CHAPEL HILL/ORANGE COUNTY VISITORS BUREAU

# 2011–2012 ANNUAL REPORT

CHAPEL HILL

HILLSBOROUGH & CARRBORO

SERVING THE ORANGE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITIES OF CHAPEL HILL, CARRBORO AND HILLSBOROUGH

# A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

***David Gephart***
***Chair, 2011–2012***
***Board of Directors***

**WHAT AN INCREDIBLE YEAR** for the tourism industry in Orange County. After overcoming numerous economic challenges in the last three years, the Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau went full force in being seen and heard throughout the Atlantic Coast and beyond.

The Visitors Bureau managed to pull off many feats including introducing a new marketing campaign focused on mid-week business, themed "The Edge of the Triangle." The campaign positions the area as hip, funky and edgy and reminds visitors of the growing popularity of the Research Triangle Park. The campaign has reached 26 million people in target markets on the Atlantic Coast, through digital, print and radio platforms.

From TerraVITA, the Carrboro Film Festival and the Black Alumni Reunion, to sponsoring athletic events and collaborating with the North Carolina High School Athletic Association, the VB saw an increase in visitors, conferences, media coverage and demand for rooms, restaurants and information.

Additionally, the Visitors Bureau worked on growing the meetings, sports, wedding and reunions markets; goals were met and exceeded through collaborative initiatives such as UNC Blitzes, incoming client tours, participation in corporate and religious tradeshows and direct marketing.

Looking ahead, the VB has embarked on new research, gauging attitudes, awareness and purchasing behavior of our customers in order to better understand who our target audience is and how to improve marketing initiatives to meet their goals.

I'm truly excited about the work and dedication of the Visitors Bureau staff and look forward to seeing how the new strategic plan impacts tourism development in the next fiscal year.

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**MEMBERSHIPS:**

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# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JULY 1, 2011–JUNE 30, 2012

## OFFICERS

**David Gephart,** *Chair*
Alliance for Historic Hillsborough
**Anthony Carey,** *Vice Chair*
Orange County Lodging Association
**Mike Gering,** *Finance Chair*
Town of Hillsborough

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**Valerie Foushee,** Board of County Commissioners
**Gordon Jameson,** Orange County Arts Commission
**Lydia Lavelle,** Town of Carrboro
**Laura Morgan,** University of North Carolina
**Greg Overbeck,** Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce
**Gene Pease,** Town of Chapel Hill
**Jim Parker,** Hillsborough/Orange County Chamber of Commerce
**Mark Sherburne,** Orange County Lodging Association
**Lee Pavao,** At-Large
**Annette Downing Stone,** Economic Development, Carrboro (ex-officio)
**Meg McGurk,** Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership (ex-officio)
**Steve Brantley,** Economic Development Commission, Orange County

*Others who served during part of the fiscal year:*
**Jim Ward** and **Donna Bell,** Town of Chapel Hill; **Jim Norton,** Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership

## BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

**Bernadette Pelissier,** *Chair*
**Pam Hemminger,** *Vice Chair*
**Valerie P. Foushee**
**Alice M. Gordon**
**Pam Hemminger**
**Barry Jacobs**
**Earl McKee**
**Steve Yuhasz**

**Frank Clifton,** *County Manager*

— ABOUT THE CVB —

### *OUR MISSION*

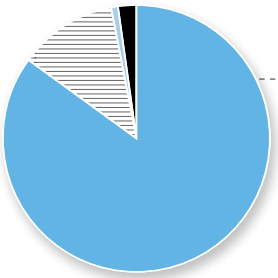
To market Orange County, in collaboration with community stakeholders; to attract and serve visitors; and to positively impact the local economy and quality of life.

### *OUR VISION*

To establish and promote Orange County as a premier place to visit; and a conference destination.

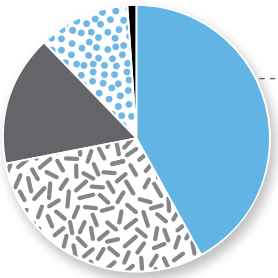
# REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES

FY 2011–2012



## REVENUE

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Occupancy Tax Receipts (3% Orange County) | $1,038,383 | 85% |
| Chapel Hill Occupancy Tax Support | $150,000 | 12% |
| Partnership Reimbursement, Merchandise Sales, Interest | $1,377 | 1% |
| State Arts Grant (Arts Commission) | $29,891 | 2% |
| **TOTAL** | **$1,219,651** | |



## EXPENDITURES

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sales & Marketing | $464,942 | 42% |
| Personnel Services | $326,208 | 30% |
| Operations/Administration | $178,959 | 16% |
| Arts Commission Operations | $125,390 | 11% |
| Recurring Capital | $6,644.77 | 1% |
| **TOTAL** | **$1,095,499** | |

# STAFF DIRECTORY

**Laurie Paolicelli,** *Executive Director*
**Linda Ekeland,** *Sales Director*
**Patty Griffin,** *Communications Director*
**Tina Fuller,** *Administration*
**Susan Rice,** *Visitor Services*
**Dale Chodorow,** *Visitor Services, Saturday*

# MAJOR COLLABORATIONS IN ORANGE COUNTY

**In this fiscal year, the Visitors Bureau partnered with numerous special events that brought in tens of thousands of visitors to Orange County. These events provide tremendous impact on the local economy by boosting sales at hotels, restaurants and shopping venues. Here's just some of the highlights from 2011–2012!**

Visitors Bureau represented on the Chapel **Downtown Partnership Board.** Promotes Locally Grown Summer Events, holiday activities and other downtown events.

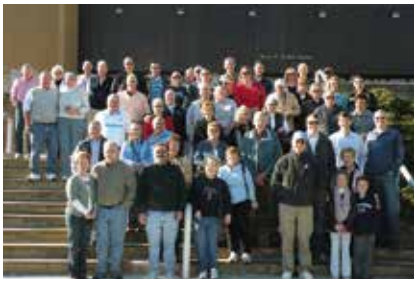
Publicity for the first **Free Spirit Freedom Outdoor Cultural Affair** in September at Hillsborough's Moorefields featuring an appearance by the highly acclaimed actress and storyteller, Joyce Grear, in the role of Harriet Tubman, along with tours and music.

Support of popular annual **Festifall** event each October in downtown Chapel Hill.

**Alliance for Historic Hillsborough Holiday Campaign** as well as support and promotion for **Downtown Merchants Winter Ladies' Night Out** and new Spring 2012 **Hillsborough Fresh Roots Festival & Feast** events.

Continued sponsorship for second annual **TerraVITA Food & Wine event** in September 2011.

Visitors Bureau was a sponsor of the **2011 UNC Black Alumni Reunion Dinner** at the Sheraton Chapel Hill Hotel on October 28, 2011. Former Chapel Hill Mayor and NC Senator Howard Lee was honored at the event.



Chapel Hill was a day trip tour destination for 60 readers of ***Our State Magazine*** on Saturday, December 3, 2011. The daylong event, part of the magazine's "unique destinations and behind the scenes access" tours, was hosted by the magazine and the Visitors Bureau.

Sponsorship and support of September **Carrboro Music Festival,** a free day-long music festival at 25 locations with 180 different musical aggregations.

Sponsorship and support of November **Carrboro Film Festival,** highlighting local area short films, 20 minutes or less.

Funder with the 2011-12 **North Carolina High School Athletic Association** to support championship events including basketball and football held in Chapel Hill.

Partner with **Tar Heel Sports Marketing** to get more visitors to come early and stay late to UNC Athletic events throughout the year.

Partnership with the Hillsborough/Orange County Chamber of Commerce to market **Hillsborough Candlelight Home Tour, Hog Day, Golf Tournament** participation and more.

— NEED-TO-KNOW STATS —

# IMPACT OF TOURISM IN ORANGE COUNTY

**1,650 JOBS** in Orange County

**TRAVEL** generated a **$28.72 million PAYROLL**

**$156.82 million ECONOMIC IMPACT** in Orange County—an increase of 8.8% from 2010

**$3.04 million** in **LOCAL TAX REVENUE**

**$8.60 million** in **STATE TAX REVENUES**

**$1.03 million** in **OCCUPANCY TAXES**

*Source:* 2011 Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina Counties, *study by the U.S Travel Association and *Visitors Bureau Revenue Chart*

## VISITOR INQUIRIES & STATS

Visitor inquiry packets are mailed in response to inquiries through website, email, phone and advertising. Visitors Center is staffed six days a week. Also visitor materials are distributed monthly to more than 50 locations throughout Orange County, as well as North Carolina Welcome Centers and the Raleigh-Durham International Airport.

| VISITOR STATISTICS | FY 2011–12 |
|---|---|
| Visitor Inquiry Packets Mailed | 1,934 |
| Visitor Center Walk-ins | 8,762 |
| E Newsletter Subscribers | 1,920 |
| Orange County Attractions, Welcome Centers & Guided Tours Attendance* | 1,965,857 |
| Visitors Guide, Maps, Rack Cards and Top 10 Bulletins Distributed | 75,975 |

*area attractions include 25 noted venues including museums, sports stadiums and facilities, gardens, performing arts, planetarium, historic sites, welcomes centers and guided tours.

— MEETINGS & EVENTS —

# BRINGING GROUPS AND EVENTS TO ORANGE COUNTY

## SALES HIGHLIGHTS

- Linda Ekeland, Sales Director, participated with 7 Industry Partners to exhibit at the Association Executives of NC annual Tradeshow held in Raleigh in December 2011.

- Hosted a 2 day sales blitz themed "March Madness" held on the University of North Carolina campus. The Blitz culminated with a lunch and industry partner presentations held at The Carolina Club at which 165 employees and planners took part in the event.
- The sales department distributed 87 Meeting & Event Guides to meeting planners throughout the US.
- Attended Connect Marketplace Association Tradeshow in Chicago and met with 35 decision makers from various associations. Attended Collaborate Marketplace Corporate Tradeshow in Las Vegas, and met with 30 meeting planners from various corporations around the US.
- The Bureau teamed with area hotels to host the second Research Triangle Park Sales Road Show with 10 Industry Partners at Mez Restaurant; an event that attracted 24 planners from the Research Triangle Park area. The sales team hosted the first Raleigh Road Show with 12 Industry Partners at 18 Seaboard Restaurant which attracted 40 meeting planners.
- Sales department continued partnership with North Carolina High School Athletic Association for sporting events held in Chapel Hill.
- Additionally, 500 hundred informational packets were designed and distributed to all county schools promoting Chapel Hill/Orange County hotels for any sporting events held in Orange County.

| SALES NUMBERS | FY 2011–12 |
|---|---|
| Requests for information | 1,603 |
| Generated Sales Leads | 76 |
| Conference Bookings | 51 |
| Conference attendees to Orange County | 6,809 |
| Economic Impact of conferences | $2.4 million |
| Total room nights used from groups | 3,808 |
| Events, Groups Serviced | 190 |
| Total Trade Shows/Meetings/Blitzes Attended | 6 |

# COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY

## MEDIA RELATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS OUTREACH

- Generated **national publicity** on Orange County and Chapel Hill in key travel and lifestyle publications, newspapers and on-line resources.
- Hosted **21 travel journalists** who secured story placement on key initiatives in Orange County.

- Communications Department participated in and hosted two media FAMS during 2011–12. In September 2011 **TerraVITA Farm Media Tour and Food & Wine Event** included writers from *Bon Appetit,* NPR, *Lavendar Magazine* and www. everybodyeatsnews.com. In April 2012, four travel writers from the Midwest Travel Writers Association traveled to Orange County as part of a **Triangle Culinary & Cultural Triangle Treats Media Tour.**
- Participated in 6 **media outreach missions** with NC Department of Tourism, Film and Sports Development Division within NC Commerce Department. Provided pitch sheets with story ideas for New York and Washington DC media missions. Hosted four travel writers in working with the Division from *Ladies Home Journal Magazine, Toronto Star* newspaper, *New York Post* and United Kingdom's *Sunday Mirror.*
- Created 2 **new videos and B-roll** on Orange County for internal website and Weather Channel story.
- Conducted two **hospitality training tours** with 16 participants. Additionally presented information session to 13 individuals at the **NC Call Center** (1-800-VISITNC) in September 2011.
- Worked with photographer to continue to increase our **library of images** on Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough and UNC.
- Built awareness of Orange County's assets through **marketing program** with *Herald Sun,* Chapelboro.com, *Chapel Hill Weekly* and *Chapel Hill Magazine.*
- Created 8-page advertisement in *Chapel Hill Magazine* promoting **local food, farmers and agricultural lifestyle** which appeared in the March-April 2012 issue.

- Created **2012 Visitor's Guide to Orange County, 2012 Official Visitors Map** and **Top 12 Things to Do in 2012** flier.

- Visitors Bureau received three **Destination Marketing Achievement Awards** at the 2012 N.C. Tourism Leadership Conference Banquet. *Gold Awards* went to the **2010–2011 Annual Report and Strategic Plan Overview** for "Best Local Constituents Communications" and the **Visitor's Bureau Enewsletter** for "Best Local Constituents Communications — Newsletter". A *Platinum Award* for "Best Publications — Niche Marketing" went to the Sales Department's piece **"Good Meetings Start with Good Preparation"** geared toward meeting planners.

# WHAT THE MEDIA ARE SAYING ABOUT ORANGE COUNTY

**"Think of this city as one big food festival where farmers, chefs, and diners all come together in the name of local ingredients and Southern cuisine. Culinary events take over downtown streets and James Beard Foundation Award-winning chefs like Andrea Reusing think local."**

"South's Best College Towns"
*— SOUTHERN LIVING —*
*September 2011*

**"Don't Mind Me, I'm Just Here for the Food. When I dream of dining destinations a handful stand out for their stellar cuisines — Paris, Hong Kong, Florence. And Chapel Hill. Who Knew?"**

*— LAVENDER MAGAZINE —*
*November 2011*

**Though it remains, literally, on the other side of the tracks from Chapel Hill, Carrboro has developed a personality all its own, using its creative flair and the passion of the people who live there to forge its reputation as one of America's best art towns.**

*— AAA GO MAGAZINE —*
*November/December 2011*

**If you like to tour, shop, and dine in a place with the look and feel of history, drive about an hour east. Just moments off Interstate 85 is Hillsborough**

*— WINSTON-SALEM MONTHLY—*
*July 2012*

**Most residents stay only a few years. Some hang around for a few more. But time doesn't matter. Those who give themselves to Chapel Hill at all walk away with the right to say they are Tar Heels — born, bred and dead — and that's a gift that lasts a lifetime.**

*— OUR STATE —*
*November 2011*

## 125 STORIES

ran about Orange County in magazines, newspapers, travel websites and broadcast outlets including *DeltaSky Magazine, Southern Living, Food & Wine, Bon Appetit, Money Magazine, Ladies Home Journal, Lavendar Magazine, Garden & Gun, Our State Magazine, Winston-Salem Monthly, the New York Post, Toronto Star, Sunday Mirror, Winston-Salem Journal.* Online features included Smartmoney, MSN.com, yahoo.com, reuters.com and more. Also HGTV, Weather Channel, Travel Channel and NPR featured the area. Additionally, Trade publications included *Carolina Explorer, Meeting South, ConventionSouth, Associaton News, Small Market Meetings, Group Tour Magazine, Bus Tour Magazine, AAA Go Carolina* and *Insight Travel Guide.*

# PROMOTING OUT-OF-MARKET MESSAGES TO BRING VISITORS HERE

VISITCHAPELHILL.ORG

**THE VISITCHAPELHILL.ORG INITIATIVE** launched a **mobile website,** making it easy to figure out what to do, where to eat and shop while on the go!

## WEBSITE REPORT

| |
|---|
| **181,383** Visits |
| **29, 272** Visits from Mobile Site |
| **530,231** Page Views |
| **76%** New Visits |
| **2.92** Pages Per Visit |

## TOP VISITED PAGES

| | |
|---|---|
| Special Events | **15,411** |
| Attractions | **13,765** |
| Dining | **10,914** |
| Blogs | **10,904** |
| Accommodations | **10,372** |

## TWITTER

**152** new followers,

a **21%** increase

over previous year

## FACEBOOK

**1,254** friends,

a **125%** increase

over previous year

**The stats represent the website use from 2011–12, prior to the launching of the new website in November 2012.*

# BUILDING THE ARTS IN ORANGE COUNTY

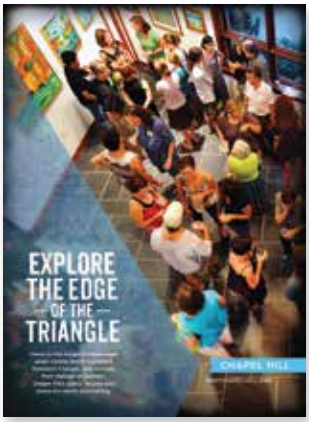
Photo: David Hunt

The Orange County Arts Commission merged forces with the Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau in 2010 to cross-promote and accelerate arts marketing in Orange County. The Arts Commission is housed at the Visitors Bureau and its director, Martha Shannon, works with a specially appointed advisory board, named by the Orange County Board of Commissioners.

**Some of the highlights of the Orange County Arts Commission in 2011-12 include:**

- The Arts Commission awarded $30,482 in state Grassroots Arts Program funds in Orange County, adhering to state program guidelines. The Arts Commission also awarded $26,750 in county-funded grants.
- Provided training sessions for online arts calendar **www.explorechapelhillarts.com** which highlights arts and cultural related events in Orange County, the Triangle and beyond.
- Arts & Economic Prosperity IV National Economic Impact Study released in June 2012 says the nonprofit arts and culture industry generated $85.4 million in economic activity in Orange County, NC during fiscal year 2010—supporting 3,352 full-time equivalent jobs and generating $8.0 million in local and state government revenues.
- Hosted four Artists' Salons offering education-relation seminars designed for professional development on accounting, emergency prepared and marketing art product & services via tourism & crowd funding.
- Arts Commission joined partner agencies to choose Raleigh dramatist Ian Finley as the 2012 Piedmont Laureate. The Piedmont Laureate program promotes awareness and heightens appreciation for excellence n the literary arts throughout Piedmont region. Finley served for one year presenting public readings/workshops throughout Alamance, Orange, Durham and Wake counties.
- Arts Commission continued to increase participation from Orange County High school students in North Carolina's 4th Congressional District Arts Competition.
- For more information about the Arts Commission visit **http://artsorange.org/**

# MARKETING OVERVIEW




## THE EDGE OF THE TRIANGLE

Key Message approved in June 2012:

**"When visiting North Carolina's Research Triangle, skip the mainstream and indulge in the unique sights, sounds and tastes of Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Hillsborough."**

## A COMPREHENSIVE MARKETING PLAN

- In spring 2012 the Marketing Committee of the Visitors Bureau began meeting and planning a new brand strategy, marketing campaign and goals. In June, the board voted on: **The Edge of the Triangle,** a campaign that was launched at the end of the fiscal year and that has now reached 25.5 million targeted visitors as part of strategy.
- The Edge of the Triangle campaign was kicked off in June at a celebration at the new Top of the Hill Distillery in downtown Chapel Hill.

## TACTICS

- Introduce new website providing dynamic source of visitor information.
- Build social marketing plan on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Four Square, Pinterest and Instagram.
- Create new mobile application.
- Launch an out-of-market advertising plan with a goal to reach 25.5 million through June 2013.
- Publications and Vehicles Used for new ad campaign:

*Wired*
*Golf Digest*
*Conde Nast Traveler*
*The New Yorker*
*Charlotte Magazine*
*Our State Magazine*
*Tar Heel Monthly*
*Travel Channel*
*Travel & Leisure*
*The Weather Channel*
*Rolling Stone*
*Living Green*
*NBC, Discovery*

# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2012-13

***Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director***

**AFTER AN INCREDIBLE FY12,** the Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau is excited to continue our momentum forward into FY13. With a new strategic plan that will help guide our goals and strategies, we are already implementing new ideas to meet these initiatives.

Among the numerous initiatives is the Edge of the Triangle brand. Whether it's our arts & culture scene, our food, music, meeting facilities and art scene, the Visitors Bureau is watching excitedly as visitors respond and react to our messaging.

We're well on our way to experiencing increased business, collaborations and testing new programs that will increase our mid-week and weekend visitor volume.

We will continue to educate our tourism industry partners, stakeholders and the community on the importance of tourism, and what we are doing to drive economic development through increased travelers to our area.

By marketing attractions, events, venues and amenities to conference and meeting planners, wedding and tour planners, leisure travelers, and High School sports planners and participants, we anticipate an even stronger boost to the economy in 2013.

Through sales blitzes, tradeshows, networking, advertising and public relations, Orange County messages will be seen, heard and experienced by more than 20 million people this fiscal year.

— VISITORS BUREAU LOOK BACK —

# TWENTY YEARS OF SERVING VISITORS

**In December 1990 a task force created by the Public-Private Partnership recommended the formation of a visitors bureau in Orange County. By July 1991 legislation was passed allowing the Orange County Board of Commissioners to adopt a resolution levying a room occupancy tax of up to 3 %. In October of that same year an interim Visitors Bureau board was established.**

## TWENTY MILESTONES (1992–2012)

**June 1992** The Bureau's **first executive director** was hired and the Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau opened its doors on Columbia Street in downtown Chapel Hill

**January 1993** **Permanent Visitors Bureau Board** was established. The Bureau's first Visitors Guide was published shortly thereafter

**July 1994** **Initial support from Town of Chapel Hill** in form of a $30,000 grant from the Chapel Hill occupancy tax to the Bureau

**November 1996** Bureau moves its offices to **501 W. Franklin Street**. There are now four full time-employees

**September 1997** Bureau worked with the community and elected officials in developing the slogan, **Orange County, You'll be a Fan for Life.** Highways signs at county entry points erected in Fall of 1998

**October 1998** Bureau launched its first comprehensive website **www.chocvb.org**

**October 1999** Visitors Bureau produced its first **VHS video** promoting Orange County as a visitor destination

**June 2000** Visitors Bureau won first of 31 **North Carolina Association of Convention and Visitor Bureau (NCACVB) Awards**, including being named the 2001 Bureau of the Year. The NCACVB became the Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina (DMANC) with the 2007 awards competition

**October 2002** Visitors Bureau opened its first Franklin Street walk-in **welcome center**

**September 2003** Visitors Bureau helped coordinate grand finale event, **Orange County Agricultural Heritage Festival** as the culmination of a year-long 250th Orange County Anniversary celebration. Bureau created and housed **www.orangecounty250.org** which was used throughout the year to highlight various events.

**April 2006** Bureau released first comprehensive **visitors research study** coordinated by Equation Research

**November 2006** Produced first **visitors DVD**

**December 2007** New logo and destination tagline **The Feeling Never Leaves You** announced

**April 2008** Visitors Bureau launched **www.visitchapelhill.org** website and new branding efforts

Visitors Bureau published first of three **children's books** with author Irma Tejada and illustrator Chris Kanoy initially on Carrboro (2008), Hillsborough (2009) and Chapel Hill (2010)

**July 2008** Visitors Bureau Staff is **five full time and one weekend staff**

**December 2009** Bureau with author Moreton Neal and Illustrator Laura Frankstone published first **Chapel Hill Food Lover's Guide** with Carrboro and Hillsborough

**June 2010** Visitors Bureau received accreditation from the Destination Marketing Association International as part of its **Destination Marketing Accreditation** Program

**July 2010** **Orange County Arts Commission** moved its offices from Hillsborough to 501 West Franklin Street in Chapel Hill, home of the Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau

**February 2011** Successfully won Chapel Hill to the **National Trust for Historic Preservation 2011 Dozen Distinctive Destination** List

**June 2012** Launched new **Edge of the Triangle Campaign**

## CHAPEL HILL/ORANGE COUNTY VISITORS BUREAU

**Visitors Center Hours:**
Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Saturday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

501 West Franklin Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27516
**Toll-Free:** (888) 968-2060
**Phone:** (919) 968-2060
**Fax:** (919) 968-2062
**E-mail:** info@visitchapelhill.org
**Website:** www.visitchapelhill.org

**Twitter:** orangecountync
**Facebook:** www.facebook.com/visitchapelhill

The edge of the Triangle

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