

2019 St. Marys Convention and Visitors Bureau Authority

Annual Report FY2019 (July 2018 – June 2019)

Prepared & Presented by: Angela Wigger, Tourism Director and Judy Thurner, Chairman

CVB Mission: To promote St. Marys as a desirable tourist destination, increase economic impact and foster a quality visitor experience to benefit the city.

CVB Board: Judy Thurner, Chairperson;
Darlene Landreth, Vice Chairperson;
Sugar Yadav, Secretary;
Mary Neff, Mardja Gray, Jerry Lee, Valerie Fautz, Melissa Braun, and Councilmember Jim Goodman

What is our Primary funding source?

6% local and 3% county Hotel Occupancy Tax

FY12 - \$109,377	FY16 - \$145,979
FY13 - \$102,253	FY17 - \$157,570
FY14 - \$118,906	FY18 - \$148,027 *
FY15- \$138,298	FY19 - \$140,215

*FY18 – 1st year of 1/3 Camden County Tax revenue allowance. IRMA alone caused a 64-day closure of the island.

*FY19 – MICHAEL, Severe Spring weather, and a January 2019 government shutdown caused over 38 days of island closures.

Other Sources: Gift Sales, Golf Cart History Tours, Motor-coach Step-on Guide Services, Scholarships/Grants, Donations, Community Market, Event Fees, Sponsors, and City of St. Marys.



CVB Authority Board Continued Project Goals for FY2019 & FY2020:

Key Target Groups/Markets – Cycling & outdoor enthusiasts

(Ecotourism), leisure travelers and small business/social meetings, and reunions. Key Geographical Markets: Drive markets are Atlanta, Middle/Northwest Florida, Georgia Coast (events), South Carolina, North Carolina. (Cities: Atlanta, Savannah, Augusta, Orlando and Tampa, Charlotte, Charleston, and Greenville)

Promotions to Key Target Groups to Increase Economic Impact – Biking and other nature-based ecotourism groups (support of cycling efforts, including the Three Rivers Ride and Bike Ride Across Georgia Winter Ride). Focus on birdwatching (Birdwatcher’s Digest), fishing and water activities promoting outdoor adventure (Guy Harvey Magazine). Robust use of digital advertising and social media marketing, including \$10,000 in marketing grants from GDECD Tourism Division for print and digital marketing for FY19.

Initiatives & Accomplishments

- Strengthened use of an event coordinator on a part-time contracted basis through half of the year July 2018 – February 2019)
- 48 Events from July 1, 2017 –June 30, 2018 for an estimated minimum total of 11,710 people brought downtown for events.
- 57 Events from July 1, 2018 – June 20, 2019 for an estimated 10,000
- Continued marketing efforts at the Georgia Visitor Center at Exit 1 to capitalize on the strength of the I-95 corridor. Including floor to ceiling coverage, interior banner, and signs. A billboard and window perfs covering the front entrance that feature photos of St. Marys, a NPS poly/fiberglass sailboat sculpture with “Visit St. Marys Waterfront” prominently displayed on the popular photo opportunity, plus a Visit St. Marys photo frame photo op, and a Welcome to St. Marys sign upon entering the building, all provide a much remarked upon first impression of St. Marys. The CVB fosters business relationships with the Georgia Visitor Information Center staff at I-95 Exit 1 and at I-95 Port Wentworth/Savannah. We utilize available opportunities to their maximum potential with welcome center staff training at the state center.
- Facilitates participation and placement in possible advertorial/editorial opportunities, especially festival information – photo heavy
 - Certified Georgia Regional Visitor Information Center with reports sent to GDEcD, Tourism Division on a monthly basis. Attendance at mandatory quarterly state RVIC meetings, staff training, and participation in two state Georgia On My Mind Days.
 - Director attended the Ga. Regional Visitor Information Center Workshop and Governor’s Tourism Conference to keep abreast of latest trends & networking.
 - Director serves as Georgia Coast Travel Assn. board member & Submarine Museum B.O.D.
 - Continued CVB sponsorship of the Three Rivers Ride and of Rustapalooza.
 - Support /assistance with accommodations, information, dining arrangements, tours, and/or hosted events for groups such as, BRAG, Three Rivers Ride, Signature Festival Vendors, Group Tours, etc.



Atlanta Magazine

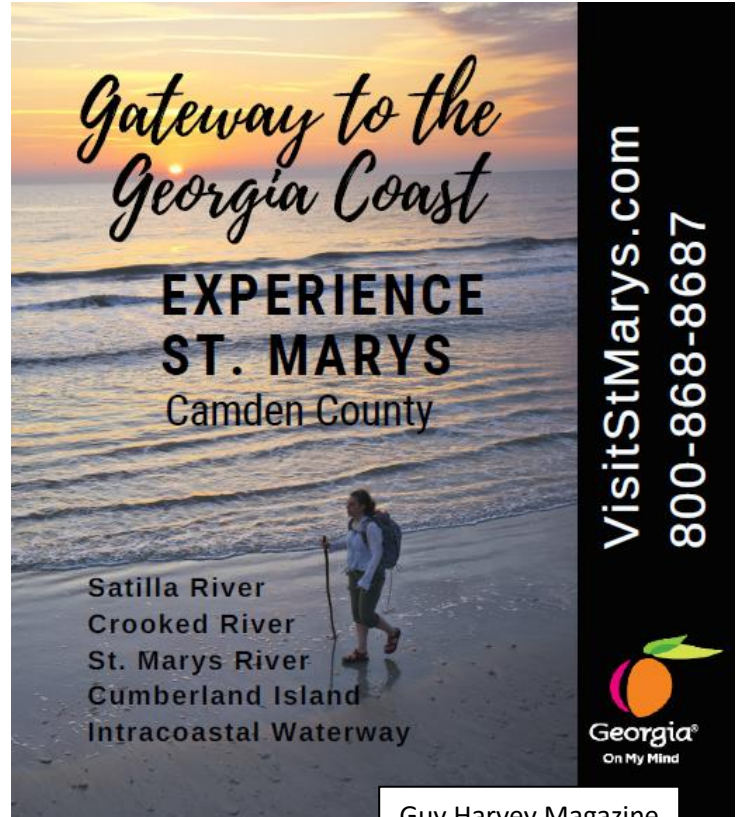
- Facilitated the placement of and highlighted in editorial/ad features in media outlets including Florida Times Union, Brunswick News, Georgia Magazine, Atlanta Magazine, Georgia Public Broadcasting
- Facebook growth - Page Likes of 13,800 (300 in 2011; 3,000+ in 2014, 6,480 in 2015; 8,200 in 2016; 9,315 in 2017; 10,683 in 2018)

Other General Responsibilities

- Marketing/Promotions through social media, newsletters, web updates, and fam tours.
- Media buys in appropriate marketing mediums, as decided by authority board, to sustain and increase economic growth in tourism; Works with partners on developing deals and promoting existing product (special rates and coupons); Promotion/PR for/of local and regional events; Management, updating, and/or creation of media, brochures, video, handouts, advertising placement, and web content; Management of St. Marys Welcome Center and Saturday Community Market
- Required monthly and annual reports and financial responsibilities to city, county and or state officials.
- Implemented marketing/promotion plan actions with \$41,268.00 spent towards marketing and advertising efforts in FY2019. Highlights are as follows:

DIGITAL- Website with Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and a mobile responsive program, Facebook Advertising of website and boosts of various events and posts; Constant Contact monthly newsletter, TripAdvisor ad campaign reached over 6,079,000 impressions, Social Media; AAA Living South digital banner

PRINT or PRINT/DIGITAL MIX - Highlights: Atlanta Magazine (350,000 readership), MAPTech Boating/Cruising Guide, St. Marys Magazine, AAA Living Magazine (great lead source), Georgia Coast Travel Association brochure and website, Chamber Relocation Guide,



Guy Harvey Magazine



Southern Living Magazine

Richmond Hill Reflections Magazine, Southern Living ads in October and April (almost 1 million in readership and a 15.5 million reach). Guy Harvey magazine targeting the upscale outdoor traveler in a special Georgia section.

TELEVISION/RADIO – Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) delivers quality television and radio with robust content and images. We leveraged a co-op marketing opportunity with the Georgia Coast Travel Association and secured (33) thirty-three, 15 second TV and 25 radio ads through a grant program with GPB, which resulted in over 900,000 impressions in Georgia.

OTHER – Jacksonville International Airport kiosks, I-95 Exit 26 Billboard; Haddock Road/Georgia Visitor Center Billboard. Representation at the “55+ Lifestyle Travel Expo”. Free newsletter ad to over 250,000 through ExploreGeorgia Opt-ins and Southern Living upgrade.



Local Event Promotion

ACCOLADES/AWARDS

- Tourism Director received the **Georgia Certified Professional Travel Counselor** designation from the U.S. Travel Association National Council of State Tourism Directors (NCSTD)
- “Make a Splash at the 10 Best Beaches in Georgia” – Fodor’s Travel, Nov. 2019
- "2019 Bucket List. The Best Park in Every State" - Outdoor Magazine, Sept. 2019
- "Explore Georgia's Unspoiled Coast From These 7 Campgrounds" - The Dyrt, Oct. 2018
- "18 of the Best Places to Visit in Georgia" - Trips To Discover - September 2018
- "Reel Time: On the road to St. Marys and Cumberland Island, Ga. - September 2018
- "The Prettiest Town in Every U.S. State" - Architectural Digest, July 2018.
- "The Most Beautiful Vacation Spots in Each State" - TheInsider.com, July 2018.

Economic Impact of Tourism to Camden County – The Coast Region

(Tourism figures from U.S. Travel Association, Study for GDEcD, Tourism Division – 2018 Data)

- Supported 888 jobs
- Generated \$108.07 million in direct tourist spending
- **On an average day, \$296,082 is spent on tourism related expenses in Camden County**
- Created \$4.77 million in state tax revenues
- Created \$3.06 million in local tax revenues
- Generated \$21.32 million in payroll
- **Each Camden County household would need to be taxed an additional \$405 per year to replace taxes generated by tourism economic activity.**

Attraction Updates (Provided by Each Venue):

Welcome Center Statistics – MANAGED BY THE ST. MARYS CVB

FY2017	9,548
FY2018	7,744
FY2019	7,631

St. Marys Express Train Rides

2017	14,500
2018	14,500
2019	14,500

St. Marys Submarine Museum

2017	9,500
2018	9,000
2019	+10,000

Cumberland Island National Seashore (Island & Museum)

2016	61,897
2017	51,900
2018	55,600

*An estimated 2.3 million dollars spent by visitors in Camden, Charlton, Glenn and Nassau Counties. Figures from NPS.

Crooked River State Park

Visitation:

2017	197,534
2018	201,534

*Figures provided by CRSP Staff – “CRSP Transition and Trend Report”

Gateway to the Georgia Coast

HISTORY, NATURE & CUMBERLAND ISLAND EXPERIENCE ST. MARYS

- Historic District
- Waterfront Park
- Dining & Shopping
- Submarine Museum
- Kayaking, Fishing & Biking
- Cumberland Island Museum

St. Marys Community Market:
Downtown - Saturdays 9am-1pm

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800.868.8687
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VISITSTMARYS.COM
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- Camden County is part of Georgia's Colonial Coast Birding Trail
- Visit Crooked River State Park & Cumberland Island National Seashore

Guide to Camden County/ St. Marys Magazine