



Blount Partnership

Annual Report
2019

BLOUNT PARTNERSHIP

Working with diligence, tenacity and determination, the Blount Partnership has established itself as the standard by which economic development, chamber of commerce and tourism development are measured statewide.

And with an attitude of never letting downturns get the best of them, the momentum generated by the huge number of jobs and capital investment brought to the county over the last seven years breed the optimism for continued growth.

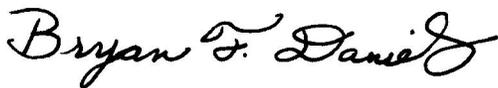
Per that ambition to make Blount County a leading economic driver in the state, the Blount Partnership will continue to strengthen the regional economy while enhancing residents' quality of life. By investing in the Blount Partnership through Chamber of Commerce memberships, funding of the Economic Development Board of Blount County and the Smoky Mountain Tourism Development Authority, you are helping to create jobs, attract new business, recruit a talented workforce and improve Blount County's competitive positioning and economic prosperity.

The long term goal of the Blount Partnership is to create primary, high-value jobs with competitive annual salaries with a significant capital investment. It also plans to work towards creating more opportunities for the business and family visitors as well as group travel while increasing educational and training programs for the business community.

Additionally, by hosting numerous educational training workshops and seminars while continuing to be an advocate for the business community by making federal, state and local elected officials available to its members, the Blount Partnership remains the only place where people can be heard on an individual basis. Its strong commitment to workforce development is the key to shaping the county's future economic growth.

The Blount Partnership thanks you for your contribution to enhance our economy and quality of life. The importance of the role our partners play in the economic development of Blount County cannot be overstated.

Sincerely,



Bryan Daniels
Blount Partnership President/CEO



Chris Soro
Chair, Blount Partnership Joint Operating Committee

VISION STATEMENT

The Blount Partnership will earn a national reputation as the primary catalyst for this region's competitive success and economic prosperity, steeped in strong tradition and leadership.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Blount Partnership is to serve its members and stakeholders while promoting economic growth and stability, fostering community development and enhancing the overall quality of life in the region.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Breaking through the norm and establishing yourself in the stratosphere of excellence is extremely difficult to do. Once you have, maintaining that lofty status and not letting up is the sign of a true champion.

The Blount Partnership not only soared high in 2019, it also maintained its high level of quality customer service, while looking toward the next goal to attain.

With the assistance of nearly 300 community volunteers, the Blount County Chamber of Commerce became the fifth chamber in the nation to top \$200,000 in revenue from 396 new and upgraded memberships during a two-day membership event produced by Your Chamber Connection.

The \$328,290 is the most ever generated by a chamber in the state of Tennessee, surpassing Cleveland/Bradley County Chamber's total of \$183,144. The membership total bettered the Blount Chamber's previous mark of 333 set in 2012.

Only San Antonio, Texas (\$501,503) generated more revenue during an event than the Blount Chamber's total in the nearly 30 years of membership events conducted by Your Chamber Connection. Other chamber's topping the \$200,000 mark include Tyler, Texas (\$239,775), Gwinnett, Ga. (\$231,447) and Springfield, Mo. (\$221,039).

As a gateway to the Smoky Mountains, Blount County ranked eighth among Tennessee's 95 counties in visitor expenditures at \$408 million in 2018 according to the Economic Impact of Travel on Tennessee Counties report issued by the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development and Gov. Bill Lee.

Among Tennessee's top eight counties in tourist spending, Blount County's 7.91% increase in visitor expenditures was edged out by Sevier County's 7.97% increase for the top spot.

Statewide, direct domestic and international travel expenditures reached an all-time high of \$22.02 billion in 2018, up 6.0 percent over the previous year, as reported by the U.S. Travel Association. The state also saw a record 119 million domestic visitors in 2018, up 5.1 percent from the 113 million the previous year.

For the 13th consecutive year, Tennessee tourism topped \$1 billion in state and local sales tax revenue, reaching \$1.81 billion. That marks a 4.5 percent increase over 2017 (national growth, 4.0 percent). Tourism generated 189,757 jobs for Tennesseans, a 2.9 percent growth year over year (national growth, 1.3 percent).

Blount County's \$408 million in visitor spending represents an increase of more than \$30 million from 2017 and over \$150 million from 2009.

Tourism jobs in the county were at an all-time high of 3,650 which also led to an all-time high payroll of \$109.86 million.

Local tax receipts of \$13.85 million was the sixth-highest total in the state, while state tax receipts totaled \$22.31 million, both records for the county.

From 2017 to 2018, Blount county saw marked percentage increases in visitor expenditures (7.9%), payroll (9.3%), employment (4.3%), state tax receipts (6.4%) and local tax receipts (6.3%).

Economic development continued at its rapid pace as a number of projects were pursued and many still in the works. A couple major announcements included Nisus breaking ground on a 30,000 square foot warehouse at its Rockford headquarters. Arconic Inc. announced an investment of approximately \$100 million to expand its hot mill capability and add downstream equipment capabilities to manufacture industrial and automotive aluminum products in its Tennessee Operations facility.

The Chamber continued to be a source of energy in the community while serving as a collaborative force that brings opposing sides together to focus on the getting the best results that make Blount County stronger. As the best way to make connections for business people, the chamber hosted nearly 200 networking events, a record setting 42 ribbon cuttings, business development workshops, human resource and managerial seminars to aid businesses of all sizes in their quest for new customers.

BLOUNT PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Education & Training

The Blount Partnership hosted the following educational training workshops and seminars for its members.

- Saw more than 600 participants in Human Resource, soft skills and other educational workshops
- Hosted a briefing with Maryville, Alcoa and Blount County Schools superintendents.
- Hosted Glenn Shepard's seminar entitled "How to Supervise People and Lead a Team."
- Hosted Donna Cutting's "Roll Out the Red Carpet: Engage Your Team to Deliver Excellent Customer Service."



Donna Cutting returned for a second year to present her customer service workshop.

- Hosted two Human Resources Supervisor's Training sessions in the spring and fall.
- Two classes on How to Network Effectively with Raeus Jae Cannon.
- Two classes on Networking 101 with Betsy Cunningham.
- Hosted workshops presented by the Tennessee Small Business Development Center and other Blount Chamber members with subjects including business planning, social media marketing, etc.
- Hosted a joint discussion with leadership from Maryville College, Pellissippi State, Tennessee College of Applied Technology, King University and Roane State about the state of post-secondary education and advancements in workforce development.

Advocacy

The Blount Partnership made sure that the business community was apprised of the latest happenings in our government.

- Advocated four government agendas for local, regional, state and federal issues.
- Hosted five governmental briefings featuring state and local elected officials. Visits were made from state Sen. Art Swann, state Reps. Jerome Moon and Bob Ramsey. Blount County Mayor Ed Mitchell, Maryville City Manager Greg McClain and Alcoa Deputy City Manager Andrew Sonner also held briefings.
- Hosted the Regional Legislative Breakfast with the Oak Ridge and Knoxville Chambers.

- Volunteers in Progress (VIP) group made a legislative trip to Nashville.
- The VIPs traveled to Washington, D.C., for a legislative visit.
- Hosted Congressman Tim Burchett for a discussion about business-related topics on the federal level.



A group of Blount Partnership VIPs made a legislative trip to Washington, D.C.



Mark Cate emceed the Regional Legislative Breakfast held at the Clayton Center off the Arts.

BLOUNT PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Tourism

The Blount Partnership continued to develop and execute marketing plans to reach leisure, business and luxury visitors to the area.

- Construction was completed on the new 30,000-square-foot convention and meeting space at the Airport Hilton.
- A marketing plan with an emphasis on courting meeting planners was executed.



A new convention and meeting space opens up many new opportunities to bring in more visitors.

- National Park Service report showed that 11,421,203 visitors to Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 2018 spent \$953 million in communities near the park. That spending supported 13,737 jobs. National park tourism is a significant driver in the national economy, with every dollar invested by American taxpayers in the National Park Service returning \$10 to the economy.
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- Blount County's \$408 million in visitor spending represented an increase of more than \$30 million from 2017 and over \$150 million from 2009.
- Among Tennessee's top eight counties in tourist spending, Blount County's 7.91% increase in visitor expenditures was edged out by Sevier County's 7.97% increase for the top spot.
- Tourism jobs in the county were at an all-time high of 3,650 which also led to an all-time high payroll of \$109.86 million.

- Local tax receipts of \$13.85 million was the sixth-highest total in the state, while state tax receipts totaled \$22.31 million, both records for the county.
- Hosted a Greeway meeting which updated the community on linking Knox and Blount Counties.
- Continued to market the mobile app for Cades Cove to help increase exposure for the Cove while giving visitors a way to tour it and get information without a cellular signal and post their own personal experiences.
- Continued management of the Main Street Program for downtown Maryville.
- Hosted seventh annual Tourism Day celebration in conjunction with National Small Business Week. Paid homage to the small businesses that rely Blount County tourism.
- Hosted monthly Downtown Maryville Association meetings.
- Saw great turnout at the Townsend Fall Festival with increased food and craft vendors.
- The Spring Festival saw solid attendance as the weather was good.



Hops in the Hills and Summer on Broadway continue to grow as summertime festivals.

- Leisure travel marketing plan continues toward soft adventure and pulling in travelers that enjoy outdoor activities while on vacation. Ad space in publications focuses entirely on outdoor sport activities, festivals and races.
- Brought in musical guest "The Cleaverlys" to kick off Summer on Broadway event.

BLOUNT PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Saw increased vendors and attendance at the fifth annual Hops in the Hills craft beer festival.
- Held the fourth annual statewide distillers gathering in East Tennessee at the Grains and Grits Festival at the Townsend Visitor Center. Attendance continues to grow with over 800.
- The Great Smoky Mountains Half Marathon continued to grow with increased participation for the sixth consecutive year with more than 2500 runners participating.



Grains and Grits Spirits & Food Festival continues to grow as an anchor event for the Tennessee Distillers Guild.

- Switched to Big Slate Media to coordinate social media. It saw significant exposure increases and engagement across all its platforms in the second half of the year.
- Attended a number of travel shows throughout the Southeast.
- Attended conferences including the Tennessee Hospitality and Tourism Association, Southeast Tourism Society Marketing College, Distillers Convention and the Governor's Conference.
- Worked with local established events like The Scottish Festival & Games, Smoky Mountain Snowdown, Tour de Blount, Dancing Bear Bicycle Bash, and Great Smoky Mountains Hot Air Balloon Festival to help market events out of state.
- Made six visits touring 19 tourism-related locations to familiarize the staff with what is available for visitors to do and see.

Economic Development

The Blount Partnership continued to recruit, retain and bring new business developments into Blount County while also pursuing overseas interests.

- The Blount County Economic Development Board was honored with the Tennessee Board of Regents' Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Philanthropy. The board was nominated by Pellissippi State Community College for its early pledge of \$1 million on behalf of Blount County and the cities of Alcoa and Maryville to support the Ruth and Steve West Workforce Development Center that will be built on Pellissippi State's Blount County Campus.
- Lauren Emert was hired as the Director of Economic Development to replace Rachel Buchanan who left to pursue other interests.
- The community has boasted a capital investment and jobs of more than \$2 billion and 6,000, respectively, since January 2013.
- Nisus inked an memorandum of understanding on research cooperation with the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture and South Korea.
- Connecting existing greenway on behalf of Blount County governments to the Blount County Industrial Park.
- Currently, working on a number of confidential projects involving aerospace, defense, company headquarters, heavy manufacturing and back office operations.



The Economic Development Board was recognized by the Tennessee Board of Regents for its contribution to the Ruth and Steve West Workforce Development Center.

BLOUNT PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Workforce Development

The Blount Partnership worked to bring together manufacturers and educational entities to determine future needs of the local workforce.

- Hosted Commissioner Jeff McCord from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development.



The Partnership routinely brings in key state of Tennessee representatives like Commissioner Jeff McCord from the Department of Labor & Workforce Development.

- Hosted two half-day summits for employers on work-based learning and apprenticeships.
- Hosted Blount County Signing Day for recent high school graduates who chose to go directly to work at Massey Electric, DENSO, Danny Davis Electrical Contractors and Cherokee Millwright.
- Partnered with Visual Voice to promote the job board website www.blountareajobs.com through Facebook and Instagram.
- A focus was made to geotarget businesses in East Tennessee that were either closing or downsizing in order to inform workers about job opportunities in Blount County.
- Promoted www.blountareajobs.com to aid employers find employees.
- Produced a video aimed at changing perceptions for construction and advanced manufacturing.
- Held Blount County Job Fair at Foothills Mall with more than 500 attendees and 50 businesses represented.
- Held teacher externships for Blount County teachers to learn more about the needs of local employers in the manufacturing sector.

- Hosted a Labor Education Alignment Program (LEAP) camp at Pellissippi State.
- Administered the Arconic Foundation Unemployed Youth Grant.
- Took national Manufacturer's Day and turned it into Blount County Manufacturing Month to celebrate modern manufacturing and its impact on this community.
- Held multiple workforce advisory committee meetings on STEM, advanced manufacturing, construction and information technology.
- Conducted monthly educator's roundtable to continue discussions on a shared Career Technical Education (CTE) facility in Blount County and continue discussions on career pathways.
- Along with the Blount County Public Library, presented 10 soft skills classes.
- Continued to develop plans to attract people to move to Blount County to work.
- Attended numerous job fairs at four-year and community colleges and high schools.
- Held an eighth-grade career fair at the National Guard Armory for all students in Blount County and city schools.



The eighth-grade career exploration fair introduced students to some of the careers offered by community employers.

BLOUNT PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Business Development

The Blount Partnership saw that businesses stayed connected with each other and offered avenues to reach the public through numerous networking and community events.

- With the assistance of nearly 300 community volunteers, the Blount County Chamber of Commerce became the fifth chamber in the nation to top \$200,000 in revenue from 396 new and upgraded memberships during a two-day membership event produced by Your Chamber Connection.



The support from the business community during the membership event led to a record-setting number of new and upgraded memberships.

- The \$328,290 is the most ever generated by a chamber in the state of Tennessee, surpassing Cleveland/Bradley County Chamber's total of \$183,144. The membership total bettered the Blount Chamber's previous mark of 333 set in 2012.
- Volunteers earning the event's top honors in leading the most productive teams were Dave Bennett of Cherokee Millwright and Jackie Mills of Jackie Mills Realty, who were named Godfaddah and Godmuddah, respectively.
- Inducted nine individuals as Blount County Chamber of Commerce lifetime members. They were honored with an engraved stone marker with their name in the Partnership's courtyard.
- The lifetime members are Joy Bishop, Wilson Borden, Marty & David Black, Dick Ray, Joe Dawson, Carolyn Forster, Sharon Hannum and Fred Lawson.
- Chamber Ambassadors made over 6,500 member connections helping to increase retention rate.

- The three-day Operation Thank You continued to be a positive where Ambassadors deliver membership packets and plaques to every member.
- Presented 57 business development workshops.
- Held a record 42 ribbon cuttings and grand openings, shattering the previous high of 28 in 2017.
- Hosted 12 coffee clubs, four afternoon mixers, two socials and three president's breakfast.
- A record crowd of over 750 attended Taste of Blount. The addition of food trucks and the Culinary Excellence Awards, as judged by local food experts, added to the festivities.
- Held a numerous one-on-one business counseling sessions.
- Helped more than 60 individuals with business start up seminar.
- Hosted seminars for human resource workers, monthly non-profit community collaboration, how to network training events, maximize Chamber membership programs.
- Presented the Best of Blount Awards featuring former prisoner of war Mike Durant, whose saga was chronicled in the movie *Black Hawk Down*.
- Continued to increase exposure for members participating in the fifth annual Small Business Saturday.
- Hosted numerous social media and digital marketing seminars for businesses.



Bryan Daniels shows off the artwork presented to the inaugural class of Blount County Chamber of Commerce that included Wilson Borden, Joy Bishop, Dick Ray, and Marty and David Black.

BLOUNT PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Communications

The Blount Partnership continued to make strides in communication to its Chamber members and stakeholders as well as the community.

- Made monthly appearances on WATE-TV to promote community events in Blount County. Also made additional appearances on WBIR-TV and WVLT-TV to promote Partnership events.



Tammi Ford was named the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce Executives Staff Member of the Year.

- Appeared on Michele Silva's B97.5-FM podcast to talk about Small Business Saturday and other community events.
- Published the Blount Chamber's 100-year anniversary book.
- Developed a 2020 communications plan for the Partnership with an emphasis on social media.
- Hired an administrative assistant to work with the communications and economic development departments in Afton Dobbins.
- Continued local radio advertising with WKVL and WBCR on the football broadcasts for William Blount, Maryville and Alcoa High Schools.
- Sponsored The Sports Page weekly sports talk radio program. Produced on Facebook Live, the Blount Partnership is branded on the screen along with two 30-second radio ads.
- Used the billboard located on U.S. 129 by Target in Maryville to promote events.
- Made more than 30 appearances on live or taped news stories for three television networks.

- Continued to use the Facebook Live option to show all ribbon cuttings.
- Changed programs in the lobby monitors to streamline the updating of events and information.
- Continue to build relationships with media representatives in print and electronic media.

Professional Involvement

- Vice President Tammi Ford was named the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce Executives Staff Member of the Year.
- President/CEO Bryan Daniels was one of 14 new executives named to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Committee of 100 (CCC100).
- Director of Tourism Kim Mitchell was one of 14 new members appointed to the Tennessee Hospitality and Tourism Association Board of Directors.
- Bryan Daniels was honored by Leadership Blount with its Community Leadership Award.
- Staff participated on Earth Day with trash pick up.
- Hosted the past Chamber Chair's luncheon.
- Bryan Daniels lectured at ETSU about the success of the Partnership's economic development program.

Managerial staff attended the following meetings and conferences to gain further insight into national trends.

- U.S. Chamber Institute for Organizational Mgmt.
- International Economic Development Council
- Southern Economic Development Council
- American Chamber of Commerce Convention
- Tennessee Chamber of Commerce
- Governor's Conference on Tourism & Econ. Dev.
- Public Affairs Conference/Boots N Business

Staff members also hold leadership positions at a number of professional organizations.

- Chair of Tenn. Chamber of Commerce Executives
- Board member of Tenn. Chamber of Commerce
- Vice Chair of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Southeast Board of Regents
- Board member of the International Economic Development Council
- East Tennessee Department of the Tennessee Economic Development Council
- Board member East TN Econ. Dev. Agency
- Board member of the Tenn. Economic Partnership

BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

Blount Partnership Joint Operating Committee

Chair Chris Soro, C2RL, Inc.
Vice Chair Chuck Alexander

Chamber Representatives:

Chair Bob Booker, DENSO
Chair-Elect Rick Shepard
Past Chair Chris Soro, C2RL, Inc.

Economic Development Board Representatives:

Chair Fred Lawson
Vice Chair Matt Murray, University of Tennessee
Past Chair Chuck Alexander

Smoky Mountain Tourism Development Authority Representatives:

Chair Tim Seay, Century 21 Smoky Mountain Real Estate
Vice Chair Jewell Overton, ProNova Solutions
Past Chair Bryan Cable, Hilton Knoxville Airport

Blount County Chamber of Commerce Board

Chair Bob Booker, DENSO
Chair-Elect Rick Shepard
Chair – Chamber Foundation Joe Tipton, Twin City Dealerships
VIP Chair Christi Fightmaster, Pugh CPAs
VIP Chair-Elect Stephen Deucker, Cirrus Aircraft
Auto Sales & Services, Transportation & Petroleum ... Trevis Gardner, Metropolitan Knoxville Airport Authority
Construction, Building Trades & Suppliers Ben Pinnell, Hickory Construction
Finance & Professional Tony Thompson, Pinnacle Financial Partners
Government & Public Utilities Al Scott, South Blount County Utility District
Hotel/Accommodations, Restaurants & Recreation Richard Maples, Kinzel Springs Partnership
Individuals/Non-Profits Vanessa Sparks, Blount County Habitat for Humanity
Manufacturers, Wholesalers & Agriculture Brian Hayes, Clayton Homes
Retail/Service/Real Estate/Insurance Drew Miles, Miles Insurance Agency
Board Member at Large Mike Lutheran, Royal Metal Powders
Board Member at Large Kathy Johnson, CBBC Bank
One Year Director Jason Brooks, LDA Engineering
One Year Director Brian Davis, Danny Davis Electrical Contractors
One Year Director Dennis Dockery, Michael Brady Architects
One Year Director Andrea Knight, Harmony Family Center
One Year Director David Shanks, Shanks & Associates

Ex-Officio Members:

Chair, Economic Development Board Fred Lawson
Chair, Smoky Mountain Tourism Development Authority.. Tim Seay, Century 21 Smoky Mountain Real Estate
Legal Counsel Matt Haralson, Kizer & Black, Attorneys
City of Alcoa Mark L. Johnson, City Manager
Blount County Ed Mitchell, County Mayor Blount County Government
City of Maryville Greg McClain, City Manager

BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

Economic Development Board

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Chair | Fred Lawson |
| Vice Chair | Matt Murray, University of Tennessee |
| Secretary/Treasurer | Gary Hensley |
| Past Chair | Chuck Alexander |
| Member | Greg Wilson, First Horizon |
| Member | Joe Dawson |
| Member | Monica Gawet, Tennessee Marble Company, Inc. |
| Blount County | Ed Mitchell, Mayor |
| City of Alcoa | Mark Johnson, City Manager |
| City of Maryville | Greg McClain, City Manager |
| Ex-Officio Members: | |
| Legal Counsel | Robert N. Goddard, Goddard & Gamble |
| Chamber Chair | Bob Booker, DENSO |

Smoky Mountain Tourism Development Authority Board

| | |
|---|---|
| Chair | Tim Seay, Century 21 Smoky Mountain Real Estate |
| Vice Chair | Jewell Overton, ProNova Solutions |
| Secretary/Treasurer | Boyce Smith, Walmart |
| Business/Resident Representative Alcoa | Bryan Cable, Hilton Knoxville Airport |
| Business/resident Representative Walland/Townsend Area | Chad Rochelle, Dogwood Cabins |
| Business/Resident Representative Maryville | Dr. Tom Bogart, Maryville College |
| City of Alcoa Representative | Mark L. Johnson, City Manager |
| City of Maryville Representative | Greg McClain, City Manager |
| Blount County Mayor or County Commission Representative | Jeff Jopling, Blount County Commissioner |
| Chamber Representative | Bob Booker, DENSO |

Blount Partnership Staff

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| President/CEO | Bryan Daniels |
| Vice President | Tammi Ford |
| Director of Events & Partnership Programs | Jessica Belitz |
| Director of Economic Development | Lauren Emert |
| Director of Membership | Jessica Hahn |
| Director of Accounting & Human Resources | Bruce Kerr |
| Director of Tourism | Kim Mitchell |
| Director of Communications | Jeff Muir |
| Executive Administrative Assistant | Brenda Farner |
| Accounting & HR Administrative Assistant | Ann Watson |
| Administrative Assistant | Deborah Nye |
| Administrative Assistant | Amy Lawson |
| Administrative Assistant | Claire Carter |
| Administrative Assistant | Afton Dobbins |
| Maryville Welcome Center Host | Kasey Ferguson |
| Townsend Welcome Center Host | Sharon Thornton |
| Facilities Maintenance | Robert Galyon |



Best of Blount Awards Winners



Richard Maples officially opened the Townsend Sunshine covered bridge as one of 42 ribbon cuttings.



Best of Blount Awards Guest Speaker Mike Durant



Congressman Tim Burchett visited with Chamber members.



Blount County Signing Day for Seniors Entering Workforce



Dave Bennett (L) and Jackie Mills (R) were the Godfaddah and Godmuddah of the membership event.



Blount County Chamber of Commerce Past Chairs



Taste of Blount