



October, November and December 2024

Visitor Stats

- Welcome Center visits totaled 925 for the quarter, up from 826 during the same period in 2023. This is a 12 percent increase.
- The Holmes Medical Museum had a total of 1,359 guests this quarter, down from 1,753 in 2023. This is a decrease of 22 percent.
- The Depot Museum greeted 4,286 visitors this quarter, down from 4,646. This is a decrease of 7 percent from the same period in 2023.
- The Model Train Exhibit greeted 5,192 guests during the first quarter of 2024, compared to 5,002 visitors during the same period in 2023. This is an increase of 4 percent.
- Caboose club members logged 652 volunteer hours during this quarter compared to 881 hours in 2023. This is a decrease of 25 percent.
- Getting a free ride around Heritage Park on the park train is one of the most popular things to do on Saturday's in Foley. During this quarter, the park train gave 1,636 rides, compared to 1,861 during the same quarter last year. This is a decrease of 12 percent.
- The Welcome Center mailed 122 visitor packets to those who requested to receive tourism information during this quarter. We also distributed a total of 470 visitor packets to organizations that requested them.
- In February of 2024, the city began using Critical Mention, a media monitoring service used to track, analyze and share earned media coverage. The program also tracks reader sentiment. During the months of October, November and December, a total of 55 press releases were sent by the Marketing Department, generating 432 stories. Please see the attached page for more detailed information.

Events

- Midday Melodies – A series of four Midday Melodies were held during the month of October in Heritage Park. Attendees were primarily retired couples, but also included a good showing of people who seemed to be enjoying an outside lunch break. Approximately 150 attended each event.
- Hometown Halloween. Good weather helped the city have one of the best crowds ever for this event held in the streets of Downtown Foley. Although it is impossible to get a true count for the event because of so many "entrances", officials estimate approximately 3,500 attended. Over 40 businesses and organizations provided booths for the event. There were approximately 350 participants in the costume contest. Orchestrating this event requires numerous city department. This includes police, fire, street, sanitation and parks departments. Other departments, such as the senior center and library, participated by hosting a booth.
- Christmas is the Park is a great way to show off the city holiday decorations. The tree lighting was well attended. Seventeen organizations competed in a Christmas tree decorating contest that creates Foley's Christmas Tree Lane. Junior Ambassadors served 40 gallons of hot chocolate and hot coffee, as it was a very chilly evening, in addition to hundreds of Little Debbie Christmas tree snacks. Santa arrived in a fire

truck and spoke with each child who stood patiently in line to see him. Manufactured snow fell softly on the decorated trees and in the children's village during the event.

- Let it Snow was also successful. The weather was sunny and comfortably cool for this event. In addition to music by the Foley High School Band, art opportunities provided by the Foley High Art Department, bounce houses and balloon artists, "Whoville Hair Styles" created by South Baldwin Chamber Foundation members, there were 27 market vendors. There were also several choices for food and beverages. The event was attended by thousands. It immediately follows the Foley Kiwanis Christmas Parade.

Other news

- On Thursday, Oct. 17, Director LaDonna Hinesley presented a program at the Military Officers of America luncheon covering the topics of Foley's Barin Field and Foley being named a WWII Heritage City.
- On Dec. 5, 82 years to the day that Barin Field was commissioned, an exhibit on Barin Field and Foley being honored as a WWII Heritage City opened in the Foley Railroad Museum. Approximately 85 people, including Mayor Ralph Hellmich, city council representatives, and numerous city officials, as well as many family representatives of those who served at Barin Field, attended the opening.
- On Dec. 13, a meeting that included a luncheon for the volunteers who are vital to the success of the Foley Railroad Museum and Model Train Exhibit was held at the Foley Civic Center. This included members of the Caboose Club, Event Train Drivers and the Museum Archives Board. An overview of the previous year was presented.
- The Caboose Club is going strong. This past summer we helped celebrate two 93-year birthdays. (This may indicate that folks who operate model trains live longer!) There are about 15 names on the volunteer roster and about eight regulars who can be counted upon to volunteer several times a week. There are currently two part-time employees embedded in the group.



More than 200 posts and releases helped generate about 2,400 media reports featuring Foley in 2024.

Since the city began using the Critical Mention service in February, searches generated 1,811 stories that included the city of Foley. That total does not include stories in Gulf Coast Media.

We have attempted to add GCM, but for some reason due to the nature of their website or the Critical Mention search criteria, stories on that site have not appeared in Critical Mention.

The GCM website lists about 600 stories featuring Foley in 2024.

Of the individual stories reported in Critical Mention, 689 were positive, 733 were negative and 389 neutral.

A handful of crime or accident incidents generated the majority of the negative stories. A fatal stabbing in March generated 138 stories. A hit and run incident that same week generated 88 stories. The crash of the gyrocopter generated 50 and the lockdown incident and arrests at Foley High School generated 77.

This is not uncommon in news coverage. An old newsroom saying is "if it bleeds, it leads."

Positive stories generated by the Foley Marketing Department, however, received a great deal of coverage.

The total number of stories fell into 266 categories based on specific releases or incidents. Of those, 197 were positive, 36 were negative and 33 were neutral.

The city sent out 244 press releases and postings in 2024.

In the last year, essentially all the reports that featured Foley city operations and activities in the city of Foley found in Critical Mention or Gulf Coast Media have been positive.

Critical Mention lists an audience estimate for each story based on reported potential audiences for each media outlet covering the story. The most covered stories each month since Foley began using Critical Mention had a total estimated potential audience of about 84 million.*

*The audience reports do not include sources for the estimates or how the numbers were determined (Ratings, press runs, website hits). Most reports seemed to fit possible totals for the area market. Some numbers that appeared to be more "optimistic" were not included in this report.

A breakdown of the stories found in Critical Mention in 2024 includes:

December: 158 total stories. Most coverage – the gyroplane crash with 50 stories. The Critical Mention total estimated possible audience for the gyroplane crash, based on audience estimates for each outlet reporting, was 15,465,107.

November: 105 total stories. Most coverage – library bids with 18 stories. The total estimated potential audience for the library story was 14,322,458.

October 140 total stories. Most coverage – Foley helps with hurricane relief with 38 stories (six stories in September). The total estimated potential audience for the hurricane relief story was 956,372.

September: 198 total stories. Most coverage – Foley High lockdown with 77 stories. The total estimated potential

audience for the FHS story was 1,314,542.

August: 161 total stories. Most coverage – water conservation urged during dry conditions with 91 stories. The total estimated potential audience for the conservation story was 2,109,327.

July: 65 total stories. Most coverage – Foley Sports Complex named one of Top 5 in Alabama. The total estimated potential audience for the sports complex story was 2,942,543.

June: 100 total stories. Most coverage – houses burned after lightning starts fires. The total estimated potential audience for the lightning story was 14,219,447.

May: 166 total stories. The most coverage listed was a storm relief story that included Riviera Utilities with 59 media reports. That story had an estimated audience of 15,188,086. The May report that only included Foley that had the most coverage was the approval of the safe room. That report generated 14 stories with an estimated potential audience of 255,232.

April: 143 total stories. The most coverage was for Riviera safety awards with 54 stories. The Riviera report had an estimated potential audience of 1,329,716.

March: 544 total stories. The most coverage was for a fatal stabbing in Beulah that generated 138 stories with an estimated audience of 17,509,046. The report that generated the most coverage that was not crime related in March was the death and funeral of former Mayor John Koniar, which generated 33 stories with an estimated audience of 460,925.

February: 31. Most coverage – Foley named the top location to retire on a limited budget with 24 stories. The estimated potential audience for the feature was 916,447.

