

visitnc newslink

A publication of the North Carolina Department of Commerce
Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development



This mobile billboard, sponsored by Onslow County Tourism, circled the Legislative Building in Raleigh during the 2011 N.C. Travel & Tourism Day celebration

N.C. to mark National Travel & Tourism Week, recognize strength of industry's economic impact

North Carolina will recognize National Travel & Tourism Week next month with a range of events locally and statewide designed to highlight the contributions of the travel and tourism industry to the state's economy. Local communities and businesses are encouraged to mark the period from May 3 through May 17 with events to showcase to policymakers and citizens [the integral role tourism plays in the economies all 100 counties in North Carolina.](#)

Visitors traveling to and within the state of North Carolina spent



USA launches first global marketing campaign to attract international travelers

Brand USA, the new tourism marketing entity responsible for promoting the United States to world visitors, unveiled the USA's first-ever comprehensive marketing campaign today during a press conference in Los Angeles at International Pow Wow, the largest U.S. travel trade show. The campaign showcases the diversity of experiences available in the United States in a fresh and unexpected light, inviting visitors to "Discover this land, like never before." The launch marks the culmination of a five-year effort by the tourism industry – including the Division, partners across the state and colleagues around the country – to increase international visitation to the U.S. through a unified marketing campaign. Assistant Sec. Lynn Minges, chair of the National Council of State Tourism Directors, and International Marketing Manager Heidi Walters were at the announcement.

"Our goal is nothing short of rekindling the world's love affair with the USA – the place, the spirit and the dream," said Brand USA CEO Jim Evans. "We want to spread America's message of welcome around the world and invite travelers to experience the limitless possibilities the United States has to

a record \$17 billion in 2010, supporting more than 40,000 North Carolina businesses and directly supporting 183,900 jobs all across the state. State and local tax revenues generated as a result of visitor spending totals more than \$1.5 billion annually North Carolina ranks as the sixth most visited state in the United States. The state's natural scenic beauty, rich history and culture, vibrant cities, quaint small towns, and central East Coast location make it an ideal travel destination. And the abundance of direct air access into the state from national and international destinations around the globe has helped to position it as a preferred international travel destination.

The Division is joining the N.C. Travel & Tourism Coalition, the N.C. Travel Industry Association, and other industry partners to emphasize the economic benefits of tourism. North Carolina's nine Welcome Centers will mark the period with [celebrations with partners](#) to thank visitors for traveling to the state, and the state's official recognition of Tourism Day will be on Wednesday, **May 16**, with a full slate of activities in Raleigh.

The U.S. Travel Association and the Division of Tourism provide a number of [free, useful resources](#) to help you plan and stage effective activities in support of National Travel & Tourism Week, including everything that you will need to organize and host a local travel rally for Travel Rally Day on Tuesday, **May 8**. Take advantage of the toolkit's templates to write proclamations for your local town council or county commission, craft op-ed pieces for your local newspaper and see how to use social media to deliver your message about National Travel & Tourism Week and the value of North Carolina's tourism industry.

To mark Travel & Tourism Day in North Carolina, [NCTIA](#) is hosting an industry dinner at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, **May 15**, at [Porter's City Tavern](#) in Raleigh. The dinner is open to all. Tickets are \$30, which covers the cost of the meal, and can be purchased directly from Porter's. T. Jerry Williams and Dana Simpson will review tourism-related issues and talking points for discussions with legislators on Wednesday. Their message to legislators is simple: "Tourism creates good American jobs."

Events for North Carolina Travel & Tourism Day, May 16, include:

Legislative meetings – Interested parties are encouraged to make appointments to meet with their legislators to discuss [tourism-related goals](#) for this session and the [importance of tourism to each of North Carolina's 100 counties](#) throughout

offer. So we asked ourselves, 'how can we best speak to multiple countries, across countless languages and cultures?' We found the answer lay in the only truly universal language – music."

Rosanne Cash, Grammy award-winning singer/songwriter and daughter of American music legend Johnny Cash, has composed the original song "[Land of Dreams](#)," to serve as the heart of the campaign. Initial advertisements feature Cash playing the song under New York's Brooklyn Bridge, accompanied by musicians from around the world. As part of its marketing efforts, Brand USA will extend invitations to musical artists from around the world to come perform their music in their favorite U.S. cities and towns, profiling their trips and favorite things about the USA online and through social media. "Land of Dreams" is [available as a free download](#).

Brand USA, which created the campaign in partnership with JWT, the organization's agency of record, will employ a fully integrated marketing strategy, using a mix of 60-, 20- and 15-second television spots, as well as digital, billboard and print advertisements and a robust online presence and social media strategy to reach potential visitors. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages will showcase country specific promotions and engagements and the newly re-launched website [DiscoverAmerica.com](#) will act as visitors' information portal for trip planning.

"Other countries around the world have prioritized tourism efforts for years, yet in the 236 years since the United States of America was founded, this country has never had a nationally coordinated effort dedicated to inviting travelers to come visit us," said Stephen J. Cloobek, Chairman of Brand USA's Board of Directors. "That changes today. This new campaign will tap into an incredibly valuable economic resource – the millions of visitors who want to experience all that our great country has to offer."

The first wave of advertising launches in-

the day.

Breakfast – [The Travel & Tourism Coalition](#) is hosting a private breakfast for legislators at 8:30 a.m., following its Tuesday board meeting.

Power of Travel Announcement – Gov. Bev Perdue is scheduled to hold a media briefing at the State Capitol at 10:00 a.m. to announce 2011 data regarding visitor spending, job creation and state tax revenue. She will also issue a proclamation declaring May 16 North Carolina Tourism Day. Tourism industry partners are invited to attend the briefing.

N.C. Travel & Tourism Board meeting -- [The N.C. Travel & Tourism Board](#) is meeting in the 4th floor boardroom of the N.C. Dept. of Commerce in the New Education Building from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

NCTIA Board meeting – The NCTIA Board is meeting from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Sheraton in Raleigh.

Evening Reception – NCTIA is hosting a private reception for members, industry partners and members of the General Assembly at the [N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences](#) from 5:30-7:30 p.m. For information on sponsorship or to purchase a ticket, contact [Christine Flores](#) at (704) 333-3234.



The Vote Travel Bus, seen here in Washington, D.C., will be in Charlotte next month

Vote Travel Bus to visit NASCAR Hall of Fame on May 17

U.S. Travel's Vote Travel bus will visit the [NASCAR Hall of Fame](#) Plaza in Charlotte on Thursday, May 17, at 9:00 a.m. to promote the 2012 [Vote Travel](#) campaign. "Travel contributes

market May 1 in the United Kingdom, Japan and Canada, with a budget of \$12.3 million for the first three months. A second wave will follow in Brazil and South Korea, with several other markets to follow.

Brand USA was created as a result of the U.S. Travel Promotion Act, federal legislation passed in March 2010 which established a public-private partnership between the travel industry and the U.S. government dedicated to increasing international visitation to the U.S. through marketing and promotional efforts to drive job creation and spur economic growth. According to the U.S. Travel Association, the average overseas visitor to the United States spends \$4,000 per trip, and 35 incremental overseas visitors supports one new U.S. job.

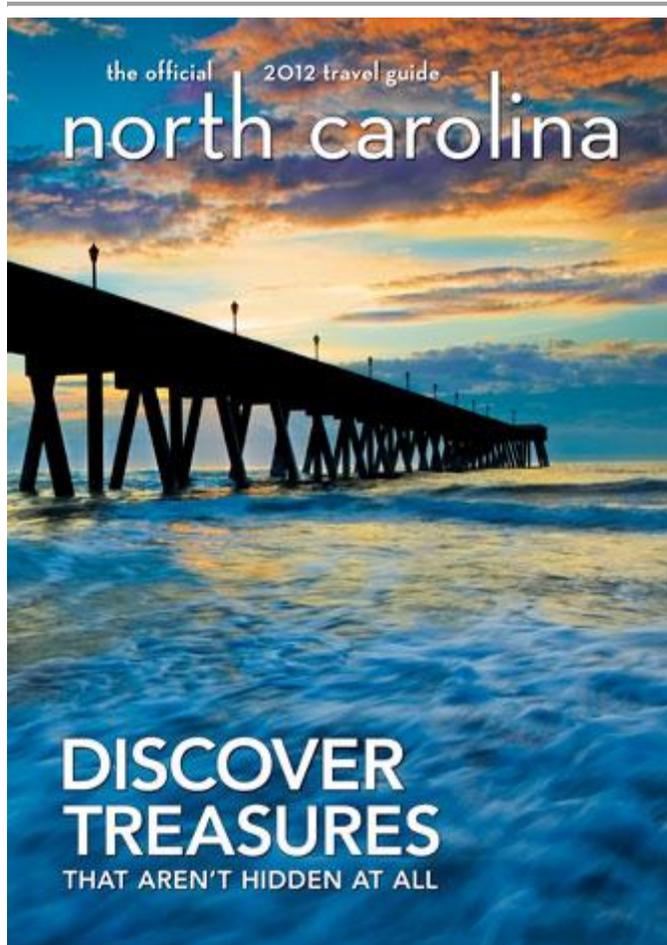


Construction of the new entrance at Harrah's Cherokee (photo courtesy of Marilyn Ball)

Harrah's expansion adds grand entrance, fuels growth

Harrah's Cherokee Casino has a new front door. The rotunda space features eight towering columns lit from inside that give an artistic impression of trees; a 75-foot-tall waterfall surrounding a small stage; and a curving high-definition television screen that's 140 feet long and 6 feet tall. Light, video and accompanying sound can all be programmed to create one-of-a-kind shows. The [grand new](#)

\$1.9 trillion to our economy and supports more than 14.4 million U.S. jobs, and the Vote Travel campaign aims to highlight the strength of our industry and engage its employees nationwide," said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. "While we're having some fun and playing off the current campaign season, the Vote Travel bus tour and rallies present local travel advocates an important and creative tool in engaging elected officials in cities and states throughout the country and informing them about the power of our industry."



Ad sales start May 7 for 2013 North Carolina Travel Guide

The advertising sales campaign for the 2013 Official North Carolina Travel Guide starts May 7. Sales representatives from Journal Communications will be meeting face-to-face with industry partners throughout the state in the coming weeks to share advertising opportunities in the Travel Guide.

[entrance](#) will stand as the centerpiece of a \$650 million expansion that's been in the works for eight years. It has included the addition of 500 rooms in a new hotel tower, a 3,000-seat event center and thousands of square feet of added gaming space. Brooks Robinson, the casino's general manager, said the rotunda space will be a "must-see attraction." That, combined with a total of 150,000 square feet of gaming space, 4,100 slot machines and 40 video table games, means the casino is positioned for growth, Robinson said. The casino is planning on 25 percent growth in visitation once the expansion is complete.

Casino officials are also awaiting final approval of live card games. Gov. Bev Perdue signed an agreement with the Eastern Band last year, but state lawmakers must still vote to amend state law to allow the Las Vegas-style card games. The federal government must also agree. The entire expansion project is set to be completed this fall. It all comes on the casino's 15th anniversary, and marks the casino's evolution into a gaming, spa and resort destination aiming for new, upscale customers. The casino is owned by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and draws about 3.5 million visitors a year.



N.C. hearing planned on seismic testing along U.S. coast tomorrow

With the federal government now open to the idea of drilling for oil and natural gas off the East Coast, North Carolina residents will get their first chance tomorrow to offer opinions about seismic testing along their coastline. The Wilmington meeting, at the Hilton Wilmington Riverside from 1-7:00 p.m. on Thursday (tomorrow), is the [only hearing in North](#)

The newly re-designed travel guide offers engaging editorial and captivating photography that adds visual appeal. Features will include cross-promotion of additional content, including videos, that will also be available in an online Travel Guide. Stories will spotlight the attributes that bring visitors here – North Carolina's natural wonders and outdoor activities; food, wineries, breweries and distilleries, Civil War-related sites, music and more.

Integrated media opportunities for marketing partners include premium placement in the forward editorial features of the guide, new (larger) display ads in the online guide and exclusive video sponsorships. Space is limited and ad sales close July 20, so inquire today the options that work for you.

Sales representatives at Journal Communications are:
Mountains – [Mary Ann Stafford](#) at (615) 218-8271
Piedmont – [Deshaun Goodrich](#) at (865) 385-3830
Coast – [Scott vonCannon](#) at (205) 482-1347



State partners with MerleFest for 25th annual music festival

The Division is partnering with MerleFest organizers to promote travel to and within the state in conjunction with the 25th anniversary the Wilkesboro event. Merlefest is included in

[Carolina](#). The public hearing in Wilmington is one of eight meetings in coastal cities that the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management is holding on the rules that would govern any such search for energy reserves. The meetings follow Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's announcement last month that energy companies will be allowed to determine how much oil and natural gas are available on the outer continental shelf between Florida and Delaware.

BOEM Director Tommy Beaudreau said the government is concerned about the potential impacts on marine life, including whales and sea turtles. He said BOEM is hosting the public hearings and gathering more data on those possible impacts to learn how to minimize any negative effects. He said the bureau would prepare three scenarios. The first two include different levels of protection and mitigation requirements. The third alternative is to do nothing and not allow any energy searches off the coast. The North Carolina coast supports a \$2.6 billion tourism and travel industry with 40,000 jobs, and a \$116 million commercial and recreational fisheries industry with 27,000 jobs.



ABA Marketplace registration opens at record-setting pace for Charlotte event

Registration for the American Bus Association's (ABA) [Marketplace 2013](#), in Charlotte Jan. 5-9, has opened at a record-setting pace. Drawn by the prospect of bringing home an average of \$78,000 in booked business, almost 1,000 delegates have registered for the January show in less

featured event listings on VisitNC.com, as well as in weekly Events eBlasts running since February. The eBlasts have more than 75,000 subscribers. During March and April, the Division awarded tickets to Merlefest on Twitter Trivia Tuesdays occurring bi-weekly at @VisitNC. The Division, along with Welcome Center staff, is also staffing a booth at the festival this weekend to provide travel information and offer information about North Carolina economic development. N.C. Dept. of Commerce Sec. Keith Crisco and Assistant Sec. Lynn Minges are also meeting with economic development officials in Wilkes County during the event.

Founded in 1988, MerleFest is considered one of the premier music festivals in the country. This year's festival features four days of performances by over 90 artists on 14 stages. Merlefest has a regional economic impact in excess of \$10 million and attracts about 80,000 fans from 48 states, the District of Columbia and 10 foreign countries.



AAA/CAA counselors enjoy Grandfather Mountain along with Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation's Penn Dameron (right) (photo courtesy of Tracy Brown, Blowing Rock TDA)

N.C. joins Tenn. & Va. to showcase Parkway for AAA/CAA

The Division is joining Tennessee, Virginia and the Blue Ridge Parkway Association to host 23 counselors from AAA and CAA to familiarize them with the areas along America's most visited unit in the national park system, the Blue Ridge Parkway. This year, Group Travel Manager Kristi Driver led the group in North Carolina's mountain region during the tour, which started last weekend in Tennessee, and continues until Sunday, wrapping up in Virginia. The AAA/CAA counselors are from California, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana,

than one week. In gearing up to host the annual event next year, the Division, Visit Charlotte and other North Carolina partners hosted the final evening's event and dinner at ABA Marketplace 2012 in Grapevine, Texas, this past January.



(Left-right) Karen Wilmot, executive director of the Swain County Chamber of Commerce, talks to Tourism Development Manager André Nabors at the TRAC session in Bryson City

Strong turnout marks TRAC sessions

Strong turnout marked the Division's Tourism Resource Assistance Centers (TRAC) in western North Carolina last week, where staff met with more than 60 local and regional tourism businesses in Morganton and more than 40 in Bryson City. The goal was to share how these businesses could engage more fully with the Division's programs. These businesses included independent artisans, restaurants, accommodations, and retail, as well as outdoor, event, sports and attractions owners and managers. Staff explained the Division's research, development and marketing programs and discussed best practices for reaching visitors and the media to increase visitation and spending.

The next TRAC session is scheduled for Jacksonville on June 20. For more information about TRAC, contact [André Nabors](mailto:Andre.Nabors@nc.gov) at (919) 733-7502 or [Eleanor Talley](mailto:Eleanor.Talley@nc.gov) at (919) 733-0869.

Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington and Ontario, Canada.

The North Carolina portion of the Parkway tour showcased Cherokee, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Harrah's Cherokee Casino, the Museum of the American Indian, Qualla Arts and Crafts, Asheville, Biltmore Estate, the Folk Art Center, the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center, Chimney Rock State Park, Linville Caverns, Grandfather Mountain, Boone, Blowing Rock, Blowing Rock Art and History Museum, Mast General Store, and Holy Trinity Church.

"Every stop along the Blue Ridge Parkway makes an important impression on the counselors," said Tom Hardy, executive director of the BRPA. "All our partners roll out the red carpet welcome to make it a positive impression that the counselors will share with not only their members, but their internal staff as well. As a result of the fam tour, we look for increased visitation, especially with traveling closer to home even more important to AAA members."



(Left-right) Assistant Sec. Lynn Mingos, Lorrie Love of the Outer Banks VB, N.C. Tourism Office German representative Deborah Theis, International Marketing Manager Heidi Walters, Brandy Larrick of Visit Charlotte, Dianna Pierce of Asheville CVB and Mike Butts of Visit Charlotte

Pow Wow provides N.C., partners audience with tour operators, media

More than 1,000 U.S. travel organizations from every region of the United States (representing all industry category components), and nearly 1,200 international and domestic buyers from more than 70 countries, gathered in Los Angeles this week at International Pow Wow to conduct business



Finalists announced for Best Dish in North Carolina competition

Twenty-five restaurants have been selected to compete this summer in the Best Dish in North Carolina competition. The finalists will represent one of two regions within the state in either the fine or casual dining category. Each region will have a single judge who will be responsible for choosing that region's winners in both categories. Competition finalists are required to feature the dish or combination of courses in their restaurant for at least a four-week period running between May and September. During this time, the judges will visit each finalist within their region to sample the entries and judge each restaurant on its use of North Carolina products, creativity, presentation, taste and promotion. First-, second- and third-place winners will be announced in November.

Representing the Eastern Piedmont/Coastal region are Gravy Italian-American Kitchen of Raleigh, Sitti Restaurant of Raleigh, Rhett's Restaurant, Personal Chef and Catering of Southern Pines, Market Restaurant of Raleigh, Bull Street Gourmet & Market of Durham, Angelina's Kitchen of Pittsboro, Bald Head Island Club Restaurant of Bald Head Island, Catch of Wilmington, and Tonali of Durham.

The finalists in the Western Piedmont/Mountain region are Pleasant City Wood Fired Grille of Shelby, Bistro 42 of Asheboro, HomeGrown of Asheville, Curate of

negotiations that result in the generation of over \$3.5 billion in future U.S. travel. North Carolina, along with industry partners from the Outer Banks VB, Visit Charlotte, the Asheville CVB and Biltmore, staffed a booth to sell travel to the state. The North Carolina delegation, including Assistant Sec. Lynn Minges and International Marketing Manager Heidi Walters, met with more than 60 tour operators and journalists.



Pres. Obama on Jimmy Fallon show from Chapel Hill

President Barack Obama is no stranger to late night talk shows and yesterday (Tuesday) he added "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon" to the list of talk shows he's appeared on. The segment aired last night and was taped as part of the president's visit to UNC-Chapel Hill, filming in Memorial Hall before a live audience. The opening of the show featured several shots from UNC-CH's campus and area with Fallon making several references to Carolina and even donning a Carolina sweatshirt jacket. To view the episode, [click here](#).



First quarter lodging data reveal strong N.C.

Asheville, Sunny Point Café of Asheville, Off the Square of Albemarle, Lucky 32 Southern Kitchen of Greensboro, Spring House Restaurant, Kitchen & Bar of Winston-Salem, Vidalia Restaurant and Wine Bar of Boone, Red Stag Grill of Asheville, Season's at Highland Lake Inn of Flat Rock, Marisol of Greensboro, Westglow Resort and Spa of Blowing Rock, Gallery Restaurant of Charlotte, Crippen's Country Inn & Restaurant of Blowing Rock, and Mast Farm Inn of Valle Crucis.

The annual event is sponsored by the N.C. Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services and Our State magazine.



Alyssa Barkley (photo courtesy of NCRLA)

Stone leaves NCRLA, Barkley acting director & CEO

Paul Stone has resigned as N.C. Restaurant & Lodging Association president and CEO. Alyssa Barkley has been appointed acting director. She may be contacted at (919) 844-0098 or via alysab@ncrla.biz.

performance

Building on a strong March for N.C. lodging, first quarter data reveal a strong start to the year. Occupancy growth for North Carolina hotels and motels is up nearly 5 percent from first quarter 2010. This is compared to growth at the U.S. level of 3.8 percent and at the South Atlantic level of 3.7 percent. Average room rates in the state are also on a positive trend. Rates are up 3.7 percent year-to-date, compared to 4 percent at the U.S. level and 3.6 percent at the South Atlantic level.

First quarter demand for hotel/motel rooms in North Carolina is up 5.4 percent (U.S. demand +4.1 percent; South Atlantic demand +3.6 percent) and room revenues are up 9.3 percent from 2011 (U.S. revenues +8.3 percent; South Atlantic revenues +7.3 percent).

Regionally, the N.C. lodging industry also continues to post positive numbers. Year-to-date occupancy in the Western region is up 10.4 percent and demand is up more than 13 percent year-to-date as well. Demand for lodging is up 8.7 percent in the Northeast Region, up 6.5 percent in the Triad Region and up 6.1 percent in the Eastern Region. Year-to-date room rate growth is strongest in the Western Region (+5.2 percent), followed by the Triangle Region (+5.1 percent), and the Carolinas Region (+4.9 percent).

The complete report is available [here](#). For more information, contact [Marlise Taylor](#) at (919) 733-7278.



NC Green Travel: Is your attraction or accommodation uber eco-friendly?

A recent MSNBC.com article, "[Luxury lodgings get uber eco-friendly](#)," focused primarily on the [U.S. Green Building Council's](#) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program. While LEED does provide guidelines on green building, it would be a mistake to conclude an attraction or accommodation's commitment to sustainability is dependent on a certification. There are many green hotels that are not certified, and more than enough examples of certified properties that are not green. This does not mean certification programs do not provide a helpful tool, but it does question relying on certification as the sole criteria in



A third of North Carolina's 100 counties directly employ more than 1,000 persons in the local tourism industry. Statewide, over 185,000 North Carolinians are employed in the tourism industry. For more county level visitor statistics, [click here](#). For more information, contact Tourism Research Manager [Marlise Taylor](#) at (919) 733-7278.



'North Carolina Weekend'

For the week of April 26 on UNC-TV's "[North Carolina Weekend](#)," take it outside at the French Broad River Festival in Hot Springs. Enjoy crafted works, wine and more at the Sanford Pottery Festival in Sanford. Step back in time at Blandwood Mansion in Greensboro. Explore the Pamlico House Bed & Breakfast in Washington. And tempt your tastebuds at Battistella's in Raleigh. (Please note: listings are subject to change.) "North Carolina Weekend" is exclusively underwritten by the N.C. Division of Tourism. In addition, UNC-TV has made recent editions of "North Carolina Weekend" available online.

Upcoming industry meetings & events

May 2-3 - Blue Ridge Parkway Assn. Annual Meeting, Gatlinburg, Tenn.

May 5-13 - National Travel & Tourism Week

determining if a hotel is green or not. In examining authentically green attractions and accommodations, one of the few similarities among them is an honest and top-to-bottom organizational commitment to being green. Some tourism businesses are less committed to being green, and others are uber committed, regardless of being certified. For more information on sustainable tourism and how you can implement your uber commitment, contact [Tom Rhodes](#) at the N.C. Division of Environmental Assistance and Outreach at (919) 707-8140, or [Alex Naar](#) at (252) 737-1346.

May 16 - N.C. Travel & Tourism Day, statewide
May 16 - N.C. Travel & Tourism Board Meeting, Raleigh
May 17 - "Vote Travel" Bus Tour, Charlotte
May 20-21 - MPI-CC Annual Meeting, Cherokee
June 15-16 – AFCI Locations Tradeshow, Los Angeles, Calif.



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