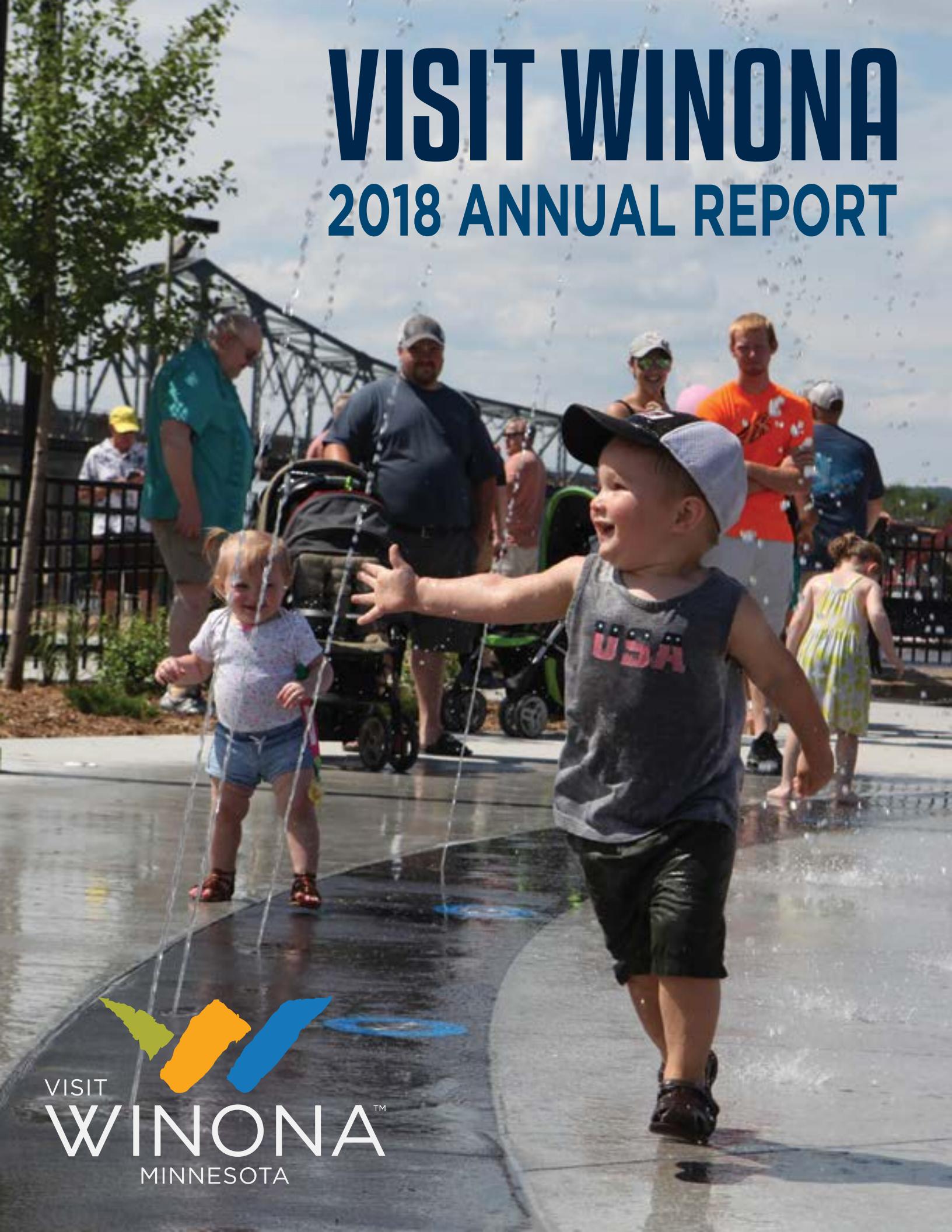


VISIT WINONA

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



VISIT
WINONATM
MINNESOTA



2018 TOURISM BY THE NUMBERS: WINONA COUNTY

\$111,328,250 in Gross Sales from the Leisure and Hospitality Industry (+7.72% over 2017)

\$7,126,835 in State Sales Tax (+1.08% over 2017)

2,545 Private Sector Employment Jobs (+8.39% over 2017)

Source: Explore Minnesota "Tourism & Minnesota's Economy"



www.visitwinona.com

info@visitwinona.com

Visitor Center
924 Huff Street / 507.452.2278

Visit Winona Offices
Winona County History Center
160 Johnson Street
507.452.0735 / 800.657.4972
Winona, Minnesota 55987

2019 BOARD MEMBERS



Matthew Fluharty
Chair



Eric Barnard
Vice Chair



Nichol Araya Espinoza
Treasurer



Jamie Schell
Past Chair



Diane Amundson



Tom Fassbender



Dani Holtzclaw



Emily Kurash Casey



Andrea Moore



Lew Overhaug



Ryan White

STAFF



Pat Mutter
Executive Director



Kate Carlson
Partnership Director



Mary Farrell
Visitor Services Coordinator



Cynthia Porter
Marketing Specialist



Emily Skeels
Marketing Assistant

MARKETING - STRATEGIES

VISIT WINONA COMMUNICATIONS



2018 Marketing Strategies & Tactics

- The “Surprisingly Weird” marketing campaign celebrates the fact that many people say it is surprising and kind of weird that a city the size of Winona has world-class art, theater, musical performances, recreation, architecture, AND industry, while most cities our size would be grateful for any one of those things. We agree that it’s weird but in the coolest way possible, and our mission is to invite as many people as we can reach here to experience our city for themselves.
- Embody a new brand***
- Create local ambassadors with awards and a community celebration
- Brand festivals as *Winona Originals*
- Enhance the website appearance and functionality
- Expand reach to niche markets with a partnership grant program



Non-print Advertising

- Billboards in the Twin Cities
- Fox 25 TV in Wisconsin
- Minnesota Public Radio
- Wisconsin Public Radio
- Keyword buys
- Digital ad campaigns
- Sponsored e-mail blasts
- Influencer sponsorship
- Retargeting/Intercept marketing
- Star Tribune Travel Trade Show
- Branded merchandise promotions
- Tourism Celebration Awards
- Tweet-chat with Midwest Bloggers Network
- Social Media
- WEIRD display letters



Diversified Print Media Mix

- Minnesota Monthly
- AAA Living
- USA Today
- Midwest Living
- Lavender Magazine
- City Pages
- Midwest Meetings
- Have Fun Biking
- River Valley Bike Trails
- Explore La Crosse
- Explore MN Group Tour Planner
- Group Tour Media
- Minnesota Meetings & Events
- So MN Travel Guide
- Minnesota Trails
- Star Tribune

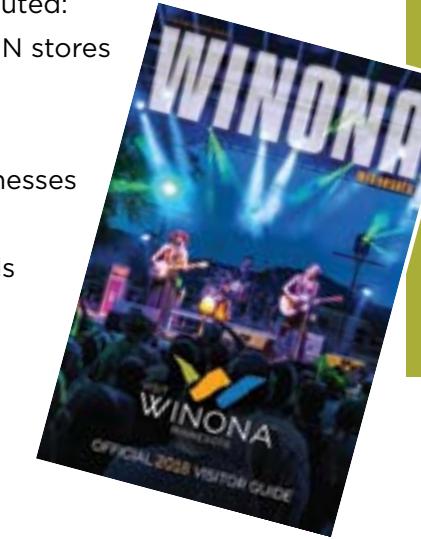


*Our New Brand

Bold imagery › Playful wording › Large ads › Expanded advertising efforts › A new brand promise › A focus on rebranding to highlight the niche markets Winona appeals to

2018 Visitor Guide

- First-time inclusion of 2018 coupon spread, featuring 10 partner business deals
- 40,000 copies printed and distributed:
 - Mall of America's two Explore MN stores
 - Welcome Centers statewide
 - Winona Welcome Bags
 - Local and regional partner businesses
 - Trade Shows
 - Explore Minnesota Website leads
 - Midwest Living magazine leads
 - Travel and Event Planners
 - Winona Visitor Center
 - All Visitor Inquiries



NEWS & E-COMMUNICATION

Tourism Matters is printed inside the Winona Post monthly and distributed to an average of 24,000 Winona area households

Visit Winona's monthly e-newsletter is sent to 4,200+ subscribers

This Week in Winona is emailed to 1,000+ Winona visitors and residents every Monday

Indicators of Brand/Marketing Success

- Featured at least **56 times** in travel-related articles in 2018
- Average daily social media engagement increased **75 percent** over 2017
- Great River Shakespeare Festival** reported record attendance and **Boats & Bluegrass** reported more robust sales at higher price points in 2018
- Google Analytics shows a **49 percent increase** in website page views compared to 2017
- The Visitor Center nearly sold out of **Surprisingly Weird** merchandise
- Face-to-face marketing at consumer travel shows was enormously popular and netted nearly **500 new leads**



SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK LIVE CAMPAIGN

Launched in August 2018, Visit Winona's weekly Facebook Live Series has brought Marketing Specialist Cynthia Porter to places like Garvin Heights and the Winona Public Library, the kitchen of Bloedow Bakery and the top of Sugar Loaf bluff – all based on the votes from our Facebook page followers.



Facebook: 2018 compared to 2017

Fan Growth 1/18–12/18: 14,228–15,174



15.2k

Total Fans



319.6k

Impressions



207.6k

Reach



15.6k

Page Engagement

↗ 100%

↗ 100%

↗ 100%

Visit Winona holds a position of envy among even the largest tourism organizations in Minnesota, as we consistently outperform them on engagement.

We invested \$2,420 in social media marketing in 2018 and achieved an average of 168,000 monthly impressions.

Facebook Success By the Numbers:

Average Total Monthly Impressions: 2017: 135,669 **2018: 169,520**

Average Daily Unique Engaged Users: 2017: 159 **2018: 276**

Instagram: 2018 compared to 2017

Fan Growth 1/18–12/18: 2,103–**2,505**



2.5k

Total Followers



404

Followers Evolution



217.2k

Impressions

↗ 100%



130.3k

Reach



6.81%

Average Engagement Rate by Post



11.72%

Average Engagement on Reach

↗ 100%



facebook.com/visitwinona



instagram.com/visitwinona



twitter.com/visitwinona



pinterest.com/visitwinona



youtube.com/visitwinona

MARKETING HIGHLIGHT: INSTAGRAM INFLUENCERS TAKE ON WINONA

Instagrammers share Winona to Chicagoland followers and beyond

Visit Winona hosted four Instagram Influencers in December 2018, invited them to experience our city, and share favorite moments with their combined 500,000+ followers. These Chicago-based photographers included:

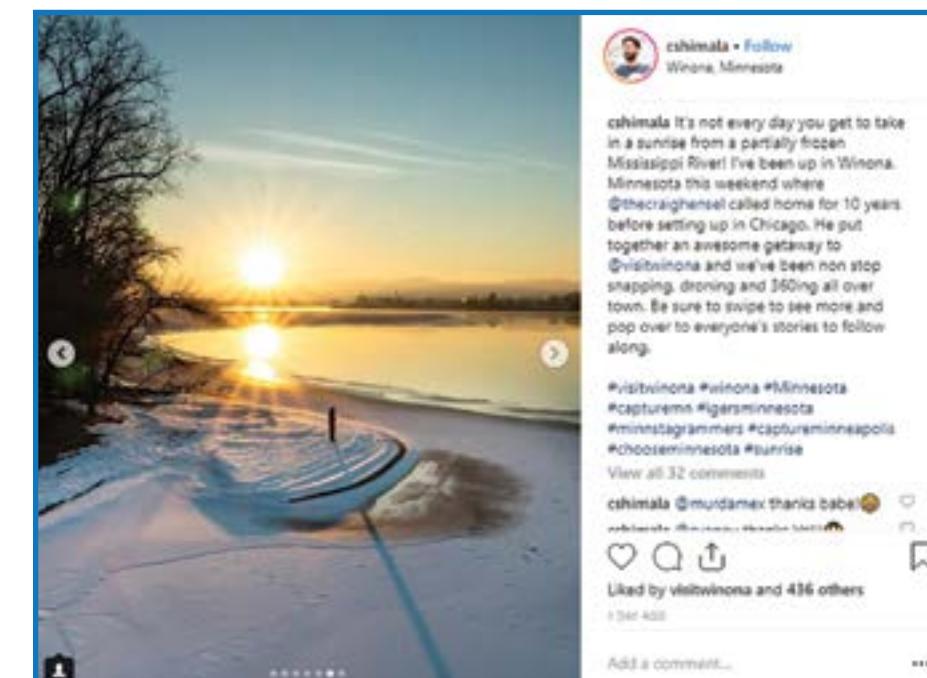
Craig Hensel



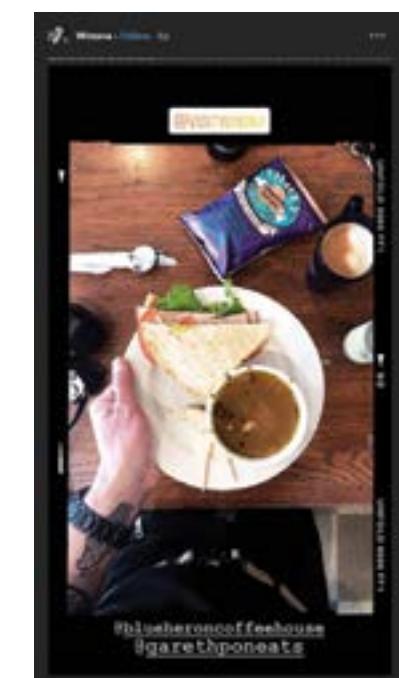
Mike Meyers



Craig Shimala

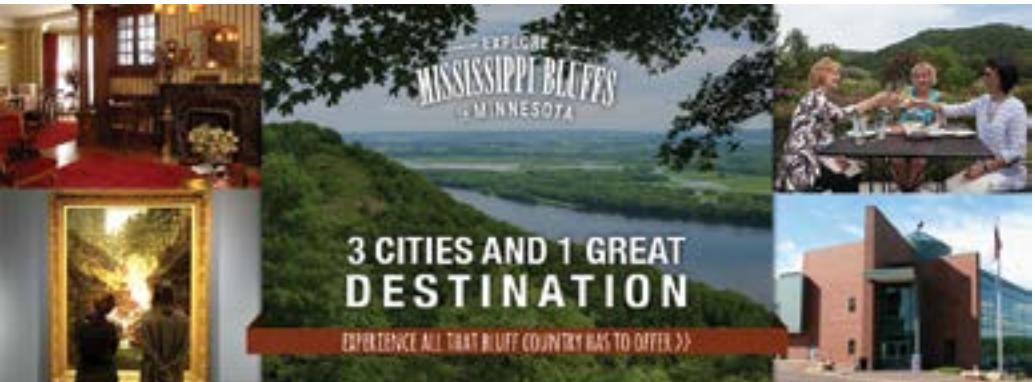


Gareth Pon



This was an incredibly unique marketing opportunity at a target audience (millennial, male, Chicago-area, outdoor enthusiasts) that Visit Winona is eager to tap in to.

REGIONAL & LOCAL COLLABORATION

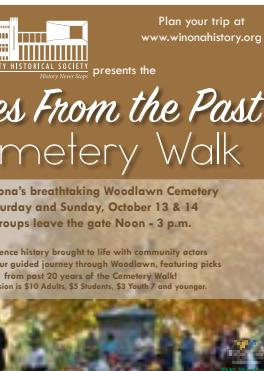


Explore Mississippi Bluffs

Visit Winona worked with the Explore Mississippi Bluffs marketing collaboration group (Winona, Wabasha and Red Wing Convention and Visitor Bureaus) to apply for and received \$5,000 in regional community marketing grants used for native content, email campaigns, social media sweepstakes opportunities, and a print ad in the Explore Minnesota Tourism 2018 Guide. Explore Mississippi Bluffs also launched its own Facebook page in 2018, highlighting regional events and attractions.

2018 Visit Winona Marketing Grant Program

- Purpose:** This Grant Program was created to increase travel and tourism in our community by assisting partner attractions and events in marketing to their target markets that are more than 60 miles from Winona.
- 14 partner applications were awarded \$1,000 each** after completing the application process for strategic and specific marketing outside of the Winona region.



WCHS ad in MN Monthly Sept 2018
MMAM ad in City Pages Sept-Oct 2018

"We had never purchased advertisements in the Twin Cities before because it was hard to find money to help cover the cost of an effective campaign. The Visit Winona Marketing Grant Program helped give us the motivation to drastically increase our marketing budget. As a result of our advertisements, we saw the number of unique zip codes in Minnesota double at our festival. Without this grant, we wouldn't have been able to budget money to spend outside of the Winona area."

—Sara Enzenauer, Executive Director
Frozen River Film Festival



Visit Winona received a **Marketing Excellence Award** from **Explore Minnesota Tourism**, the state's tourism marketing organization. The award recognized the **Visit Winona coloring book*** released in 2017 as the state's outstanding branding initiative, with judges calling it a clever way to tie the community together in a project that helps imprint Winona in the minds of visitors.



*The Winona Coloring Book Project was also selected as a finalist for the Upper Midwest Convention and Visitors' Bureau McDaniel's Innovation Award in September 2018.

In collaboration with the City of Winona, Visit Winona facilitated a grant from Explore Minnesota Tourism for June's successful Live at the Levee event in 2018. More than 4,000 people were in attendance.



2018 Tourism Award

Visit Winona successfully led a rebrand of our annual **Tourism Awards** event as a local marketing opportunity with expanded awards that invited community participation and, in the process, helped deepen the community's understanding of our mission and of the importance of tourism.



2018 Tourism Award Winners included:
People's Choice Award — Winona Tour Boat
Tourism Rock Star Award — Aaron Repinski, Winona Tour Boat
Partnership Excellence Award — Lakeview Drive Inn

Visitor Center Highlights

- Restructuring of displays, new offerings of Winona-specific merchandise, and greater promotions of the Visitor Center as a retail space grew sales by close to **20%** compared to 2017 in yearly gross figures.
- Collaborated with **Great River Shakespeare Festival** to have the Visitor Center be the festival's satellite box office location June through early August.
 - Recorded around **500+ more** visitors each month in July and August 2018 compared to 2017.
- Continued **extended year-round hours**: Saturdays and Sundays January-March/November-December and 7 days/week April-October.



15,754

Total visitors through December 2018 (14,325 visitors in 2017)

49 STATES

(Missing: Vermont)

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

Africa, Austria, Australia, Canada, China, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Spain

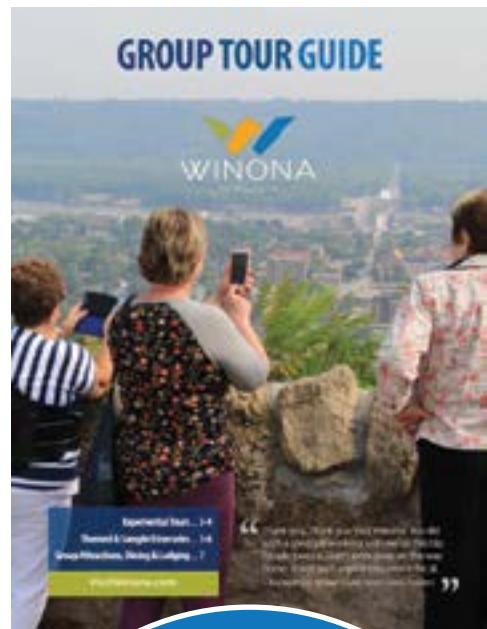


Ribbon cutting for GRSF Box Office partnership, June 2018.



Partner Communications

- Partnership Program** - 158 partners locally and regionally participated in our annual marketing partnership program.
- Creation of **Quarterly Hospitality Videos** for partners, providing front-of-house staff an easily-accessible training opportunity to become knowledgeable about seasonal area events and attraction highlights.
- Game Day Experience** tabling at WSU home football games
- Winona presentations during Admitted Student Days at WSU and SMU, Faculty Engagement Fairs and more.
- This Week in Winona** digital screen inclusion throughout the WSU and SMU campuses as well as the Plaza Hotel and Holiday Inn lobbies and Hwy 43 signage
- Connecting Winona** monthly partner meetings were held at 12 different venues in town with topics in tourism and networking opportunities which draw between 20 – 40 people at each meeting.



Volunteer Coordination:

- Visit Winona has a core group of 13 volunteers that assist with welcome bag assembly, mailings, steamboat visits and other special events. Volunteers helped with the American Duchess and America dockings at Levee Park in August and September.

Welcome Bags:

- Volunteers helped assemble 1,000 welcome bags
- Supplied bus groups and special events/conferences with 1,300 welcome bags

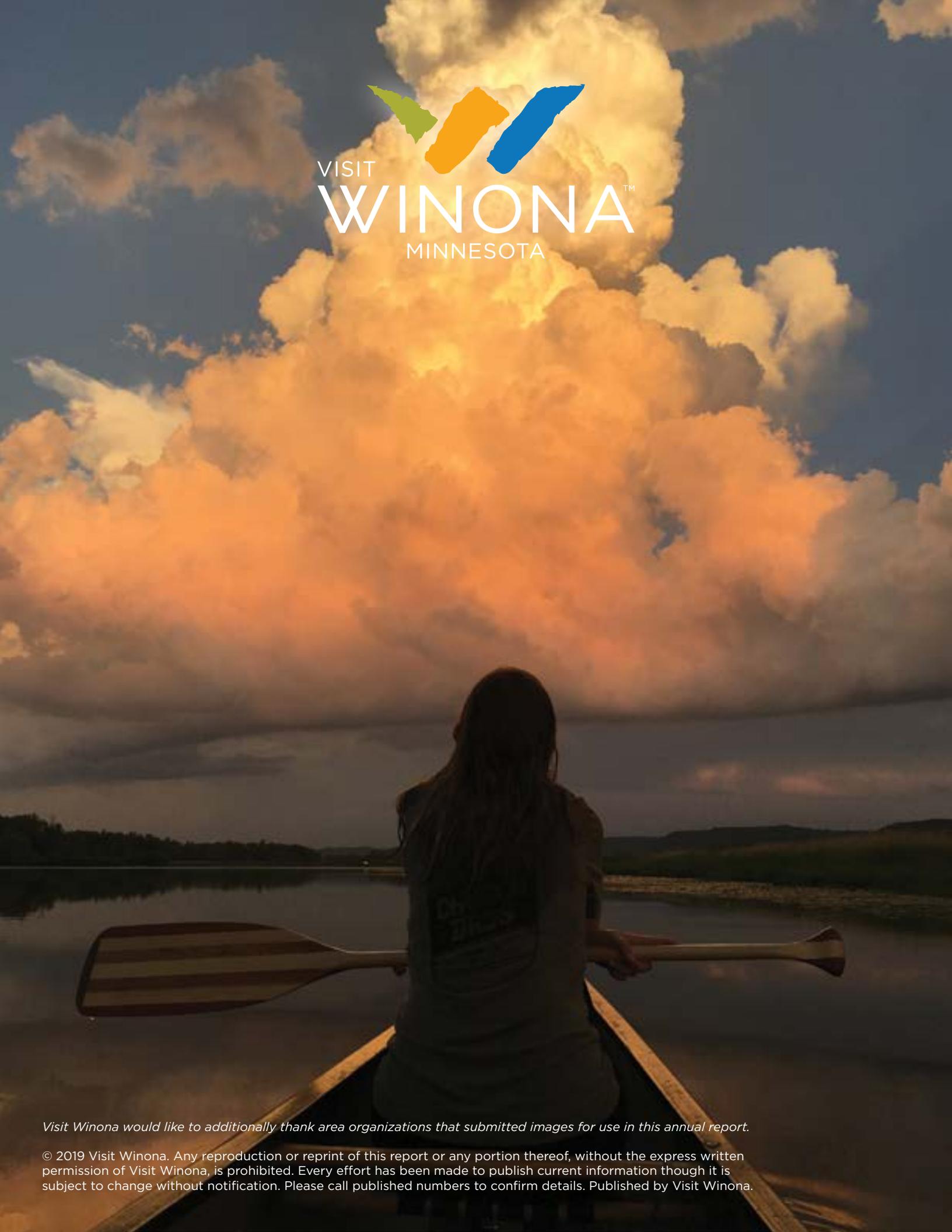
Visit Winona assisted more than a dozen Group Tours in 2018, and represented Winona at the Minnesota Field Trip Expo, Explore MN Tourism MN Group Tour Operator Appreciation Luncheon and Exhibit, Circle Wisconsin Midwest Marketplace, and Tour Minnesota Association.

New Group Tour Guide now available for download: This new resource for group travel planning offers a look at regional experiential tours, themed and sample itineraries and a list of group-friendly attractions, lodging, and dining.

Visit Winona hosted media professionals, travel writers and group tour planners in Winona familiarization tours from China, Germany, Iceland Air, and Japan in 2018.

Photo: IcelandAir FAM, October 2018





Visit Winona would like to additionally thank area organizations that submitted images for use in this annual report.

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