





BUFFALO CONVENTION CENTER

# Q3 2024 SALES & SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

# **2024 VBN/BCC Customer Advisory Council Meeting**

Visit Buffalo Niagara and the Buffalo Convention Center recently hosted their 11th annual Customer Advisory Council Meeting, with fifteen members participating. This year's event returned to the convention center, with accommodations provided by the Buffalo Hyatt Regency. The opening day featured a city tour and an update on new destination developments, concluding with a rooftop welcome reception at Vue, located in the Curtis Hotel.

The meeting agenda included a strategic input session facilitated by MMGY DestinationNEXT, which focused on developing three-year plans for VBN and BCC. Additional topics included discussing artificial intelligence, a thorough review of VBN's budget increase, and exploring how best to position Buffalo and Erie County in the meetings and conventions market. As VBN prepares to bring on a new agency of record, the customer advisory council will play a key role, offering industry insights to help shape the destination's creative direction and branding for meetings and events.





# **Meetings and Convention Site Visit – Highmark Direct**

During the third quarter, Visit Buffalo Niagara, and the Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission hosted thirteen site visits, including one for corporate meeting planners involved in Highmark Direct Programs and Seminars. It was a pleasure to welcome these planners, responsible for coordinating numerous meetings and events across various cities throughout the year. The site visit focused on the different unique off-site venues in Buffalo and Erie County that the planners can use for their programs. Some sites included in the tour were Buffalo RiverWorks, Buffalo AKG, the Darwin Martin House, and several restaurants.

# Q3 2024 SALES AND SERVICES DEPARTMENT TRADESHOW ATTENDANCE



Annual Convention Tampa, FL July 16-19 Temekia Powers and Meaghan Zimmer

# Connect Sports

Sports Tradeshow Minneapolis, MN August 27-29 Greg Gelinas



Annual Convention New York, NY August 9-13 Leah Mueller



Annual Tradeshow Jacksonville, FL September 5-7 Meredith Walsh

# SMERF X

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**Annual Convention** 

Cleveland, OH

August 10-13

**Temekia Powers** 

Conference & Tradeshow Branson, MO September 23-27 Meredith Walsh



**Marketplace** 

Association and Specialty

Minneapolis, MN

**August 27-29** 

Temekia Powers & Meredith

Walsh

Connect

Conference & Expo Anaheim, CA September 23-27 James Adler & Greg Gelinas

# **Attendance Building for 2025 Conferences**

Visit Buffalo Niagara staff regularly attends conventions the year before they are hosted in Buffalo to encourage attendance the following year. During Q3, VBN staff participated at the Williams Syndrome and Small Market Meetings, which will be held in Buffalo in 2025.



Annual Conference Phoenix, AZ July 8-13 Marisa Urbano



Annual Conference Columbus, OH September 25-27 Karen Cox, Meaghan Zimmer

# Q3 2024 SALES & SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS





## **Compete Sports Diversity Regional Women's Summit**

The Compete Sports Diversity Regional Women's Summit took place in Buffalo in September 2024, bringing together women leaders, athletes, and advocates across the sports diversity landscape. Hosted in partnership with Visit Buffalo Niagara and the Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission, the summit aimed to foster discussions on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in sports, focusing on amplifying the voices and experiences of women in the industry.

The event featured inspiring keynote speakers, including influential figures in sports, business, and DEI advocacy, who shared their journeys and insights on navigating the challenges faced by women in both professional and amateur sports. Interactive panel discussions highlighted critical topics such as gender equality in sports, the importance of diverse representation in leadership roles, and the creation of inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ athletes.

Attendees also participated in workshops that provided practical strategies for advancing diversity within sports organizations, while networking sessions created opportunities for attendees to connect, collaborate, and share best practices.



# **LinkedIn Social Tradeshow Attendance Creative**

Visit Buffalo Niagara and the Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission have introduced a new creative platform to promote staff involvement and engagement at industry tradeshows and conferences. This initiative leverages social media, where posts are designed to highlight our presence at key events. By tagging relevant industry contacts and using targeted hashtags, we aim to increase visibility among existing clients while also attracting the attention of new and potential customers. This strategy enhances our brand's reach and strengthens connections with the business community, fostering new opportunities for collaboration and growth.



# Sept.

# **Sports Commission Cereal**

The Buffalo Niagara Sports
Commission was privileged to host
our Advisory Council meeting at the
vibrant Serendipity Labs inside
Seneca One. After a productive
session, attendees enjoyed a fun and
unique "Cereal Social," where council
members indulged in their favorite
cereals while networking and building

connections. Adding to the excitement, we were joined by a special guest, Buster Bison from the Buffalo Bisons, who brought some extra Buffalo spirit to the gathering.

A huge thank you to everyone who attended, and a special shout-out to Emily Donnelly and her incredible team at Serendipity Labs for creating a welcoming and engaging environment for our meeting. We appreciate all the hard work that went into making this event a success!



### **Destinations International Annual Convention**



Visit Buffalo Niagara's Drew Brown, Temekia Powers, and Meaghan Zimmer represented Buffalo at the Destinations International Annual Convention in Tampa, Florida, where they connected with tourism professionals from across the globe. The convention provided an invaluable platform for networking, knowledge-sharing, and exploring new ideas to strengthen Buffalo's appeal as a travel destination. The team gathered insights into the latest trends and best practices in destination marketing and management through educational sessions, panel discussions, and workshops. Their participation underscores Visit Buffalo Niagara's commitment to continuous improvement and innovation, equipping the team to enhance Buffalo's visibility and appeal in the competitive tourism landscape.

# AND SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS



## Time Magazine: World's Greatest Places List 2024

Visit Buffalo Niagara's public relations team has continued to actively maintain a strong connection with the Time magazine travel writer Ashlea Halpern, who featured the Buffalo AKG Art Museum in the prestigious "World's Greatest Places List 2024" list. The Visit Buffalo Niagara marketing team first met Ms. Halpern in 2023 when we hosted her on a cultural arts media trip featuring the reopening of the Buffalo AKG. By nurturing this relationship, the PR staff continues positioning Buffalo as a standout destination for cultural tourism. Regular communication with influential media like Time not only strengthens Buffalo's visibility on a national and global scale but also opens doors for future coverage that can highlight other unique aspects of the city. This ongoing engagement reflects Visit Buffalo Niagara's commitment to amplifying Buffalo's profile and attracting more visitors eager to experience the city's vibrant arts and culture scene.



# **Erie County Fair Guide**

Visit Buffalo Niagara has developed a digital Erie County Fair Guide, providing an easy-to-navigate resource for fairgoers to explore one of the largest and most historic county fairs in the country. This comprehensive guide offers insights on must-see attractions, event schedules, dining options, and family-friendly activities, making it easier than ever for locals and visitors alike to plan their fair experience. By creating a digital guide, Visit Buffalo Niagara enhances accessibility, allowing users to access valuable information right from their mobile devices. This initiative aligns with Visit Buffalo Niagara's commitment to improving visitor experiences, supporting local events, and highlighting the rich traditions of Erie County's beloved fair.

Plan your visit by looking over the options and calendar listings of artisans, food purveyors, national acts rides and local competitions at ecfair org. The lineup has the expansive variety of a state fair with the hor vide of a county fair — along with lots of flowers and plants, said Underberg. "It still has that small, comfeet," she said. "Not many fairs dedicate an entire building to horticulture and flora culture."

farm kid, was kind of like Disney," Underberg said. "Now that I have the op those memories and traditions for other families, it's really great."

with ambient sound, calming colored lights, wall padding, weighted blankets and a bubble water feature. Pec can also come for the toned down "Sensory Hours," 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 13 when rides will turn of ng lights and music and lower volume throughout the fair. Kits with noise ca

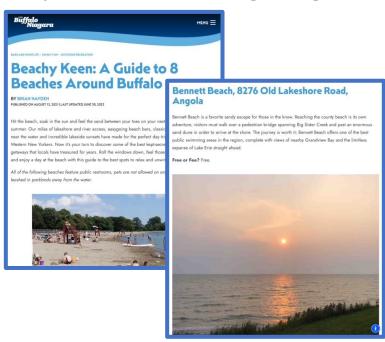


# VBN Welcomes Back Brian Hayden

Visit Buffalo Niagara is thrilled to welcome back Brian Hayden as Senior Director of Marketing and Communications. Brian returns to the team with a wealth of experience and a deep passion for promoting Buffalo as a premier destination. In his role, Brian will lead strategic marketing efforts, public relations initiatives, and digital communications, working to elevate Buffalo's profile both nationally and internationally. His extensive regional knowledge and destination marketing expertise make him a valuable asset to Visit Buffalo Niagara's mission. Brian's return signifies a renewed commitment to showcasing the city's unique attractions, vibrant culture, and welcoming spirit, driving continued growth in tourism for Buffalo and Western New York.

# Q3 2024 MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

# **Examples of Q3 Visit Buffalo Niagara Blogs**





# **Examples of Q3 Visit Buffalo Niagara Social Media Posts**











# **Q3 Most-Viewed Social Media Video Views**

JULY



A Guide To Beaches Total Views: 89,700

**A**UGUST



Upstate Eats Trail / Eat Local Total Views: 1,100,000

**S**EPTEMBER



Sponge Candy Making Total Views: 220,700

Other Q3 Social Media Video Content:

100+ Open Gardens

Where To See and Pick Sunflowers

Free and Affordable Things
To Do In Buffalo

**Erie County Fair Food Judging** 

**Welcome to East Aurora** 

5 Must-Try Dining Destinations in Buffalo

**Pumpkin Patches** 

# **EXAMPLES OF Q3 MEDIA HITS**

# The New Hork Times

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

For a Great Museum Road Trip, Get In an Empire State of Mind

Who needs Brooklyn? From Ithaca to Buffalo, the art is overflowing in upstate New York.

Listen to this article - 10:53 min Learn more





# **Forbes**

Meet Marisol, The 1960s Pop Art Superstar The World Forgot About

By Chadd Scott, Contributor, Chadd Scott covers intersection of art and travel.

Follow Author





Readership: 104,163,917 **Shares: NA** 

# architecture lab

Darwin D. Martin House / Frank Lloyd Wright | Classics on Architecture Lab



by Anton Giuroiu | Published on: August 18, 2024



Buffalo New York emerges as an unexpected but rich destination for Frank Lloyd Wright architecture. Central to this is the Darwin Martin House, Wright's first major commission outside the Midwest, which underwent a \$50 million restoration, enhancing Buffalo's architectural significance. The story of the

Readership: 27,311

Shares: 861



### **Most Popular Fishing Spots for Labor Day 2024**

Oct 23, 2024 | 2 minute read

Labor Day is both a major US holiday and the unofficial end of the fishing season in many parts of the country. Many anglers take to the water for the last time of the year over this weekend, with coastal locations being especially in demand.

In order to find out what the most popular fishing destinations are for the Labor Day weekend, we analyzed our booking data for this year and last, identifying which spots are trending, which are stayers, and which are lagging behind



Readership: 1,145,615 **Shares: NA** 

Readership: 168,009,509 Shares: 183

# **FOOD&WINE**

### A Highly Opinionated Guide to the Best Buffalo Wings in Buffalo

Restaurant publicist Tori Allen was born in Buffalo, New York, and has strong opinions about the City of Light's claim to fame.

By Tori Allen | Published on August 28, 2024







Readership: 13,734,891 Shares: 208

8 road trip destinations in the USA that are within a day's drive from Toronto

you're currently scoping out road trip destinations from Toronto, you've got a treasure trove of incredible towns and cities just across the border in the USA, all within easy reach of Ontario's capital

Whether you're looking to immerse yourself in nature, connect with history or sample iconic foods across the northeast, there's a spot in the USA just a few hours away that has what you're after

From the bustling streets of Detroit to the scenic shores of Lake Erie, there's something for every traveller to discover just a stone's throw from home To inspire your next trip to the USA, here are eight must-see spots you can road trip to in less than a day from Toronto

Buffalo, New York

Readership: 1,231,334 Shares: 214

25 of the USA's most underrated destinations



(CNN) - Disney World, Times Square and Yellowstone National Park can be packed to the rafters with tourists. But there are plenty o other places across the United States that continue to fly beneath the travel radar

While there are literally hundreds of locations that fit that description, here are 25 destinations - from cities and national parks to regions and even entire states - that remain refreshingly underrated despite the surge

Readership: 22,769,100 Shares: 385

# blog



How to spend an unforgettable weekend digging into Buffalo's arts and culture scene

This content is paid for by an advertising partner. Read more about what this means.

Sabrina Gamrot Posted 3 months ago

Toss aside everything you ever thought about the city of Buffalo, New York. A nearby neighbour to our lovely Toronto, Buffalo isn't the place you visited in the past. As a major source of arts and culture, there is so much to explore in Buffalo beyond the Walden Galleria Mall.

Readership: 3,387,360 Shares: 15

# **Buffalo's Music Tourism Included In Wanderlust Magazine**

For the past year, Visit Buffalo Niagara has been cultivating a relationship with the publisher and writers of the United Kingdom's Wanderlust magazine. Buffalo's vibrant music scene was spotlighted in Wanderlust magazine's "52 Secrets of the USA," celebrating the city's rich and diverse musical offerings. Iconic venues like the historic Colored Musicians Club, one of the country's oldest continually operating African American jazz clubs, highlight Buffalo's deep roots in jazz and blues. Contemporary venues like Terminal B, Sportsmen's Tavern, and Babeville showcase live performances that span genres from rock to indie and folk. Adding to the city's musical appeal, the annual Borderland Music and Arts Festival brings national and local artists together to celebrate music, arts, and community. This recognition by Wanderlust magazine acknowledges Buffalo's dynamic and evolving music culture and reinforces its place as a must-visit destination for music lovers seeking authentic and memorable experiences.

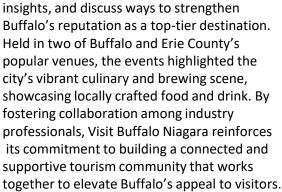




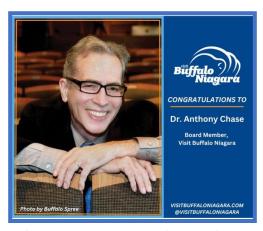
# Q3 2024 DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT / INDUSTRY RELATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

# **VBN Hosts Industry Nights At Southern Junction and Wayland Brewing**

Visit Buffalo Niagara recently hosted two industry night events at Southern Junction and Wayland Brewing, bringing together local tourism and hospitality professionals for evenings of networking and camaraderie. These gatherings provided an opportunity for the industry's key players to connect, share







# **Congratulations, VBN Board Member Anthony Chase**

Congratulations to Visit Buffalo Niagara board member Dr. Anthony Chase on receiving a star in the Buffalo Theatre District's Plaza of The Stars! This distinguished honor celebrates the careers of Buffalo's most talented and influential contributors to the arts.

Dr. Chase has been a cornerstone of Buffalo's theater scene for decades and hosts "Theater Talk" on WBFO, Buffalo Toronto Public Media. He is also the founder and producer of the Artie Awards, which have honored excellence in Western New York Theater for 33 years and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for local AIDS charities. Additionally, Dr. Chase is the assistant dean of arts and sciences at SUNY Buffalo State, teaching theater history and graduate-level drama studies.

"Anthony Chase's lifelong contributions to the local theater and cultural community demonstrate the power of collective achievement," said Visit Buffalo Niagara President and CEO Patrick Kaler. "As a valued board member, his work aligns with our vision to expand the performance sector as a sustainable tourism driver in regional markets. His induction marks an illuminated journey and a truly well-deserved honor."



# Congratulations, Buffalo Marriott at LECOM Harborcenter

Congratulations to the Buffalo Marriott at LECOM HARBORCENTER on being recognized by Shaner Hotels as a U.S. & Canada Full-Service Award Winner for Guest Experience! This award honors top-performing hotels based on guest feedback metrics like Intent to Recommend and Overall Staff Service.

Shaner Hotels is a renowned hotel management company and a leader in global hospitality. Its roots date back to the 1970s when Lance Shaner and his brother Fred began investing in real estate. Shaner Hotels remains committed to enhancing customer experiences and driving properties forward with passion and dedication.



# Q3-2024 RESEARCH AND OPERATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

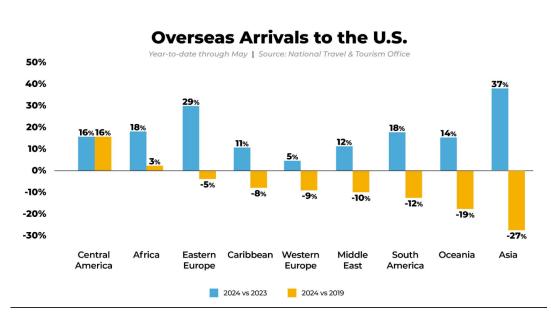


# **Key Findings: Tourism Economics/ASAE – The Impact of Associations on America's Economy Study**

- Associations are a vital competent of America's job market.
   Associations directly support 1 million jobs and provide \$71.4 billion in wages through all 50 states each year.
- 2. Association events are a powerhouse for state and local economies. More than 272,000 association events attract nearly \$2 million participants, directly support 324,000 jobs, and generate \$42 billion in spending in communities nationwide every year.
- 3. Associations are vital tax revenue generation for government. Associations support nearly \$28 billion in federal, state, and local taxes – and events generate an additional \$7.5 billion in taxes to state and local governments annually.

State and national associations are vital for economic growth and industry innovation, especially through partnerships with Visit Buffalo Niagara and the Buffalo Convention Center. By attracting conventions and events to Buffalo, these associations boost local tourism and enhance the city's reputation as a premier host destination. This collaboration drives visitor spending, benefiting local businesses and the community while allowing Buffalo to stay competitive by accessing industry best practices.

### **Continuing Recovery of International Inbound Travel and Tourism in the U.S. – Tourism Economics**



As the summer season progresses, strong travel demand, growth in outbound trips, and a continued recovery in inbound international travel are boosting U.S. airport traffic.

Looking back at early 2024, Over 360 million travelers passed through U.S. airport security checkpoints from January to May, including over 10 million during Memorial Day weekend alone.

International arrivals to the U.S. through May were 14% below 2019 levels, despite a 20% increase over last year. Recovery rates varied by region, with Central America showing the strongest rebound, up 16% compared to the first five months of 2019.

This surge in U.S. airport traffic and the steady recovery of international travel directly support Visit Buffalo Niagara's global sales efforts. With growing inbound travel, there's an increased opportunity to attract international tourists to Buffalo as a unique U.S. destination. As more travelers seek diverse and authentic experiences, Visit Buffalo Niagara can leverage this momentum to showcase the region's cultural, historical, and recreational attractions to overseas markets. The recovery in key regions also highlights potential areas to target through marketing campaigns and partnerships, helping to position Buffalo as an appealing option for international visitors looking to explore beyond major U.S. cities. This alignment with rising travel trends aids in boosting Buffalo's visibility globally, ultimately driving economic growth through international tourism.

# Q3 2024 Administration Highlights

# **Record-Breaking Visitor Spend In Erie County**

According to the annual visitor spending study commissioned by New York State and conducted by the Oxford Economics Company, Tourism Economics, visitor economic impact in Erie County has continued to surpass pre-pandemic levels to reach a new high: Traveler spending rose 11.2 percent to \$2.4 billion in 2023, going above the previous \$2.2 billion high of 2022, according to the latest economic impact study.

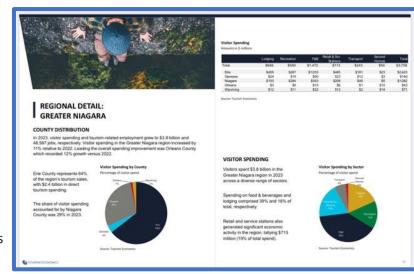
Spending in Erie County represents 64 percent of the region's 2023 tourism sales. Increases from 2022 by business category are:

- Lodging spending was \$455 million, up by 13.5 percent.
- Recreation spending was \$267 million, up by 16.1 percent.
- Food and beverage was \$1.03 billion, up by 11.1 percent.
- Retail was \$465 million, up by 5.2 percent.
- Transportation was \$181 million, up by 18.3 percent.
- Second home ownership was \$23 million, up by 4.5 percent.

The increase in tourism spending has also impacted employment: The number of people employed in tourism-related jobs is 28,650, up 4.6 percent.

Were it not for tourism-generated state and local taxes, the average household in Erie County would have to pay an additional \$648 annually, said Patrick Kaler, Visit Buffalo Niagara's president and CEO. This tax contribution is up nine percent from 2022, he said. "Buffalo and Erie County are fortunate to have an exciting visitor experience that continues to bring more visitors year after year," Kaler said. "Tourism has also proven to be a good job creator for Western New York. This is especially true in Erie County."





Kaler is also encouraged by the growth in leisure travel from New York City and other markets that he expects to see continued growth in: Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. "Visitors from those areas tend to stay longer and spend more money than people who drive to Buffalo from closer places like Central New York, Cleveland and Pittsburgh," said Kaler.



# In The BUF Weekly E-Newsletter

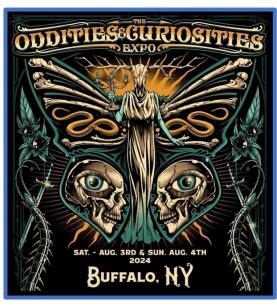
Visit Buffalo Niagara's weekly industry e-newsletter, *In The BUF*, is a crucial tool for sharing the latest developments, events, and initiatives across Buffalo and Western New York's tourism community. With over 6,000 subscribers and an impressive open rate nearing 50%, *In The BUF* effectively engages local stakeholders and industry partners by delivering timely and relevant insights. Visit Buffalo Niagara is dedicated to growing this subscriber base while maintaining its strong engagement. It strives to expand its reach and continue serving as a trusted resource that supports the region's tourism growth and keeps Buffalo's industry momentum thriving.

# Q3 2024 CONVENTION CENTER HIGHLIGHTS

















### VISIT BUFFALO NIAGARA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Officers:

Cindy Abbott-Letro, Law Offices of Francis A. Letro – Chair Kimberley A. Minkel, NFTA – Vice Chair Thomas Long, The Westin Buffalo – Treasurer Thomas Beauford, Buffalo Urban League - Secretary Mary F. Roberts, Martin House - Immediate Past Chair

Mark Alnutt, University of Buffalo Department of Athletics

### **Directors:**

Melissa Brown, Buffalo History Museum
Daniel Castle, Erie County Dept. of Environment & Planning
Matt Chiazza, Reikart House
Anthony J.W. Chase, Buffalo State University
Dottie Gallagher, Buffalo Niagara Partnership
Mark Glasgow, Erie County Legislature Majority Caucus Appointee
Patrick Kaler, Visit Buffalo Niagara – President & CEO
Bob Karmazyn, Embassy Suites Buffalo
William Paladino, Ellicott Development, Inc.
Steven Ranalli, Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation
David Schutte, Schutte Hospitality Group
Don Spasiano, Trocaire College
Michelle Urbanczyk, Explore & More Children's Museum
Gail Wells, Coppertown Blockclub & Buffalo Freedom Gardens

### VISIT BUFFALO NIAGARA STAFF

James Adler, Director of Sports Development

Jennifer Bialek, Executive Assistant to the CEO Jo Ann Blatner, Industry Relations Assistant **Drew Brown, Marketing Manager** Michele Butlak, Accounting & Benefits Manager Brooke Chavanne, Administrative Sales Assistant Karen Cox, Convention Sales & Services Manager Mike Even, Vice President of Sales & Services Karen Fashana, Vice President of Marketing **Greg Gelinas, Director of Sports Development** Brian Hayden, Senior Director of Marketing & Communications Nicklaus Householder, Destination Experience Specialist Patrick Kaler, President & CEO Michelle Kearns, Director of Communications David Marzo, Chief Financial Officer Leah Mueller, Director of Tourism Sales Heather Nowakowski, Director of Research & Operations Kathryn Scaduto, Marketing and Social Media Specialist Renata Toney, Vice President of Destination Experience Marisa Urbano, Convention Services Coordinator **Lauren Vargo, Sports Services Manager** Meredith Walsh, National Sales Manager **Meaghan Zimmer, National Sales Director** 

### **BUFFALO CONVENTION CENTER STAFF**

Jeff Calkins, Vice President & General Manager Lorna Cullen, Office Manager Jamie Flood, Controller Megan Gummo, Sales and Catering Manager Patrick Kaler, President & CEO Craig Landseadel, Executive Chef Mary Ann Martin, Bookkeeper & Benefits Manager Mark McMahon, Maintenance Supervisor **Heather Petrino, Sales & Service Coordinator** Ken Sanford, Chief Engineer **Christie Walker, Convention & Event Service Manager** Cory Watson, Food and Beverage Manager Michael Will, Director of Operations Colleen Willis, Sales Manager Danielle Winiarski, Assistant General Manager Alishia Vega, Front Desk Receptionist

Melissa Burke, Senior Director of Sales



### **VISION:**

To be the most surprising destination you'll ever visit.

### **MISSION:**

Transforming our community by inspiring visitors and locals to discover Buffalo and Erie County.

# BUFFALO CONVENTION CENTER

### **VISION:**

To create memorable event experiences for our guests and be a catalyst for economic development and improved quality of life in Buffalo and Erie County.

### **MISSION:**

Delivering quality facilities and exceptional service through our warm hospitality, attention to detail and drive to achieve our clients' vision.

# Data Sources For This Key Performance Indicator Report:

**Cervis Technologies** 

Cision
Google Analytics
Key Data
Madden Media
Momentus Technologies
Sales Force Marketing Cloud
Simpleview
STR (Smith Travel Research)
Tourism Economics
Zartico





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