

Marketing Department Quarterly Report

October, November and December 2019

Visitor stats

- Welcome Center visits totaled 973 for the first quarter of the fiscal year. This is down 13 percent from the same period last year. This is overall a higher percentage than normal, but we are not surprised as more people are getting information from their cell phones, and Foley information is readily available at the two nearby museums.
- The Holmes Medical Museum has a total of 1,562 visitors during the quarter, which is down 1.4 percent from the prior year. This is surprising, because overall that museum saw double digit growth last year. I believe the apparent decline is due to a learning curve in using a new electronic system for gathering visitor information.
- Visitors at the depot museum totaled 2,975 for the quarter. This was a 10 percent increase over that same period the prior year. With an increase of depot museum attendance, and better trained docents, it is no surprise that Welcome Center numbers are dropping. The good news is that visitors do not have to waste time gathering information.
- Foley's model train exhibit continues to break records for visitors, with 5,139 visitors during the first quarter. This is a 10 percent increase over that same period the prior year. This is especially impressive when considering the fact that this exhibit is only open 3 days a week, versus the six days a week the other two museums are open. Foley sees many more visitors overall on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays when the model trains are open. The event train runs on Saturdays throughout the year, and also on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the summer months. Caboose Club volunteers logged 1,182 hours during this quarter.
- The marketing department prepared 1,490 welcome packets this quarter, and mailed 152 packets in response to requests for information.
- Visits to the VisitFoley.org website averaged 4,736 visits per month for the quarter, and the city website averaged 7,937 visits per month for the quarter.
- Visits to the CityofFoley.org website totaled increase from the same period in 2018.

A new system for gathering visitor information was begun Oct. 1, 2019. Kiosks that use iPads are now located in the lobbies of both museums and the welcome center. We are still working out the kinks. The system allows us to collect data about where they are from, the number of people in the party and where they are staying.

Activities and Events

October 2019

- The city's Halloween event was rebranded in Oct. 2019 as Foley's Hometown Halloween. The event was held in the streets of downtown Foley, where thousands enjoyed the party. About 35 businesses and organizations, including churches, had booths for activities and entertainment during the event. Fire, police, public works and parks departments provided critical services. The closing of a US Highway and several city streets in a narrow timeframe is tricky. The city team did an awesome job.

November 2019

- Attended the State of Alabama Department of Tourism statewide quarterly meetings on Nov. 18 and 19 in Tuscaloosa. The agenda includes meetings of The Alabama Travel Council, the Alabama Association of Destination Marketing Organizations and state tourism department updates. I serve on the planning committee for the Governor's Conference on Tourism, the top state-wide tourism event each year.

December 2019

- The Christmas in the Park and Let it Snow events were held in Heritage Park on Dec. 6 and 7. Both events were well attended. Remodeling of the pavilion in the park and the extended patio was completed for the event. Let it Snow was done differently this year. Literally tons of ice were replaced with small machines that turned a liquid mixture into what appeared to be falling snow. Another new change was the introduction of a 12 ft. inflated snow globe that visitors could get inside for photos. Both changes were well received by those who attended.
- In December, we completed a year of collecting oral histories, with an emphasis on gathering stories about the train and the depot building. During 2019, a total of twenty-two histories were made.
- During the past year, marketing has established a system to screen event train drivers using background checks for DMV and sex offender status. Over the past six months, we have had a complete turnover of event train drivers. We are fortunate to have six new drivers on the roster.
- During the past year, the depot museum has reworked our system for accepting museum collection items, based on recommendations from the Alabama State Archives Department in Montgomery. State archives representatives did a site visit in September to see the depot and hospital museums, and also the model train exhibit.