



2024

# ANNUAL REPORT

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# AN ACCOMPLISHED YEAR OF **TOURISM SUCCESS**

Dear friends in tourism,

As the **solar eclipse** of April 2024 put the astronomical spotlight on Buffalo, it also helped us shed light on the broad spectrum of our visitor experiences. Tourists donned special glasses for a once-in-lifetime view of the total eclipse of the sun in some unique and beautiful places here: At the Outer Harbor's new **Terminal B**, in the stands of **Sahlen Field** ballpark and on the lawn of the **Richardson Olmsted Campus**.

The options were a showcase of what's special about our home. Unique local experiences continued to unfold with the seasons. Visitors came for the **Garden Walk** and other open garden events. They strolled, cycled, kayaked and sailed along our shores. They took in the music scene at local **porchfests** and East Aurora's **Borderland Music + Arts Festival**. Visit Buffalo Niagara (VBN) spread the word about highlights like these through its advertising and media relations initiatives. These efforts helped attract the visitors who contributed to a record of **\$2.4 billion in tourism spending** in Erie County in 2023, up from \$2.2 billion in 2022.

VBN's strong 2024 included booking the **Select Traveler** conference of meeting planners, the **American Cheese Society's** convention, and the **Retail Confectioners International's** annual gathering. These attendees met with colleagues in the newly upgraded **Buffalo Convention Center**. Business First bestowed a **Brick-by-Brick award** on the center in recognition of its exterior and interior improvements.

As we look ahead to the rest of 2025, there's a lot to celebrate: from the newly renovated **Michigan Street Baptist Church** to our **Erie Canal bicentennial** highlights at Canalside, the Buffalo Maritime Center's Canal Boat "**Seneca Chief**" and the new "**Waterway of Change**" canal history exhibit.

We look forward to staying connected and sharing **more good news** in the year ahead.



*Patrick Kaler*

Patrick Kaler

President & CEO, Visit Buffalo Niagara & Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission

## **JUST THE NUMBERS: 2024 IN REVIEW**

TAKE A LOOK BACK AT ALL WE ACCOMPLISHED

**124,177**

HOTEL ROOM  
NIGHTS BOOKED

**155**

OUT-OF-TOWN  
EARNED MEDIA  
PLACEMENTS

**27**

PRESS  
VISITS

**8,141**

NEWSLETTER  
SUBSCRIBERS

**270**

MEETINGS, CONVENTION,  
TOURS & SPORTING EVENTS  
BOOKED & HOSTED

**\$103M**

IN CALCULATED  
ECONOMIC IMPACT

**1,482,234**

ENGAGED WEBSITE  
SESSIONS\*

**41,789**

SOCIAL FOLLOWERS  
GAINED

**12,450,279**

VIDEO VIEWS  
ACROSS PLATFORMS

**150,000**

VISITOR GUIDES  
DISTRIBUTED

\*Defined as a user interaction with a website that lasts at least 10 seconds.

## SALES & SERVICES ►



Meet the Cheesemakers at American Cheese Society

The **American Cheese Society** conference, the **North American Science Fiction Convention**, the **Oddities and Curiosities Expo** and **National Association of Black Storytellers** gathering were among the 270 meetings booked by VBN's sales team that drew more than 170,000 people to stay at our hotels, dine at our restaurants and see our sights.

## DESTINATION EXPERIENCE ►



Buffalo Restaurant Week

VBN's coordination of **Buffalo Restaurant Week** helped elevate more than 150 restaurants that decided to join the biannual celebration of our region's restaurateurs. Their special menus and prices captured media attention, kept the focus on our culinary delights and helped attract adventurous eaters from across Western New York.

## MARKETING ►



Telly Award-winner, The Art of Light

VBN's marketing team earned national recognition in 2024. VBN took home **two Telly Awards**, part of an annual showcase celebrating the best work in television and on video, for "The Art of Light: Stained Glass in Buffalo, N.Y.," with Paget Films. For its website, VBN won a **silver award** for excellence from the North American Travel Journalists Association.

## SPORTS COMMISSION ►



Adaptive Cornhole Tournament

The Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission continues to attract a wide range of adaptive sports, tournaments, championships and games. The BNSC team helped bring a variety of adaptive sports tournaments to our region in 2024, from a **Wheelchair Lacrosse series** to an **Adaptive Cornhole Tournament** and the **Jeff Sauer World Deaf Hockey Series** with teams from Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, and the U.S.



## DESTINATION EXPERIENCE ►



Buffalo Eclipse safety workshop

In anticipation of the April 2024 solar eclipse that brought thousands of visitors to our region, VBN spearheaded community preparations like a **pre-eclipse safety workshop**. VBN's industry relations team also debuted a **reimagined "In the BUF" newsletter**, which has an impressive weekly open rate and features industry news, upcoming events and destination highlights.

## SALES & SERVICES ►



Brand USA Travel Week

To encourage more international visitation, Visit Buffalo Niagara's Leah Mueller traveled across the ocean to meet with media and tour operators at the **Brand USA Travel Week** in London, a convention sponsored by the nation's destination marketing organization.

## SPORTS COMMISSION ►



Credit: Black Diamond

In September, the Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission hosted the first **Compete Sports Diversity Women's Summit**, which promoted leadership careers for women in sports with an emphasis on the growing sports of women's touch and flag football. The conference was also the start of a new BNSC effort to bring a women's flag football tournament to Buffalo.

## MARKETING ►



Beau Fleuve Music & Art Celebration

Visit Buffalo Niagara and Buffalo Toronto Public Media partnered to create a new **15-episode podcast** series called **"Hear Here,"** which profiled unique local music makers and venues like Sportsmen's Tavern, the Borderland Music + Arts Festival, Goo Goo Dolls bassist Robby Takac and Beau Fleuve Music & Art Celebration founder Lindsey Taylor. The series was part of a broader VBN marketing campaign to promote Buffalo's music scene that included advertising spends in key print, digital and broadcast outlets.