

## Marketing Department Annual Report 2021-2022

### Overview:

In 2022, Foley rebounded with higher guest numbers than those of the previous two years. As fears of COVID-19 became less of a threat, people were ready to travel. During the spring and summer months, visits and events settled back into a normal pattern.

### Welcome Center and Museum Counts – see attached charts

- The Foley Welcome Center greeted 4,411 visitors in 2022. This is an increase of 1,541 visitors (53.6 percent) in 2022.
- The Foley Railroad Museum saw 20,903 visitors in 2022. This is an increase of 4,654 visitors, (28.6 percent) over the 2021 count of 16,250.
- The Model Train Exhibit greeted 19,906 guests in 2022. This is an increase of 8,106 visitors (69% percent) over 2021. This large jump can be explained because during part of 2021, before vaccines were readily available, this venue was only open on Saturdays during the October through May timeframe. It reopened on three days a week during the summer months of 2021.
- The Event Train gave 10,039 rides in 2022. This is 373 more rides around the park than in 2021, an increase of 3.9 percent. Because the train rides were outside, volunteers kept the train running on schedule throughout 2021 and ride numbers remained high.
- The Holmes Medical Museum greeted 11,004 visitors in 2022, an increase of 391 percent over 2021. The explanation for this huge increase is that the museum was heavily damaged by Hurricane Sally in September of 2020. It remained closed until July of 2021, and was only open for three months during the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

### Online Presence

- Website users for VisitFoley.com totaled 60,616 for the year. This is an increase of 30 percent over 2021, when there were 46,340 users on this site.
- Website users for CityofFoley.org totaled 110,857. This is an increase of .7 percent over 2021, when there were 110,096 users on this site.
- Visit Foley Facebook activity totaled 51,329 for the year. This is a decrease of 32 percent. This can be attributed to Facebook changing algorithms, which challenged many marketers.
- The City of Foley Facebook activity totaled 60,054 for the year, down from 145,076 in 2021. This is a decrease of 58 percent. Activity on this site exploded when Hurricane Sally hit our area. This page was one of the main ways the city pushed information out to citizens. There has, thankfully, been no large event that has pushed usage to this extent this year. This site also experienced challenges with the algorithm change.

### Grants

The Marketing Department applied for and received two grants.

The Alabama Humanities Alliance awarded an Alabama Humanities Recovery Grant to assist in overcoming the impacts of COVID-19. The grant award in the amount of \$7,500 is being used to improve storage and access to city archives.

The Alabama Historical Commission awarded a 2022 Historic Sites Grant in the amount of \$6,200. It is being used to improve lighting in the Foley Railroad Museum.

### **Mayors Newsletter**

The newsletter was produced and mailed quarterly. A total of 18,000 – 19,000 newsletters are printed each quarter. The majority are mailed. A newsletter is sent to each box holder with a Foley address. Copies are also distributed at city hall, the library and the welcome center. An electronic copy of the newsletter is also posted on the City of Foley website.

### **Advertising**

- The Marketing Department purchases advertising for the city in multiple publications throughout the year. These include: the Alabama Vacation Guide; Coast 360; Gulf Coast Media's Visitor Magazine and Beachin' Magazine; Find it Local, published by the South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce; several RV guides; Facebook ads; the Mullet Wrapper and billboards on the Foley Beach Express, among others.
- The city also publishes a discount coupon sheet in partnership with local businesses. This is a joint effort between the Marketing, Recreation and Sports Tourism Departments and city businesses to attract visitors and keep them in Foley. The business agree to offer discounts that are included on a sheet that is distributed at the Welcome Center and also to sports teams who visit the area. This successful program has been in place since 2013.

### **Events**

- Events began in the fall with Midday Melodies in the Park. Three were held on Wednesdays in October. Residents welcomed the chance to get outside for an event where there was ample room for social distancing.
- Because of a fall flare-up of COVID-19, Hometown Halloween was cancelled and a drive-in movie was scheduled in its place. Unfortunately, there were high winds that day and the movie could not be shown because the screen is inflatable. It would have been a safety issue.
- Christmas in the Park seemed almost like normal in 2021, as COVID-19 numbers were falling in early December. The tree lighting was held in the park, featuring trees decorated by community businesses and organizations, an expanded Christmas Village, plus Santa and hot chocolate.
- The Foley Parade was especially long in 2021. It was followed by a very nice Let it Snow event. It included favorites such as arts and crafts, balloon art, Santa and train rides. New this year was a petting zoo and a market place with 15 vendors. Snow fell softly around eight miniature snowmen.
- Unfortunately, there was a January spike of COVID-19 cases so the Snowbird Coffee was held as a drive-thru event for safety. Event workers welcomed about 530 people.
- The second spring set of Midday Melodies was a big success. A total of five were held on Wednesdays, beginning March 16 through mid-April.
- The city again participated in the Saturday statewide April Walking Tours, organized by the Alabama Tourism Department. Volunteers led guests on a tour of Foley's historic downtown. There were a total of 82 participants.
- Music & A Movie resumed normally with no problems from COVID-19. Seven events were scheduled. The series ran from April through early June. Each event included music at the

pavilion, a marketplace along the sidewalk and a free movie in the park. These events are especially popular with young families and older couples.

### **Centennial Plaza**

- There were issues with the clock and the chimes on the tower during the summer. Both were repaired when the annual maintenance was done in August.
- Since the original installation of bricks, there have been 11 installations of new bricks that have been purchased. Bricks are ordered and scheduled for installation when the orders total about 30 bricks.

### **Caboose Club**

Caboose Club members donated 3,043 hours in fiscal year 2021-2022. These dedicated volunteers are a huge asset to the city. They greet visitors and keep the O gauge trains running. Although they make it look easy, it requires a lot of expertise to keep the exhibit operating smoothly. The group has about 20 members on the roster. A core group of about 10 keep the exhibit going. The group ranges in age from a 12-year old who comes with his dad to two ninety-year olds who are faithful members. In 2022, the Caboose Club greeted 19,906 visitors to the Model Train Exhibit.

There are currently eight event train drivers who keep the event train on schedule. They provided rides for 10,039 riders in 2022.

### **New Train Play set**

The old, small train located on the east side of the depot made of sheet metal became rusted over the years to the point of becoming a safety hazard. It was removed and placed in storage. The Caboose Club voted to use donated funds to replace it with a child-friendly option. In September, a beautiful new playground set that consists of an engine, coal car, tanker and caboose was installed. Children love the new addition. The set was a special order, manufactured with colors that would blend in with its historic surroundings.

<b>VISITORS</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Welcome Center	4,411	2,870	3,286	5,948
Railroad Museum	20,903	16,250	10,730	17,832
Model Train Exhibit	19,906	9,666	11,733	26,356
Event Train Riders	10,039	11,800	*	*
Holmes Medical Museum	11,004	**2,240	6,582	8,920

\* Train Riders were not counted before 2021.

\*\* Museum was closed for repair due to damage from Hurricane Sally September 2020 - June 2021

**FY 2022 VISITORS - ALL LOCATIONS**

VISITORS	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	TOTAL
Welcome Center	293	219	237	651	605	487	460	389	339	217	225	289	4411
Holmes Museum	748	699	706	756	1048	1115	886	827	1052	1115	915	1137	11004
Depot Museum	1827	1697	1204	949	1760	2233	1945	1709	2178	2592	1687	1122	20903
Model Train Exhibit	1403	1722	1390	988	1740	2212	1587	1283	2175	2600	1610	1196	19906
Event Train Riders	868	1143	750	142	693	586	655	573	1447	1668	927	587	10039
<b>Total Visitors</b>	<b>5139</b>	<b>5480</b>	<b>4287</b>	<b>3486</b>	<b>5846</b>	<b>6633</b>	<b>5533</b>	<b>4781</b>	<b>7191</b>	<b>8192</b>	<b>5364</b>	<b>4331</b>	<b>66263</b>
VISITOR INFORMATION PACKETS	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	TOTAL
Mailed Packets	402	142	144	6	452	366	200	268	373	243	326	312	3234
Welcome Packets	75	196	106	850	154	250	313	250	490	490	64	456	3694
<b>Total Information Packets</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>856</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>863</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>768</b>	
Sources: phone/website, South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce, Alabama Advantage, and the Alabama Vacation Guide													
WEBSITE STATISTICS	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	TOTAL
VisitFoley.com - Users	5299	4717	4578	4301	5553	5494	5300	5462	5269	5889	4943	3811	60616
CityOfFoley.org - Users	8189	8482	9035	8330	7937	9618	8811	9832	11233	9708	10847	8835	110857
Visit Foley Facebook Engagement	8160	8213	2293	2285	2449	3934	4714	6647	5605	2960	2050	2019	51329
City of Foley Facebook Engagement	3535	6058	3258	3118	3948	7710	16003	2428	1670	799	9139	2388	60054
<b>Total Online Activity</b>	<b>25183</b>	<b>21412</b>	<b>15906</b>	<b>14916</b>	<b>19887</b>	<b>26756</b>	<b>34828</b>	<b>24369</b>	<b>23777</b>	<b>19356</b>	<b>26979</b>	<b>17053</b>	
*New Comments, Likes, Shares, Views, Fans, etc.													
VOLUNTEER HOURS	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	TOTAL
Welcome Center	0	0	25	30	0	3	18	0	0	0	0	0	76
Caboose Club	218	216	184	260	258	280	279	219	277	295	297	259.5	3042.5
Kids Train Drivers & Assistants	24	16	12	4	12	28	26	26	32	27	26	20	253
<b>Total Volunteer Hours</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>279.5</b>	<b>3303.5</b>
E-Newsletters	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	TOTAL
Visitors	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1423	0	8581	0	0	10004
Local	0	0	0	0	0	0	1353	0	0	0	2147	0	3500
<b>Total Newsletters</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1353</b>	<b>1423</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8581</b>	<b>2147</b>	<b>0</b>	