

2020-2021 Annual Report 2022 Marketing Plan

warren county
**ohio's largest
playground®**





Our Mission

The Warren County Convention & Visitors Bureau is a professional destination marketing and management organization whose mission is to strengthen the community by advancing economic growth and vitality through tourism and overnight stays, and encouraging significant participation by visitors in the local tourism economy.



Introduction

To Our Friends & Colleagues,

Greetings from Ohio's Largest Playground®, Warren County!

The last published version of this Annual Report detailed the tourism growth in Warren County in 2019 and expressed optimism for "big things in 2020". Big things – historic things – did happen in 2020, but not the type of "big things" any destination anticipates or desires.

No other industry in the State of Ohio, or arguably in the nation, was more negatively affected by COVID-19 than the tourism industry. In 2020, Warren County alone lost \$257 million in visitor spending and 2,000 tourism related jobs as our tourism partners were forced to shutter their doors for many months and ride out the storm.

The storm is still with us, but there are brighter days on the horizon. We've seen a rebound in hotel occupancy and attraction attendance. In 2021 we began to climb out of the abyss, and are optimistic about continued growth for 2022.

On numerous occasions, I've compared the function of a convention and visitors bureau to that of a marketing firm or advertising agency. Both use similar tools – websites, display ads, promotions, public relations, social media, etc. But unlike a marketing firm that helps Procter & Gamble sell soap, our marketing firm, the Warren County CVB, "sells" the County to visitors from all over the country and the world.

COVID-19 forced dramatic changes to our activities, our messaging and our tactics. It even forced us to engage in a legal fight to keep one of our biggest tourism drivers open. But now the WCCVB is settling back into its more traditional role, and fully engaged in the business of selling our County to the world.

On the following pages we take an in-depth look at 2020, 2021 and at what is to come in 2022. Warren County is blessed to have a robust tourism industry, made possible by the wonderful, dedicated people who comprise our staff, our board, and our community. We're also within a day's drive of 60 percent of the U.S. population, have a rich variety of outstanding yet reasonably priced hotel properties and B&Bs, and boast a multitude of exciting and unique attractions.

With all that Warren County has to offer, you can see why we're called Ohio's Largest Playground. Each year we expect big things. We're looking forward to bigger and brighter days in 2022.

Sincerely,

Phillip S. Smith,
President & Chief Executive Officer





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2022 WCCVB Board

2022 Officers

Board Chairman

Jonathan D. Sams

Trustee, Turtlecreek Township

1st Vice Chairman

Bill Kilimnik

General Manager, Golden Lamb Restaurant & Hotel

2nd Vice Chairman

Sandy Eves

Owner, Kirkwood Inn

Treasurer

Robyn Lane

Owner, Hidden Valley Orchards

Secretary

Karolyn Ellingson

*Business Development Manager,
Workforce Development Division, Sinclair College*

2022 Directors

Elizabeth Desrosiers

Marketing Manager, Western & Southern Open

Barbara Hogan

*CEO & President Timbelo, Inc. & Partner
& Vice President, Afidence*

Michael Hogan

General Manager, Cincinnati Marriott Northeast

Richard Jones

*Executive Consultant, Warren County Community
Services*

Russell Jones

Legal Counsel & Officer, Gem City Tire

Mary Klei

*Vice President, Board of Festivals & Tourism,
City of Lebanon*

Martin Russell

*Deputy County Administrator; Director, Warren County
Office of Economic Development*

Chad Showalter

Director of Communications, Kings Island



2022 WCCVB Staff

Administration

Phillip S. Smith
President & CEO

Ian Groves
*Director of Finance &
Human Resources*

Nichole Detamore
*Executive Assistant & Office
Manager*



Leisure Marketing

Scott Hutchinson
*Director of Marketing &
Communications*

Stacha Yundt
*Manager of Marketing &
Communications*

Sports Marketing

Ben Huffman
Director of Sports Enterprises

Linda Smith
*Senior Manager, Visitor
Services & Sales*

Scott Hofmann
*Senior Manager of Sports
Operations*

Britt Barry
Facilities Manager

Brandon Moravec
Assistant Facilities Manager

Shane Hale
Operations Coordinator

Josh Berning
Operations Coordinator

Matt Johnson
Groundskeeper

Matt Ivey
Groundskeeper

Economic Impact

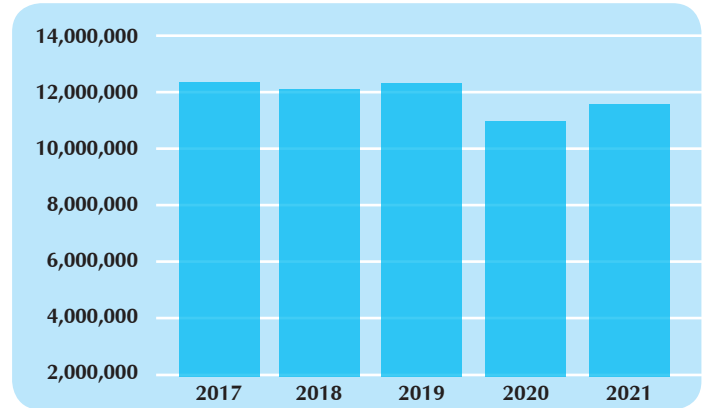


Warren County, Ohio's Largest Playground, has long relied on the tourism industry as one of its main foundations of economic success. In a typical year, the county welcomes more than 12 million visitors who generate more than \$1.3 billion in economic impact, including \$285 million in wages and \$148.8 million in federal, state and local taxes. Tourism also supports nearly 12,000 jobs – or 11% of all Warren County employment – in a typical year.

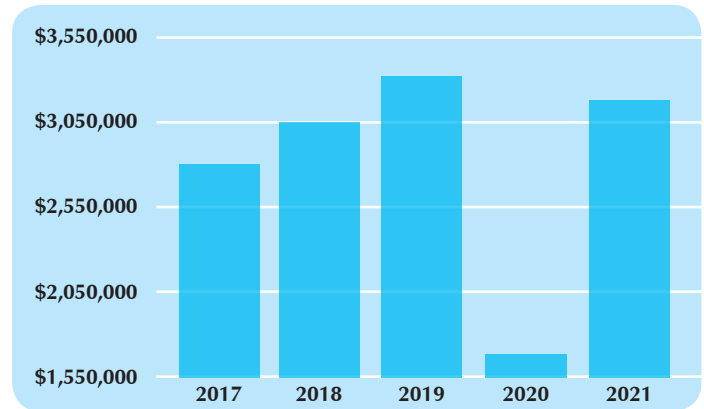
Of course, 2020 and 2021 were far from typical. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020 had an immediate and unprecedented impact on tourism - not only in Southwest Ohio, but across the globe. In Ohio, governmental orders discouraged travel and forced attractions, restaurants, shops and hotels to significantly limit operations. Visitor spending dropped by more than 24% in 2020 and a substantial number of tourism related jobs were lost within the County, according to a study by Tourism Economics commissioned by the WCCVB. Nevertheless, the Warren County tourism industry managed to generate more than \$1.1 billion in business sales in 2020. While COVID-19 continues to pose challenges, Warren County's convenient and driveable location, cost-friendly nature, and wealth of COVID-friendly offerings set it up well for a strong rebound in 2022 and beyond.

Lodging and Attendance

Attendance History



Lodging Tax Revenue

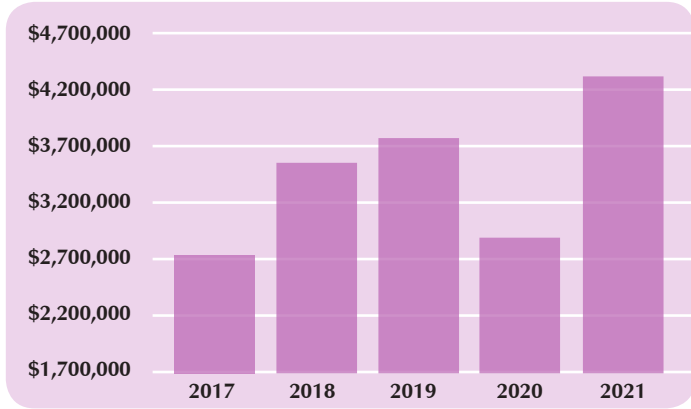


NOTE: 2018 4% County Lodging Tax vs 3% in Previous Years

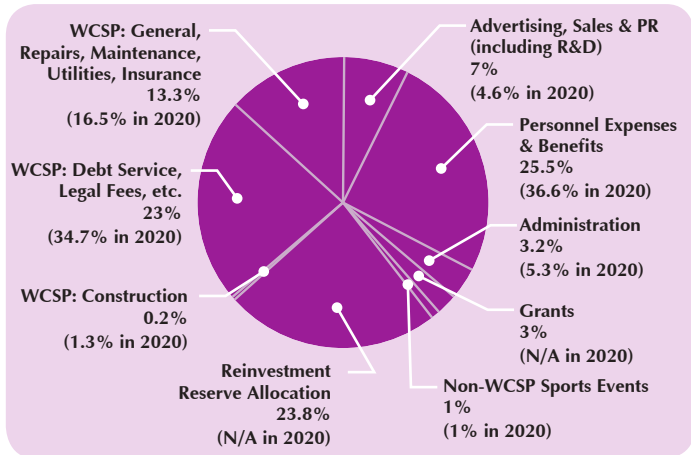


Operating Revenue and Expenses

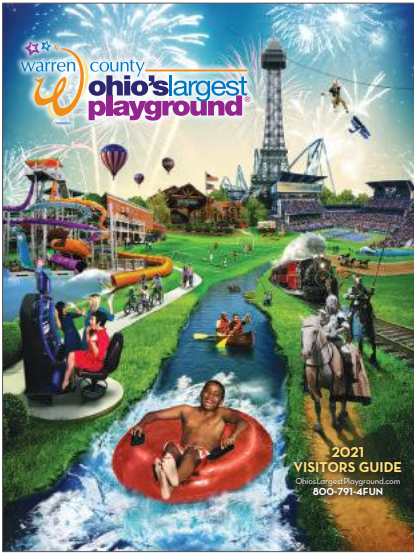
Operating Revenue



2020 & 2021 Operating Expenses



2020-2021 Leisure Marketing Review



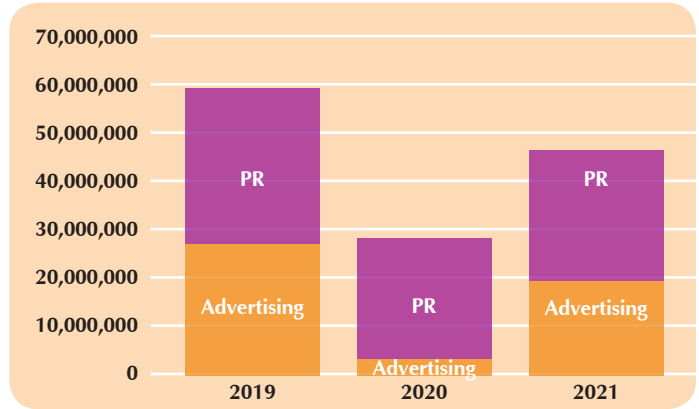
**2021
Visitors Guide**

While the WCCVB’s Leisure Marketing department is always thorough and strategic in its efforts, the unique circumstances raised by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 forced the team to be more flexible, tactical and creative than ever before.

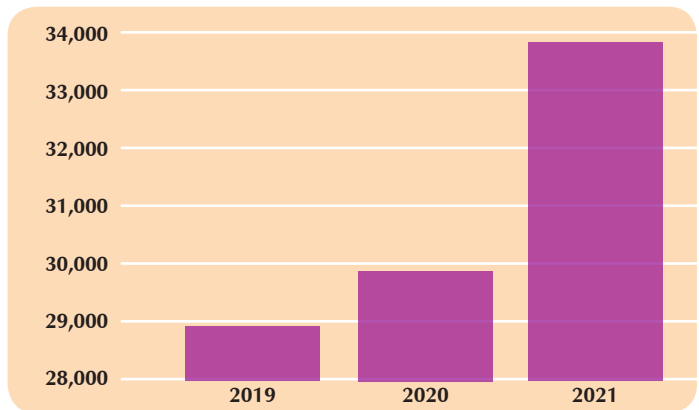
Realizing quickly the debilitating effect of COVID-19 on Warren County’s tourism landscape, the Leisure Marketing team disengaged its previously scheduled paid advertising campaigns in March of 2020, and shifted its focus to serve less as an advertising agency and more as an ambassador for Warren County’s small businesses. The team leveraged social and digital media to highlight those businesses still conducting operations, particularly carry-out restaurants, outdoor attractions and any other activities which were feasibly able to conduct business during the peak of the COVID-19 lockdown.

As 2020 turned to 2021 and tourism began to bounce back in Warren County, the Leisure Marketing team revved up its advertising efforts once again, introducing a number of new

Gross Impressions



Social Media Followers

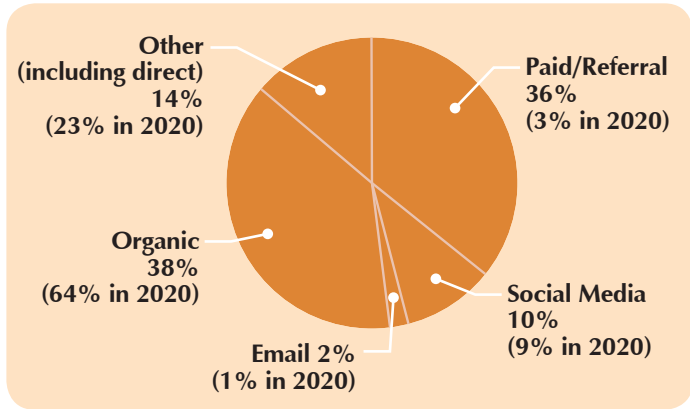


elements to its marketing strategy that proved remarkably successful.

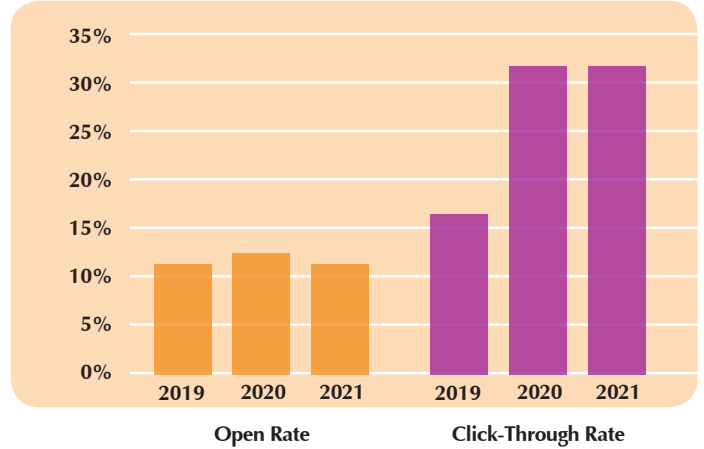
Owned and paid messages were distributed in print, radio, out-of-home, and online in 2021, garnering more than 19 million gross impressions, while public relations efforts garnered an additional 26 million.

The WCCVB’s social media channels and e-newsletter also saw tremendous growth in 2021, as did its web site and blog – both of which set all-time records for annual traffic.

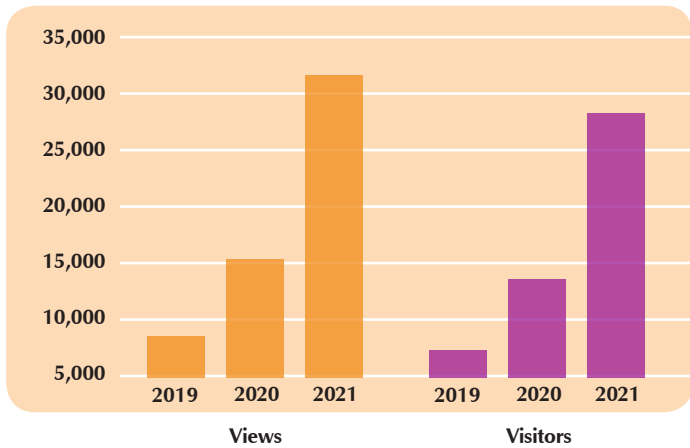
2020 & 2021 Website Traffic Breakdown



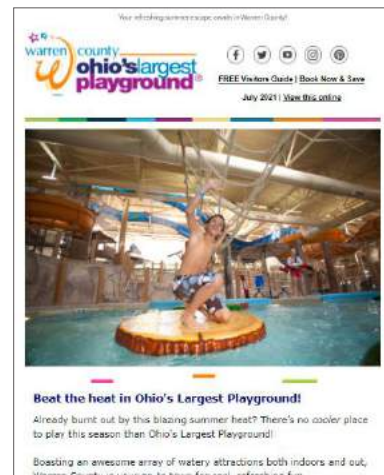
E-Newsletter Stats



Blog Stats



E-Newsletter



Facebook



Twitter



Instagram



2020-2021 Sports Review

In 2004, the Warren County Convention & Visitors Bureau launched its sports division, now known as Warren County Sports. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of athletes and their families have come to Ohio's Largest Playground for the best in competition and fun, generating an economic impact for the region estimated at more than \$535 million and 900,000 hotel room nights.

To generate that economic activity, Warren County Sports manages four different categories of sporting events:

- 1) Direct Sale Events (held as a direct result of sales/recruiting efforts by WC Sports)
- 2) Assisted Events (for which WC Sports assists in the operation to some degree)
- 3) Created Events (owned and operated by the WCCVB)
- 4) Warren County Sports Park events

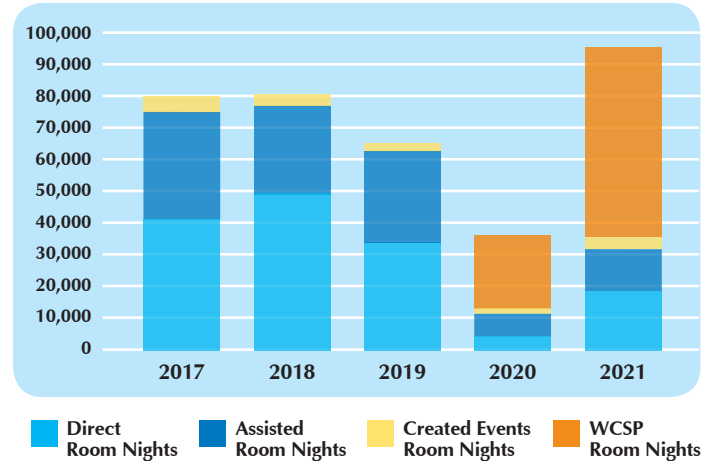
By 2006, it became obvious the WCCVB had more demand for sporting events than available fields. That realization prompted the WCCVB to begin an initiative to build, own and operate its own destination sports park, a highly unusual and ambitious endeavor for a convention & visitors bureau. A site was selected, and then determined to be unworkable. Then a second site was selected, with the same result. In 2016, the WCCVB selected its ninth and final site, and in 2018 ground was broken and construction began.

On February 21, 2020, the support and efforts of the WCCVB board, elected officials, countless partners, and the WCCVB staff were realized when the Warren County Sports Park at Union Village (WCSP) opened its gates to host its first event.

The thrill of that first event was short-lived, however, when only a few



Sports Room Night History



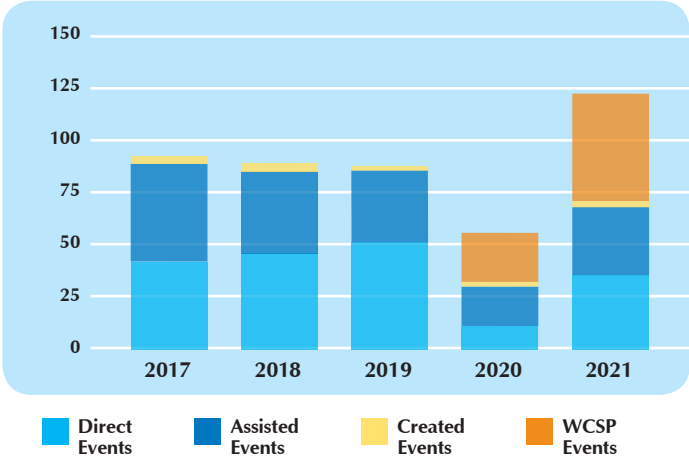
weeks later COVID-19 forced the State of Ohio into a lockdown. Subsequently, sports were prohibited from occurring throughout the State. What was anticipated to be a pause lasting only a few weeks became a cascade of cancelled events that stretched the entire year. By the end of 2020, Warren County Sports lost a total of 76 events which would have delivered \$48.5 million in economic impact to the community.

Some events decided to cancel due to concerns by the organizers, and some were cancelled due to the State's sporting events ban. That ban evolved by late spring, when non-contact sports were permitted to be played beginning May 26.

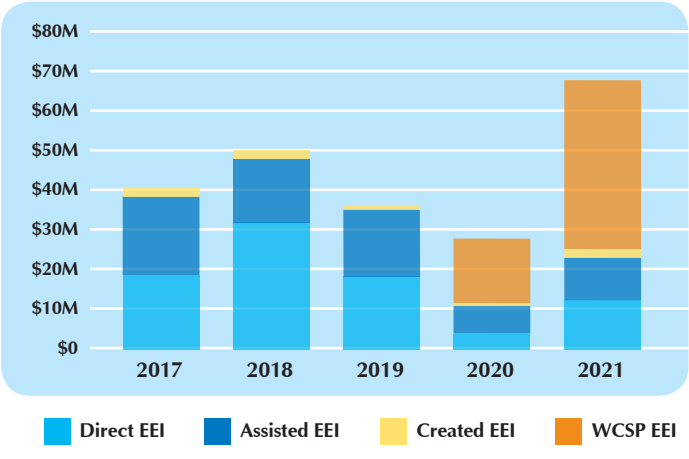
Warren County Sports responded immediately and began to host baseball events, both at the WCSP and at many other facilities in the County. Between May 26 and August 6, Warren County hosted 27 non-contact sporting events bringing more than \$8.4 million to the community.



Sports Event History



Sports Estimated Economic Impact (EEI) History



But as the weeks dragged on, the State did not appear amenable to allowing contact sports – such as soccer – to be played. Sensing a need to bring back those sports, and recognizing the voices of parents across the State who said “let our kids play,” the WCCVB made the difficult decision to fight for sports tourism. The WCCVB joined two local entities, Kingdom Sports Center and Ohio Youth Basketball, in an effort to ask a judge to allow contact sports like soccer and basketball to be played with the same rules as non-contact sports. On August 6 the judge granted that request, and by August 18, 2020, all sports – contact and non-contact sports – were permitted to be played across the State of Ohio.

The decision by the judge allowed Warren County Sports to reengage with tournaments and bring them back to Warren County. Not all cancelled events returned, but enough were held (56) to drive a total of \$26.4 million in estimated economic impact and fill 33,544 room nights.

With the dawning of 2021, the WCCVB was hopeful that sports tourism in the County would be closer to a normal year such as 2019. But when the year ended, Warren County Sports recorded a record-breaking year in all three phases: it hosted

121 events, generated more than 92,000 hotel room nights, and drove an estimated economic impact of \$67.1 million.

The Warren County Sports Park continued to meet its intended purpose throughout 2021, hosting 51 events with more than 700,000 attendees in its first full year. These events brought \$42.6 million to the community and nearly 60,000 hotel rooms.

Plans for 2022 are even brighter. The County will host 115 events, with more than 1,000,000 attendees, 115,000 hotel room nights, and driving \$70 million in estimated economic impact. The calendar for the WCSP is sold out, allowing the WCSP to generate more than \$45 million of that \$70 million total impact.

Event highlights for the County in 2022 include the return of the World Flying Disc Federation, a global competition last played here in 2018, which is an unprecedented quick return to a location for that event. The County also will host one of five major events on the Pro Pickleball Tour at the Lindner Family Tennis Center in Mason.

After the devastation of 2020 and 2021, Warren County’s sports tourism efforts look to have a outstanding 2022, potentially the best year ever for Warren County Sports.

2022 Leisure Marketing Outlook

Leisure Marketing 2022 Objectives, Strategies & Tactics

Objective: **Sell Warren County as an attractive destination for today's traveler**

Leverage new and previously existing ad creative to communicate Warren County's easy accessibility, affordability and wealth of family, grown-up and COVID-friendly offerings, utilizing the following vehicles:

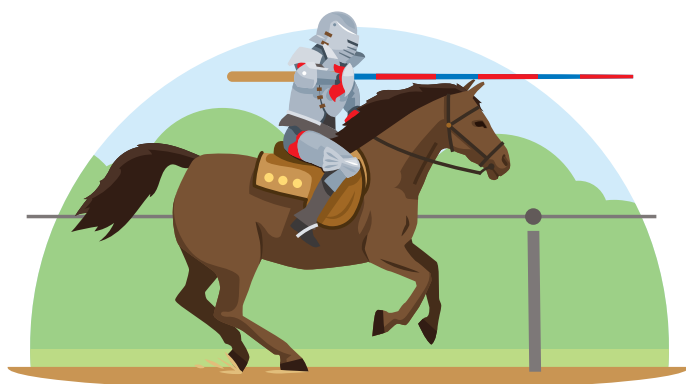
- Print
- Broadcast
- Digital (Search engine marketing, banner ads, online video, social media, e-newsletters)

Expand marketing presence in key geographic markets

- Strategically target messaging across all mediums and platforms
- Increase reliance on analytics and trend-tracking

Further leverage budget-friendly, in-house marketing solutions

- Increase frequency of blog and social media posts
- Increase collaboration with influencers and travel writers



Objective: **Increase Warren County's brand awareness among relevant audiences**

Target messaging to thoroughly researched and carefully identified regions and groups:

- Geographic Targets:
 - Illinois – Chicago
 - Indiana – Indianapolis, Fort Wayne
 - Kentucky - Louisville
 - Michigan – Detroit
 - Ohio – Cleveland
 - Pennsylvania – Pittsburgh, Philadelphia
 - Tennessee – Nashville
 - West Virginia – Charleston, Huntington
- Demographic Targets:
 - 1) Women ages 35-50 with children ages birth to 18
 - 2) Adults ages 50-64
- Ensure all messaging fits its appropriate audience

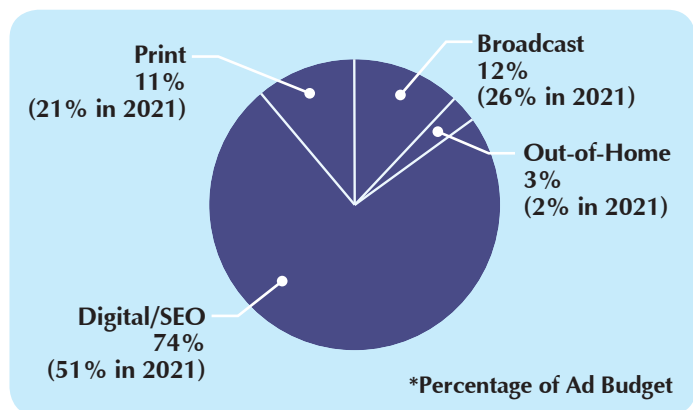
Objective: **Improve communication and integration with tourism partners and WCCVB staff**

Get “boots back on the ground” and meet with restaurants, retail owners, attractions, events and hotel partners as often as possible

Involve a wider variety of tourism partners in e-newsletter, blog and social media contest promotions

Work even more closely with Warren County Sports to further streamline efforts

2022 Media Budget Allocations*



2022 Leisure Marketing Goals

Consumer E-Newsletters	12
Partner E-Newsletters	12
Leisure PR Stories	10 placements in target markets
Sports PR Stories	8 placements in target markets

2022 Warren County CVB Media Plan

MEDIA	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Broadcast/Out-of-Home												
iHeart Radio												
Ad-Rack (Travel Info Centers & Rest Stops)												
Print												
Midwest Living Magazine												
2022 Ohio Travel Guide												
Digital												
Online Display Ads, Traditional Online Video, Youtube												
Paid Social Media (Facebook, Instagram)												
Travel Guides Free (Visitors Guide Request Platform)												
Ohio Find it Here E-Newsletters												
Paid Search Engine Optimization												
Owned/Earned												
Public Relations												
Online Media*												

* Includes blogs, e-newsletter, social media, website, SEO content produced in-house

NOTE: Media calendar is subject to change in response to ongoing COVID-19 circumstances

2022 Creative Samples*

Website – Home Page



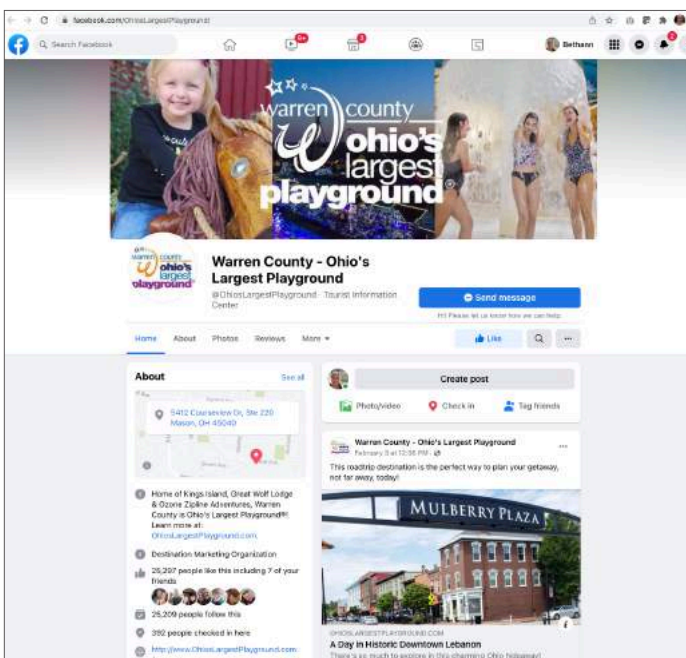
Print Ads



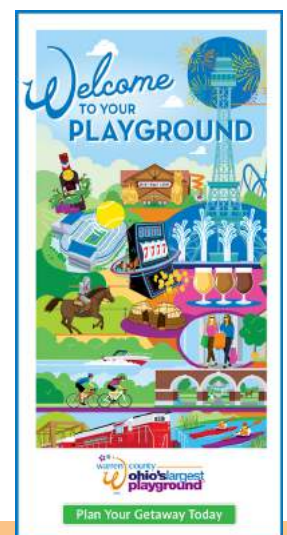
Banner Ads



Facebook



Digital Ads



* Creative concepts were still in development at the time of publication and are subject to change.

2022 Sports Marketing Outlook

Sports Marketing 2022 Objectives, Strategies & Tactics

Objective:

Deliver 115,000 room nights and \$70M in Estimated Impact - highest year to date

- Fill every available date at the Warren County Sports Park
- Utilize traditional facilities on all open dates
- Encourage/assist local groups to produce their own events
- Return to selling facilities for future years at conferences and trade shows
- Grow existing events
- Increase attendance by leveraging tourism backdrop and family vacation opportunities

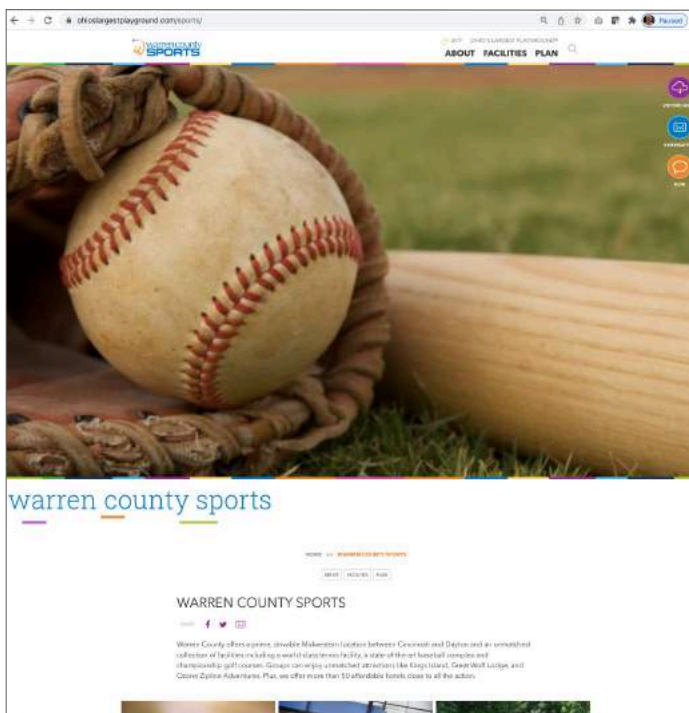
2022 Sports Marketing Goals

Events	115
Attendance	1,039,000
Room Nights	115,000
Estimated Economic Impact	\$70,000,000

Objective: Efficient Operations

- Manage budget to ensure lowest per room night spend possible
- Promote WCSP and other facilities efficiently through advertising and trade shows
- Efficiently build staff to manage expected growth at WCSP

Website – Sports



Objective: Strategic Growth of WCSP

- Continue efficient operations – equipment, staff, event support, etc.
- Work with events to increase out-of-town attendance and sponsor business growth
- Continue to recruit and retain sponsors for the Warren County Sports Park





Warren County Convention & Visitors Bureau

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