL TAXES	TAX REC'D
Lodging	(19%)	\$ 89,090,685.00	5.25%	\$ 4,677,261.00
Meals	(29%)	\$ 135,980,510.00	3.00%	\$ 4,079,415.00
Public Transport	(16%)	\$ 75,023,734.00		
Auto Transport	(18%)	\$ 84,401,701.00	1.00%	\$ 844,017.00
General Retail	(10%)	\$ 46,889,834.00	1.00%	\$ 468,898.34
Admission/Recreation	(8%)	\$ 37,511,867.00		
Total		\$ 468,898,340.00		\$ 10,069,591.34

*These figures are estimates based on the overnight visitors to Alexandria. Day trippers or those staying with friends and relatives are not included.



What Visitors are Saying

The ACVA develops marketing programs based on research of what our customers want and statistics of what has been most effective in meeting or surpassing their wants and needs. Every advertising and direct mail campaign is deliberately targeted to a specific audience with a particular marketing goal in mind. Each effort is supported by a tracking mechanism to pinpoint exactly what works with which audience and why. Customer databases grow with preciseness so that future marketing efforts will reach those people who want specific information.

With Alexandria's tourism figures on the rise over the past three years, it would be easy to claim victory with our strategy, but this would not necessarily lead to our future success. During FY 2000, we launched several surveys to determine which of our marketing efforts have been most effective in bringing visitors to Alexandria. We dug deeper than tracking statistics to learn why people made the decisions that they did. We queried a random sample of leisure travelers who requested information from the ACVA to learn just what they thought of the service they received and whether they turned their interest in Alexandria into a visit to the City. We also surveyed professional meeting planners and group tour operators who planned to do business in Alexandria to determine their satisfaction with the services they received.



Alexandria's new City Manager Phil Sunderland addressed members of the ACVA and the Alexandria community on tourism's economic impact at the association's Annual Membership Meeting.

The survey of 2,052 potential leisure visitors generated an impressive 11.5 percent response rate, which provided enough solid information to determine the ACVA's effectiveness in meeting their needs. The results were overwhelmingly positive, with the majority of initial requests converting to visits to the City. The visitors came to experience Alexandria's history, shopping and dining, and to enjoy the many arts and antiques galleries located throughout the City. They learned about Alexandria most often through travel articles, seasonal ACVA brochures, and the *Official Visitors Guide*.

A survey of professionals in the corporate meetings and group tour sectors provided valuable information for increasing marketing efforts in these areas. Based on survey information, professional meeting planners made their decisions to hold meetings in Alexandria after meeting ACVA members and staff at trade shows and local travel industry events. Group tour operators often chose Alexandria as their tour destination based on word of mouth and referrals from other tour operators who had had positive experiences in Alexandria. We will use this information to develop future marketing programs to further grow Alexandria's meetings and group tour business.

This information is invaluable to ACVA members and staff and is used by both to determine marketing strategy and operational expenditures. Surveys, such as those taken in FY 1999, will continue to be a significant tool to determine best use of Alexandria's marketing dollars.

ACVA Performance Measures FY 2000

	FY 2000 Current Period	FY 1999 Previous Period	% +/-	DC Area	% +/-
Revenue Generation					
Room Tax Collected	\$ 4,677,261.00	\$ 4,301,954.00	9%		
\$1 per room night	\$ 848,887.00	n/a	n/a		
Food Tax Collected	\$ 7,536,316.00	\$ 6,794,017.00	11%		
Gross Retail Sales	\$ 19,269,483.00	\$ 18,551,223.00	4%		
Hard Measurements					
Hotel Occupancy	73%	69%	5%	72%	1%
Hotel ADR	\$ 93.24	\$ 90.40	3%	\$ 111.36	5%
Hotel RevPar	\$ 68.56	\$ 63.07	9%	\$ 80.49	7%

*Blank areas reflect "not applicable."



Ladies Home Journal Says Alexandria is Best for Women

Ladies Home Journal, one of America's best known magazines, selected Alexandria as one of the "Best Cities for Women Today and Tomorrow" in their February 2000 edition. What's good for tourists is also good for visitors and winning this designation is a boost for tourism in Alexandria. Described as "Cozy Yet Cosmopolitan," Alexandria was the only city to receive a perfect score for quality of life in the magazine's listing of top cities nationwide and placed in the top ten cities in all judging categories.



Business Development Outlook Ranks Alexandria in "Best Cities" Award

Business Development Outlook, a Dallas-based publication of the World Economic Alliance that focuses on economic development, ranked Alexandria as number one in the country for serving the health and medical needs of its community. The same report places Alexandria as 22nd in culture and entertainment and 28th in overall quality of life. These rankings are important in attracting high quality new businesses to Alexandria and they support the ACVA's efforts to promote Alexandria as a premier destination for visiting and residing.

Revisions to ACVA Bylaws

The ACVA Board of Governors approved revisions to the By Laws of the association that reflect current Board thinking in official matters. During FY 2000, the Board increased in size by three new members. These include a second member-at-large, a second national/international association member, and a second representative of the retail sector. Executive Committee membership was updated to consist of the chair, vice chair, treasurer, member-at-large, and ACVA executive director.



"The positive media exposure that the ACVA brings to the City and its retail community is invaluable. It's something you just can't buy."

**Elizabeth Wainstein
Owner, Brockett's Row
Antiques & Fine Art
ACVA Member**

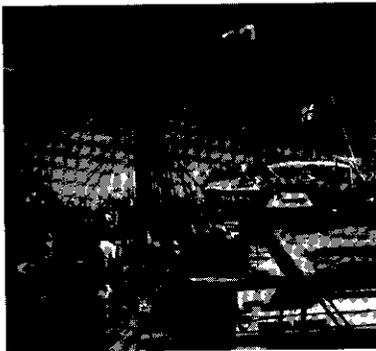




ACVA Membership Continues to Grow

Membership in the ACVA grew by 14 percent during FY 2000 to 148 members, representing an eclectic mix of businesses and organizations that make up Alexandria and the region. New members located in Old Town, Potomac West, and the Eisenhower Avenue business corridor have found that the ACVA offers a wide variety of services that meet their needs. Membership continues to grow outside those organizations that are traditionally tourism-focused to those businesses simply interested in building community ties and offering their ideas and support to tourism.

During the winter, ACVA's membership committee, chaired by Board member Pat Gaffney, organized a program to educate the business community on the benefits of ACVA membership and gained many new members in the process. The committee continued its outreach informally throughout the year. Committee members included Robert Hall, Michael Curtis, Dixie Kaufman, Elizabeth Wainstein, and Charlotte Hall. Membership retention and recruitment are ongoing initiatives of the association and its active members.



Membership Benefits

Official Visitors Guide
Web Site Listing, Advertising, and Links
Promotional Space in Visitors Center
Subscription to Potomac Splash!
Travel & Tourism Statistics
Access to Research
Participation in Marketing Campaigns
Fun Side Marketing Forum

Qualified Sales Leads
Business Referrals
Annual & Quarterly Calendars of Events
Menu in Restaurant Book
MAP Database Access
Annual Membership Meeting
Advertising Opportunities
Professional Development Seminars

"Recruiting new members is an ongoing responsibility of all ACVA members. The strength of our association is a reflection of its size, diversity, and involvement of our membership."

Pat Gaffney
ACVA Board Member
Director of Operations
Union Street Public House



ACVA Membership Committee (left to right): Pat Gaffney, Robert Hall, and Charlotte Hall.



Welcome to Alexandria



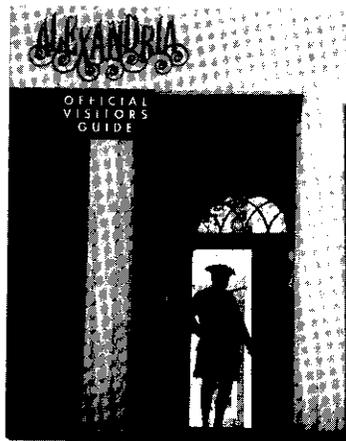
Ramsay House Visitor Center staff are often the first to greet many visitors to Alexandria. The ACVA's Visitor Center staff is knowledgeable and eager to work with tourists, answering many questions and solving problems on the spot. During FY 1999, more than 120,000 visitors signed the guest book in the historic Visitor Center, estimated to be 10 percent of the total number of visitors to the City. Thousands more called in for information on Alexandria in order to plan their visits. New souvenir items were added to the gift shop in the Center and the reception area was rearranged to better accommodate the many visitors looking for information and advice.

As picturesque as the Ramsay House is, the ACVA and Alexandria's City government agree that it is not adequate for meeting the needs of Alexandria's growing tourism industry. Options for a new location are under consideration that will offer easier access to tourists by public transportation and private auto, off-street parking, and larger facilities to better serve the traveling public. The ACVA looks forward to working in partnership with the City to better manage and serve Alexandria's visitors.

Official Visitors Guide Circulation at All Time High

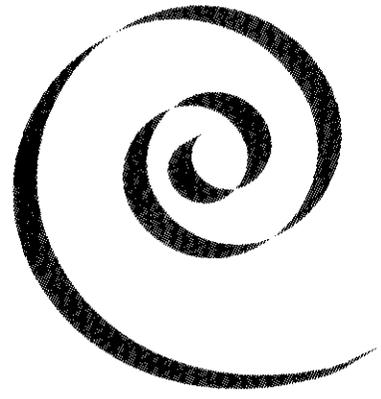
Circulation of *Official Visitors Guide to Alexandria* grew to 400,000 in FY 2000, and continues to be the Association's primary fulfillment piece. Advertising revenues increased over last year, distribution sites are up, as are requests for the *Official Guide*. In early 2000, we launched a program to announce the *Guide*, sending postcards to over 30,000 targeted households, meeting planners, group tour operators, and travel writers. Responses requesting the *Guide* amounted to 10.25 percent of those who received it, an unprecedented number for a direct mail response program.

Copies of the *Official Guide* are sent regularly in response to marketing and ad campaigns, and bulk orders are filled for group tours and corporate meetings held in Alexandria. Each ACVA member business or organization receives an ongoing replenishment of *Guides* throughout the year to display at their location. The 2000 *Official Guide* featured new walking tours, family activities, and sample itineraries for visitors.



ACVA executive director Jo Anne Mitchell (center), is joined by Dan Rosenblatt, Chair-elect of the ACVA board (left) and Wanda McKeon, president of the Alexandria Hotel Association (right). The AHA's proposal for a \$1 per room night charge at Alexandria hotels raised \$848,887 in taxes for the City of Alexandria.





Marketing Alexandria's Unique Seasonal Assets

ACVA continued three successful seasonal marketing programs, initially launched in FY 1999, to promote its unique assets and non-peak months of the tourism year. *Summer on the Fun Side*, *Fall for the Arts & Antiques*, and *Twinkling Lights and Historic Nights* incorporated special events from different aspects of the community to highlight times of the year that hold special significance and might otherwise be overlooked by the visitor. High-quality, artistically-linked brochures, designed by Brecher Design Group Inc., and marketed through direct mail campaigns, inserts into selected regional publications, and advertising and public relations efforts combined to "get the word out" early and often about Alexandria's unique experiences during summer, fall, and winter. Each campaign reached more than 50,000 people through direct mail alone, and thousands more through supporting efforts.

Summer on the Fun Side incorporated a coupon program supported by ACVA retail and restaurant businesses. Visitors redeemed coupons for discounts on food and gifts throughout the summer months.

To increase the effectiveness of its *Fall for the Arts and Antiques* program, ACVA partnered with Alexandria Arts Safari, Art on the Avenue, the Torpedo Factory Art Center and other local organizations to successfully approach Alexandria's Marketing Fund for matching funds from the City to help finance the marketing plan. Thanks to the support of the City, the combined efforts of these organizations reached audiences that could not otherwise have been reached working separately.



ACVA Board member Councilman David Speck dons a "hard hat" given in gratitude for his ongoing support of the ACVA and his initiative (along with Councilwoman Lois Walker) in securing improved Visitor Center facilities.

In addition to its direct mail, advertising and public relations efforts, ACVA used dioramas in Washington, DC's Metro stations as part of its *Twinkling Lights and Historic Nights* program. Visitors, commuters, and residents in the District read colorful diorama ads that encouraged them to visit Alexandria.



Film and Television Productions

Alexandria continues to be regarded as a welcoming location for film, with the ACVA working hard as the City's film office. The economic impact to Alexandria and the region is generally calculated at 20%-30% the cost of producing a particular film. This financial boost can be attributed to local products and services bought by the production companies during their stay in the area, including use of local contractors, materials for sets, and housing of the production staff and cast. In addition to the financial value, the publicity generated creates good will and exposure for Alexandria as a place people want to visit.

Columbia Pictures' *Hollow Man* brought Kevin Bacon, Elizabeth Shue, and William Devane to film in Old Town in the late summer of 1999. Also a steady stream of smaller TV and film productions and commercials were filmed in the City by the Discovery Channel, the Capitals hockey team, and local production companies.

The Jaguar Winter Prowl

In the fall of 1999, ACVA staff met with executives of Jaguar Cars Inc. and WGMS Radio to design and launch *The Jaguar Winter Prowl*. The program was created as part of the larger *Twinkling Lights and Historic Nights* marketing program targeted to bring local and regional visitors to Alexandria to shop during the winter months. The partnership with Jaguar Cars Inc. literally positioned the company in front of an audience demographically targeted as one of its marketing objectives, with models of the 2000 S type sedan participating in holiday parades and on display in Old Town Alexandria. Both organizations benefited from Jaguar Car's \$50,000 *Jaguar Winter Prowl* advertising campaign on WGMS radio. ACVA secured a one-year's lease on a 2000 S-type Jaguar for the winner of its shopping and dining program.

Thirty-four ACVA members participated in the program. In addition, ACVA member businesses donated hotel accommodations, dining and attractions for three free weekends in Alexandria, awarded to *Jaguar Winter Prowl* participants in a monthly drawing during January, February, and March. The monthly winners were also eligible for the grand prize.

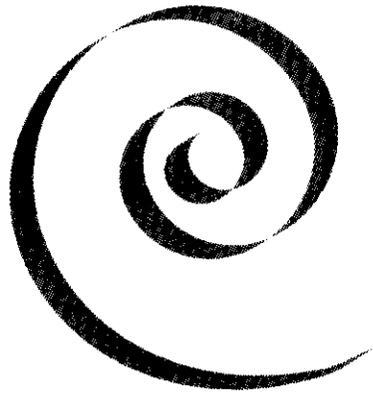
ACVA's marketing objectives were met. The program brought increased exposure to Alexandria through radio advertising paid by Jaguar, provided a reason for visitors to frequent Alexandria's restaurants and shops during the winter months, and positioned Alexandria with two well-respected corporate brands.



Carolyn Cooper (right) of Old Town Experience is interviewed by Australian television.

Alexandria continues to be regarded as a welcoming location for film, with the ACVA working hard as the City's film office.





In Partnership with American Express and Virginia Tourism Corporation

With ACVA executive director Jo Anne Mitchell serving as ACVA's representative and president of the Northern Virginia Visitors Consortium, the NVVC entered a partnership with American Express and marketing groups within the City of Washington, DC. They developed a regional travel planner that was mailed to 750,000 AMEX member households. *The Greater Washington/Northern Travel Planner* unified the region into "Northern Virginia" rather than five individual jurisdictions for the first time. The travel planner is being used as the major fulfillment piece for the region at trade shows, on sales missions, and for inquiries.

Through this partnership with American Express, the ACVA has developed an ongoing relationship that has led to other marketing programs with NVVC as well as with the ACVA.

The combined efforts of the NVVC jurisdictions (Arlington, Loudoun County, Prince William County, and Northern Virginia Planning District) have generated a new respect from Virginia Commonwealth tourism officials and across the region.



Mayor Kerry Donley tries on a little "Fun Side of the Potomac" at the ACVA Annual Membership meeting.

NORTHERN Virginia VISITORS Consortium

Partnerships

ACVA works closely with many organizations:

Alexandria Hotel Association
Northern Virginia Visitors Consortium
Virginia Tourism Corporation
Capital Region USA
Alexandria's 250th Anniversary Commission
Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Eisenhower Public Private Partnership

Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
King Street Metro Enterprise Team
Potomac West Business Association
Mid-Atlantic Receptive Services
Washington Convention and Visitors Association
Virginia Civil War Trails Program



Trade Shows and Sales Missions

Nothing is more effective in selling Alexandria to professional meeting planners and group tour operators than personal contact and building rapport. With this in mind, ACVA hotel representatives and members of the ACVA staff spent a lot of time on the road in FY 2000 and successfully booked corporate meetings, group tours, and leisure travel through AAA agency representatives.

They participated in the Travel Industry Association of America's international POW WOW in Dallas, Texas; Destination Showcase, hosted by International Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus (IACVB) in New York City; Springtime in the Park, sponsored by the Greater Washington Society of Association Executives (GWSAE) and held in Washington, DC; Affordable Meetings hosted by Hotel Sales Marketing International (HSMIAI); and National Tour Association (NTA) Convention.

ACVA sponsored its own first sales mission this year. A team of ACVA members representing Sheraton Suites Hotel, Holiday Inn Select, Alexandria Suites, Potomac Riverboat Company, and the Newseum met with AAA agency counselors in the Mid-Atlantic states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Virginia. ACVA members and staff also joined with statewide sales staff on Virginia Tourism Corporation's "Super Sales Blitz" in New York City.

Over 700 leads were generated from the trade shows and sales missions that were shared with other ACVA members, in addition to nearly 150 leads from other ACVA marketing efforts. These leads will translate into new business in the upcoming months. Revenue generated from meetings held during FY 2000 was more than \$310,000.

Working with the Media

Surveys show that travelers rely on published news as one of their most reliable sources of information for planning their trips. This may be in the form of feature articles in travel publications, the daily newspaper, the Internet, or television. The ACVA works with all media outlets to sell Alexandria.

During FY 2000, through the participation and hospitality of many of its members, the ACVA hosted 77 travel writers representing media outlets reaching over 40 million readers and viewers around the world. Ninety articles about Alexandria were published in 11 states and four foreign countries. And throughout the year, we worked with our local newspapers, television and radio journalists, helping to publicize Alexandria's 250th Anniversary Celebration and seasonal festivals.

The Association also served on the Advisory Board of the Travel Media Showcase to plan and then participate in their first annual trade show for journalists in Atlantic City in June. Many of those journalists whom we met visited Alexandria either prior to or after the show, and relationships were developed that will result in coverage in the upcoming months and years.



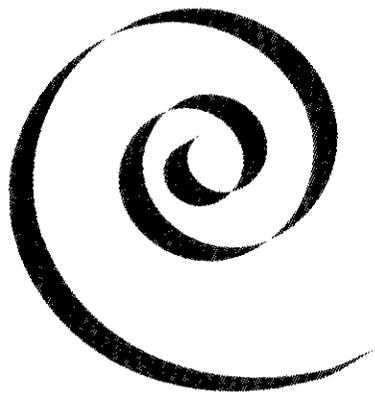
"Best place for a first date."

**Washingtonian Magazine
1999, 2000**

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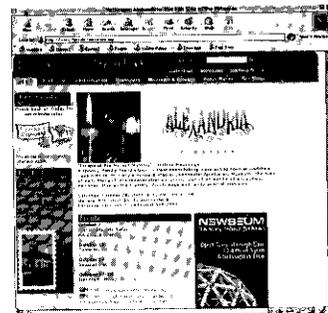


FunSide.com Transitions to New Design

FY 2000 proved to be a transitional year for FunSide.com, the ACVA's consumer web site. Since its launch in July 1998, the site has shown a consistent rise in usage. FY 2000 continued this trend. Well over 1,200,000 hits were tracked during the first three quarters of FY 2000 alone. Changes in ACVA's web site hosting company precluded tracking in 4th quarter FY 2000. However, even with this limitation in tracking, we can reasonably say that visits to the site doubled over FY 1999, which saw just over 530,000 hits.

Site-generated requests for *Official Visitor Guides* also doubled at nearly 1000 requests, up from 511 requests in FY 1999. Requests fluctuated according to the traditional tourist seasons for Alexandria, peaking in the fall and spring, and finishing with record requests for the year in May and June.

Demand for increasingly sophisticated features by an Internet savvy traveling public led to the development of an equally sophisticated ACVA web site toward the close of FY 2000. Previewed at the ACVA annual meeting in June, the association planned for its launch in September, 2000 with an aggressive marketing campaign to follow. The new FunSide.com features changing home pages highlighting the month's events and keeping the site fresh for repeat visitors; animation; and more interactive capabilities to provide visitors the best and latest information on visiting the Fun Side of the Potomac.



Jennifer Rettig of Rettig Design, Inc. previewed ACVA's exciting new web site FunSide.com at the association's Annual Membership Meeting in June.

Fun Side Forum Makes a Difference

The Fun Side Forum is making a difference, pulling together business people and association representatives, civic-minded folks, and the city government to exchange information and ideas. Meeting monthly for coffee and breakfast at different locations in Alexandria, those with an interest in promoting tourism in Alexandria gather to share marketing ideas and discuss specific issues. This year's topics ranged from a look at which businesses are interested in locating here to how to make and keep the City beautiful.

And the Fun Side Forum produces results. Observations regarding the fact that often frontline employees working in hotels, restaurants, and shops may not have the information they need to assist Alexandria's visitors led to the formation of the Fun Siders Tourism Program. This educational program, which is being piloted late in the year 2000, will cover such topics as Alexandria's history and attractions as well as customer service techniques.



Incoming Fun Side Forum Chair Mike Anderson, owner of Mango Mike's Restaurant.

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At the close of FY 2000, ACVA board member Charlene Duryea stepped down after two years as the first chair of the Fun Side Forum. ACVA board member Mike Anderson accepted the Chair's position to lead the Forum in FY 2001. The ACVA is grateful to Charlene for her hard work, and looks forward to the Fun Side Forum's third year with Mike as its new chair.



Board of Governors (as of June 30, 2000)

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Hotel Representative
Mr. Peter Greenberg, Owner
Morrison House

Vice Chairman, Association Representative
Mr. Daniel Rosenblatt, Executive Director
International Association of Chiefs of Police

Executive Committee, Chair Marketing Committee
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Mr. David Speck, Member
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Ms. Sarah Becker, Director
Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum

Restaurant Representative
Mr. Michael Anderson, Owner
Mango Mike's

Restaurant Representative
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Union Street Public House

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Vacant

Governor at Large
Ms. Charlotte Hall, Vice President
Potomac Riverboat Company

Executive Director
Ms. Jo Anne Mitchell
Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association

Ex-Officio Board Members (as of June 30, 2000)

Ms. Jean Taylor Federico
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Mr. Phil Brooks
Chairman, 250th Anniversary Commission

Mr. Ken Moore
President, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Paula Riley
Executive Director, Alexandria Economic Development
Partnership, Inc.

Mr. Lloyd Martin
President, Potomac West Business Association

Ms. Barbara Brecher
President, King Street Metro Enterprise Team

Ms. Sharon Hodges
Director, Eisenhower Public Private Partnership

Charter Members

Alexandria Hotel Association
Dandy Restaurant Cruise Ship
Hilton Alexandria Mark Center

Members

219 Restaurant, A Likely Story, Alexandria and Arlington
Bed & Breakfast Network, Alexandria Archeology,
Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, Alexandria City
Council, Alexandria Economic Development
Partnership, Inc., Alexandria Gazette Packet,
Alexandria Guide, Alexandria Hotel Association,
Alexandria Suites, Alexandria Symphony Orchestra,
Alexandria Tours, All About Town Inc., American
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Atlantic Canoe and Kayak Company, Ben & Jerry's Ice
Cream & Frozen Yogurt, Best Western Old Colony Inn,
Bike the Sites Inc., Bilbo Baggins Restaurant, The
Birchmere, Black History Resource Center, Blanca Flor,
The Blue Cottage, Bombay Curry Company, Boxwood
Antiques & Fine Arts, Brecher Design Group, Inc.,
Brockett's Row Antiques & Fine Art, Bullfeathers, The
Campagna Center, Capital Helicopters, Capital In-Sites,
Carlyle House, Century 21-Quality Homes, Chadwicks,
The Chart House, The Christmas Attic, City of
Alexandria, Clyde's at Mark Center, Comfort Inn
Landmark, Comfort Inn Van Dorn, Crilley Warehouse,
Dandy Restaurant Cruise Ship, Days Inn Alexandria,
Dishes of India, Doorways to Old Virginia, Ecco Cafe,
Eisenhower Public Private Partnership, Elder Crafters
of Alexandria Inc., Embassy Suites, Executive Club
Suites, First Impression Art Gallery, The Fish Market,
Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site, Gadshy's Tavern
Museum, Gadshy's Tavern Restaurant, Garden Club of



Virginia, Generous George, Positive Piece and Piece
Place, George Washington Masonic National Memorial
Association, George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate
& Gardens, Geranio Ristorante, Gold Line/Gray Line,
Gold Works, Guest Informant, Gunston Hall Plantation,
Hampton Inn Alexandria, Hard Times Cafe, Harmon
Horse-Drawn Hayrides and Carriages, Hilton
Alexandria Mark Center, Hilton Alexandria Old Town,
Holiday Inn Eisenhower Metro Center, Holiday Inn
Hotel & Suites, Holiday Inn Select – Old Town,
Homestead Village, The House in the Country, Il Porto,
International Association of Chiefs of Police, Joe
Theismann's, KB Tours, King Street Blues, Kinko's
Corporate, Kwik Kopy Printing, La Bergerie, Landmark
Mall, Las Tapas Restaurant, Lee-Fendall House (Virginia
Trust for Historic Preservation), Little Theatre of
Alexandria, The Lyceum, Mango Mike's, Mindful Hands,
Morrison House, Murphy's Irish Pub, Newseum,
Oceans of Wildlife Fine Art Gallery, Office of Historic
Alexandria, Old Town Coin & Jewelry Exchange, Old
Town Experience, Old Town Pendleton Shop, Pardoe &
Graham, Paul McGehee's Old Town Gallery, The
Pineapple, The Pita House Family Restaurant, Portner's,
The Potomac Mills Outlet Mall, Potomac Riverboat
Company, Potowmack Landing, Princely Bed &
Breakfast, Inc., Principle Gallery, Quimper Faience,
Radisson Old Town Alexandria, Ramada Plaza Hotel
Pentagon, Red Roof Inn, Regent University, Rettig
Design Inc., Rocky Road to Kansas, Santa Fe East, The
Scoop Grill & Homemade Ice Cream, Sheraton Suites
Alexandria, She's Unique, Siam 815, Silver Parrot Ltd.,
Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum, Stardust
Restaurant, Stella's, The Studio, Sugar House Day Spa
& Salon, Tempo Restaurant, Thrifty Car Rental,
Torpedo Factory Art Center, Tourmobile Sightseeing,
Union Street Public House, Villa d'Este Restaurant,
Virginia Rail Express, Virginia Scottish Games
Association, Vista Graphics, Warehouse Bar & Grill,
Washington Suites, West End Dinner Theater, The
Wharf, Wheel Nuts LLC, Where Magazine, Why Not?,
Wilson's Luxury Tours, Winterthur Museum Store,
Woodlawn Plantation / Frank Lloyd Wright's Pope-
Leighy House

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