

sync[®] NEWS & OPPORTUNITIES FROM N.C. COMMERCE



Traffic swelled at the state's visitor centers as travelers displaced by Hurricane Irma sought refuge from the storm. Here, cars overflow the parking lot at a center on I-95.

N.C.'s Visitor Services Team Extends Helping Hand to Irma Victims

Hurricane Irma caused havoc in the state of Florida, but the monster storm's impact was felt up and down North Carolina's interstate highways as travelers fled north. The state's Visitor Services team responded with their usual warm hospitality, but also with some innovative thinking that solved many lodging dilemmas.

Before Irma's landfall, the I-26 East - Columbus, I-77 South - Charlotte, I-85 South - Kings Mountain and I-95 South - Rowland Welcome Centers experienced heavier traffic than usual. Seasoned center staff answered many visitor questions about traffic and weather. However, it soon became clear that more than normal measures were needed in order to relay timely information about available lodging.

North Carolina's Visitor Services team quickly formed an alliance with other state welcome centers along the interstates. The goal was to rapidly share information about available lodging choices during the crisis. The team created a new, online database to list and solicit vacant rooms. State centers in Florida, South Carolina and Georgia were given access to the data, as well as operators in various state call centers. Tourism officials saw a tenfold increase in listings during Hurricane Irma with the new document process over previous efforts to provide listings during Hurricane Matthew. VisitNC's call center saw a 7 percent increase over the usual amount of calls to the center.



Registration Remains Open for Japanese Business Conference

North Carolina economic developers and business executives aiming to increase opportunities in Japan should consider attending the 40th Annual Joint Meeting between the Southeast U.S./Japan and Japan-U.S Southeast Associations. Registration is now open for the meeting, to be held in Greenville, South Carolina October 22-24, 2017.

Governor Roy Cooper will serve as the state's Head of Delegation. Other conference speakers include **Jeff Immelt, Chairman of General Electric Corporation** and the Honorable **Kenichiro Sasae, Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of Japan to the United States.**

North Carolina is a founding member of SEUS/Japan, an association of seven southeastern states created in 1976. The state's participation aims to encourage foreign direct investment (FDI) from Japanese companies, as well as strengthen export ties for North Carolina companies selling goods in Japan.

North Carolinians interested in joining the state's delegation to the conference may contact David Rhoades, State Coordinator for the conference at (919) 814-4611 or [by email](#).



Community and church groups reached out to N.C. Visitor Services staff to coordinate additional support for hurricane victims, offering free snacks and water.

Meanwhile, residents, local businesses and area churches reached out to the Welcome Centers and offered help for evacuees while others decided to come in person and set up outside offering food, water and snacks.

North Carolina's nine Welcome Centers promote thousands of tourism-related businesses - attractions, accommodations, events and more - to visitors actively seeking travel information. The Welcome Centers are open from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. daily, and only close on New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.



(Left-right) Evans Prater, Mount Inspiration Apparel; Michael Smith, Diamond Brand Gear; Mike and Carol Scully, Lever Gear; Scott McCrea, Swaygo Gear; Blake Jackman, EDPNC; Nathan Masters, SimpleShot; and Adam Masters, Bellyak.

Outdoor Products and Services from North Carolina On Display

Six North Carolina companies showcased their products to an international audience at the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market trade show (OR) held in Salt Lake City recently. The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) coordinated the state's presence at the show, in collaboration with the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Outdoor Gear Builders of Western Carolina.

The North Carolina companies featured in the state's booth included Bellyak, SimpleShot, Diamond Brand Gear, Lever Gear, Swaygo Gear, and Mount Inspiration Apparel.

For North Carolina, this industry spans the state, supports over 260,000 jobs, and brings in over \$28 billion in annual consumer spending. By attending events like OR, companies can network with trade professionals, gain first-hand knowledge of industry trends, and showcase their product's competitive

MFG WEEK

Communities Encouraged to Submit Examples of Advanced Manufacturing

Commerce's survey seeking local examples of 'factories of the future' remains open this week, as the department continues to gather information to be used to promote Manufacturing Week in the first week of October.

Every October, the national and state spotlight focuses on manufacturing, and the importance this cross-industry sector plays in our economy and our local and regional growth strategies. This year, Commerce's Communications team will publish information and hold events during the week of October 2 featuring manufacturing's key role in North Carolina.

"We're aiming to highlight examples of clean, modern manufacturing plants that can counter the outdated stereotypes that still persist regarding manufacturing as a career path and engine for a modern economy," said Beth Gargan, Assistant Secretary for Communications and External Affairs.

To contribute an example from your community, visit the [online survey](#) or contact Communications Director David Rhoades at (919) 814-4611 or by email at drhoades@nccommerce.com.

New Members Named to Rural Infrastructure Authority

Governor Roy Cooper announced new appointments to several North Carolina Boards and Commissions on September 13, including the North Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority. The North Carolina Department of Commerce provides staff support for the Authority.

Andrea Harris of Henderson was named as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 County representative. As co-founder of the N.C. Institute of Minority Economic Development, Harris has dedicated her life to supporting economic growth through small business development.

Abdul Rasheed of Henderson was also named as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 County representative. Rasheed is the CEO of the William C. Friday Fellowship for Human Relations, and he has a passion for assisting low-income areas across the state.

advantage.

"I truly appreciate the time and dedication the EDPNC spent on getting us out there," said **Evans Prater, Mount Inspiration Apparel**. "It was a truly invaluable experience for our young brand to continue its growth and development. I will never forget my first OR and my cozy little corner of the North Carolina booth!"

"Being able to share booth space on behalf of the EDPNC allowed us to showcase our product to a much larger audience than is normally possible for a company our size," said **Adam Masters, Founder, Bellyak, Inc.** "We made connections that are leading to a distribution agreement with South America, a national program with the Boy Scouts of America, as well as several smaller retailers from the west coast. The support of the EDPNC has positively and directly impacted the growth of our business."

More than 25,000 attendees visited exhibitors at OR that showcased their products and services in a variety of sectors including mountain climbing, water sports, shoes, apparel, and survivalist equipment and food.

N.C. in the News

- [The hard choices Amazon will have to make to find the right city for HQ2](#) (*Quartz* - Sept. 11)
- [Area officials: I-87 plan OK so far](#) (*Daily Advance* - Elizabeth City - Sept. 10)
- [Auto makers eye plant sites in state](#) (*Rocky Mount Telegram* - Sept. 10)
- [Dear Amazon, We Picked Your New Headquarters for You](#) (*New York Times* - Sept. 9)
- [Where Are Millennials Moving?](#) (*SmartAsset.com* - Sept. 7)

About Us

SYNC is North Carolina Commerce's electronic newsletter for local government officials, private-sector allies, state policy makers, and other economic development leaders. We offer unfiltered details about new economic development projects and events, useful news about your peers, and opportunities to synchronize with statewide programs and tools in order to advance economic development in your community. [Send your story ideas to the editor.](#)

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