



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY:
VISITERIE
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MISSION STATEMENT

VisitErie is the leader for marketing Erie's tourism industry and promoting its economic growth.



A Message from Board Chair Carla Higgins



It has been my honor serving as Board Chair for VisitErie over the past year. VisitErie continues to be one of the Commonwealth's top destination marketing organizations. In 2022, VisitErie strengthened its position as the premier leader for marketing and promoting Erie County's tourism industry.

As proud residents of Erie County, we love to share our experiences about Erie's beautiful shores, amazing attributes, and sense of community with others. They are all important parts woven into the fabric of a successful destination. As we look ahead to 2023, the outlook is bright with numerous new developments and expansions on the horizon.

Since I first joined the board in 2014, it has been my privilege to work alongside fellow VisitErie board members whose talents and dedication reflect a common desire to promote our region. They are a committed, passionate group of individuals who, through their knowledge and experiences, help guide the organization forward.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to VisitErie President and CEO John Oliver, the hard-working efforts of the VisitErie staff, along with the continued support of our elected officials, the City of Erie, Erie County Government, our committed VisitErie partners, and Erie's tourism industry stakeholders. Our success is your success. Thank you for your never-ending advocacy of VisitErie and Erie's tourism industry.

As we head into 2023, I look forward to working with all of you to promote our Great Lakes City and the surrounding Erie County as we welcome everyone to "Make Your Lake Escape" to Erie, Pennsylvania!



Board of Directors

2022 Officers

Chairperson

Carla Higgins, Erie Bank

Vice-Chair

Gus Pine, Bayfront Convention Center

Treasurer

Terry Cascioli, Decision Associates

Secretary

Elliot Ehrenreich, Phillips Lytle LLP

Immediate Past Chair

Brian Gorman, Waldameer Park & Water World

2022 Board Members

Troy Bingham, Erie Sports Center

Matt Greene, Presque Isle State Park

Anne Lewis, Red Letter Hospitality

Michael Malpiedi, iHeart Media Erie

Vicke Marz, Victoria Inn

Jennifer Reed, Relish, Inc.

Brian Shank, Erie County Council

Karen Thomas, Pineapple Eddie

Southern Bistro

Lisa Goddard-McGuirk, Gannon University

Paul Leroux, Cobblestone Inn & Suites

Aaron Loncki, City of Erie

Derek Martin, Erie International Airport

David Poor, AAA East Central

Chris Scott, Scott Enterprises

Jim Sparber, Erie County

Matthew White, Erie Events



A Message from the President & CEO



Tourism plays a vital role in Erie and is a critical component to the economic health and stability for our community, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the entire nation. The growth of tourism in Erie has greatly enhanced the quality of life for our residents through new and expanded attractions.

The pandemic certainly demonstrated the importance of tourism, bringing our industry to a grinding halt with an unprecedented number of lost jobs and closed businesses. Fortunately, our region was not hit nearly as hard as some of our counterparts and in 2022, Erie's tourism industry showed strong signs of improvement and exceeded pre-pandemic visitation. We are excited to tell you about what has been accomplished and what we are looking forward to as we head towards an even brighter 2023.

This is the first year VisitErie has compiled an annual report. Here you will find a brief overview

of the organization, a look back at the year's highlights and key performance indicators from each of our departments.

From hosting regional and national convention and sporting events to increasing our partner database, analyzing visitor trends, and launching award-winning marketing campaigns, 2022 was a banner year for Erie's tourism industry and VisitErie.

As I enter my 21st year at VisitErie, I am thankful that I get to work alongside such a committed staff who consistently go above and beyond to make the organization what it is today. Their determination, dedication, and loyalty are commendable, and I couldn't ask for a better team. I would also like to express my thanks to our board of directors, elected officials, the City of Erie, Erie County Government, and our tourism partners for their unwavering support over the years. We look forward to continuing to partner with you as we promote the Erie region.

VisitErie and Erie's tourism industry has seen many successes in 2022 and we can't wait to show you what's next.



2022 Staff

VisitErie Staff

President and CEO

John Oliver

Director of Marketing and Research

Emily Biddle

Director of Communications

Christine Temple

Director of Convention Sales and Services

Hannah Stancliff

Director of Partnership

Janice Friedrichsmeyer

Marketing Coordinator

Mary Morgan

Administrative Coordinator

Mary Lou Schuler-Karr

Business Manager

Linda Robbins



Erie Sports Commission

The Erie Sports Commission is committed to promoting the Erie region as a prime destination for sports and recreation. A division of VisitErie.

Executive Director
Mark Jeanneret, STS

Event Services Director
Ben Huggler, STS

Events and Marketing Manager
Chris Rosato, Jr.



51.8%

Hotel Occupancy

4.2% increase from 2021

\$178

Avg. Visitor Spending

13% increase from 2021

\$115

Avg. Daily Rate (ADR)

6% increase from 2021

62.38%

% of Overnight Visitors

17% increase from 2021

2022 AT A GLANCE

Erie County's tourism industry bounced back from the pandemic years significantly in 2022.

Record numbers for visitor traffic and trends were reported with figures surpassing those from 2021 and pre-pandemic 2019.

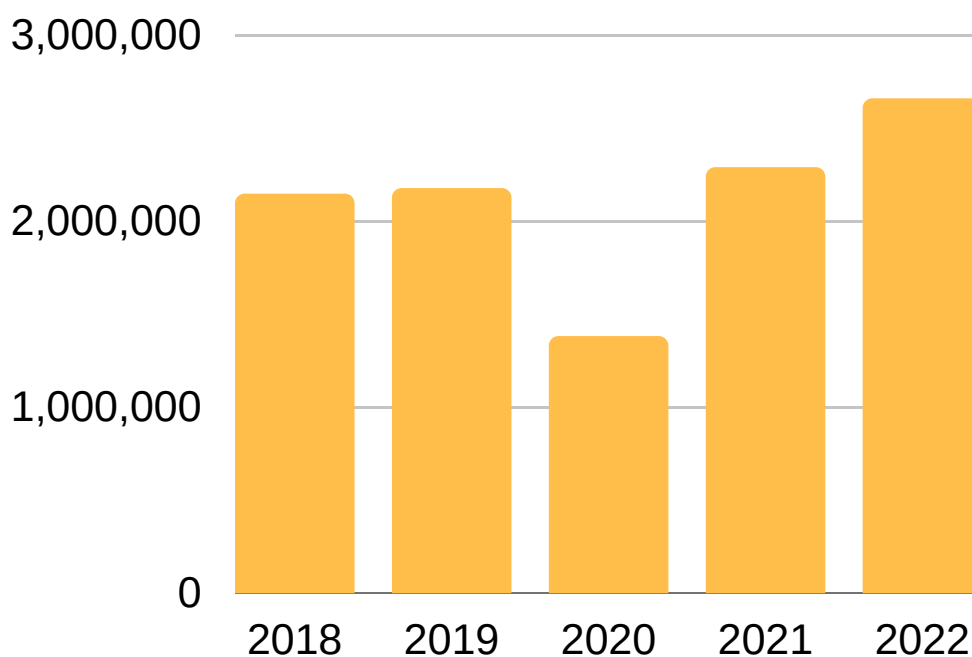
These numbers demonstrate that visitors have resumed their travel habits and are returning to the Erie region.



2022: A Look Back

2022 Highlights

- VisitErie created its first marketing and research department and hired Emily Biddle as its new director
- VisitErie hired two full time staff members: Mary Morgan (Marketing Coordinator) and Mary Lou Schuler-Karr (Administrative Coordinator).
- After conducting a marketing agency of review process in 2022, VisitErie will begin 2023 under contract with Pittsburgh-based firm, Red House Communications.
- VisitErie contracted with Zartico Destination Operating System®, a national research company, to better research visitor trends and guide marketing efforts.
- VisitErie contracted with Meltwater, a media monitoring platform used to analyze key word-based media mentions and reputation management.



- Erie County hotel tax figures exceeded pre-pandemic levels in 2022, an increase of 22% from 2021 and the highest amount collected since the tax was enacted in 2001.



2022: A Look Back

2022 Highlights

- The Erie Sports Commission hosted 74 events, generating \$20.8 million in estimated economic impact.
- VisitErie refreshed VisitErie.com to include new pages, updated content and event calendar, increased user-generated photos, and easier site navigation.

The growth of Erie’s tourism industry has greatly enhanced the quality of life for residents through new and expanded attractions including:

- Erie Downtown Development – Newly opened Flagship City Food Hall, Flagship City Public Market, the Shops at 4th and State.
- Sporting Event Facilities - Gannon’s Highmark Events Center (\$10 million renovation), Penn State Behrend’s Erie Hall (\$28.2 million renovation), Erie Sports Center and Fun Park (improvements).
- expERIENCE Children’s Museum – \$18 million expansion and renovation project (in progress).
- The Hagen History Center Campus - “The Story of Us” exhibit on Erie’s immigrant families.
- The Presque Isle Lighthouse – \$70,000 interior renovations and restoration.
- Erie Zoo - Wide Open Spaces \$10 million capital campaign.



2022: A Look Back

2022 Awards and Recognitions

- Niagara Award for Marketing (VisitErie): Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) NW PA Chapter - Lake Escape campaign.
- Sports Destination Management Awards (Erie Sports Commission): Champions of Economic Impact, Innovations in Sports Tourism and Champions of Economic Impact-Mid Market.
- Sports Events Magazine Reader's Choice Awards (Erie Sports Commission): All-Star Destination Partner, Best Long-Term Partnership Between Planner & Destination, Erie Sports Commission & PA State 8-Ball Tournament

2022 Challenges

- Group tour and conventions and meetings markets are slower to bounce back from the pandemic, however, conventions are seeing an uptick in bookings.
- Larger conventions and groups are hindered by the limited number of flights, passenger capacity, and available destinations at Erie International Airport/Tom Ridge Field.
- The delayed re-opening of the U.S./Canadian border has had an impact on group tours, one of Erie's largest leisure travel markets.
- Erie continues to recover from the pandemic and the lingering effects it has had on travel, specifically the baby boomer generation.

MARKETING

VisitErie's four-season advertising efforts targeted travelers in the traditional top feeder markets in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Buffalo.

The multi-media and award-winning "Make Your Lake Escape" campaign focused on showing visitors that Erie is an "easy breezy" destination and a place that provides a stress-free, relaxing waterfront vacation.

VisitErie also used the Erie Adventure Guide, the 'Hello Erie' Trip Planner App and VisitErie.com to assist visitors in planning their getaways.

\$362,258

Four-Season Marketing Budget

103,043,974

Total Advertising Impressions

132,910

VisitErie.com Users

440,216

VisitErie.com Pageviews

43,987

'Hello Erie' Trip Planner
App Downloads



Marketing Examples

MAKE YOUR
Lake Escape

Create memories that are simply unforgettable on Erie's seven miles of sandy beaches.

Order Your FREE Erie Adventure Guide Today

Go with the flow
KIND OF VACATION

Make your escape.

Tall rides.
Short lines.

Make your escape.

GET A TASTE OF
Unwined country.

MAKE YOUR
Lake Escape

Create memories that are simply unforgettable on Erie's 7 miles of sandy beaches.

Get your free Adventure Guide

Easy to get to, hard to leave.

Plan Your Getaway

MAKE YOUR
Lake Escape



Social Media

59,030

Facebook Followers

4,024

Instagram Followers

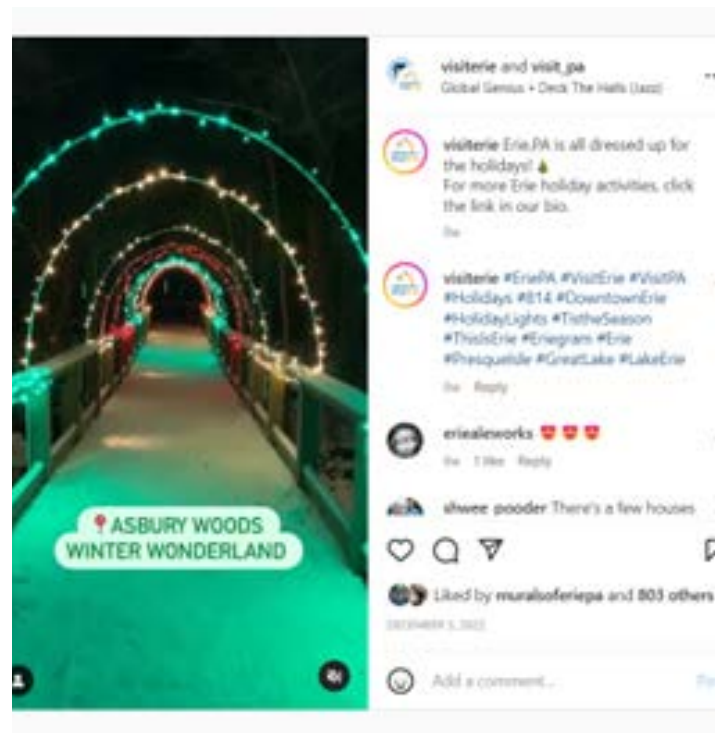
32

TikTok Followers

Launched in November 2022



Facebook Post with Highest Reach



Instagram Post with Highest Reach



2022 Erie Adventure Guide



190,000

Total Copies Printed

The 2022 Erie Adventure Guide was digitally available at VisitErie.com and on the 'Hello Erie' Trip Planner App. Print copies were distributed to AAA and CAA offices, PA Interstate Welcome Centers, the Erie Visitor Center, VisitErie, and area hotels, restaurants, shops, and attractions.



Media and
Public
Relations

11

Number of Travel Media Visits

3.4 million

Estimated Reach

80

Number of Partners Mentioned

48

Number of Media Mentions



PARTNERSHIP

VisitErie works together with its partners to grow and improve Erie's tourism industry.

The partner database is utilized for all visitor inquiries regarding places to eat, shop, play and stay.

In 2022, VisitErie welcomed 23 new partners, the highest number to date.

23

New Partners in 2022

267

Total Number of Partners

96%

Total Partner Retention Rate



Partners

**Indicates new in 2022*

5 Wits*

6 Mile Cellars Winery

A Compassionate Hart Massage
Therapy

A Cottage Getaway

AAA East Central

ACTIONTOYMAN

AHN Saint Vincent

All AN Act Theatre

Allen Stoneware Gallery

Altered State Distillery

Arrowhead Wine Cellars

Arundel Cellars & Brewing Company

Asbury Woods

Bay House Oyster Bar & Restaurant

Bayfront Convention Center

Bayfront Inn

Cobb's Second Time Around Thrift Shop

The Colony Pub & Grille

County of Erie

Courtyard Erie Bayfront Hotel &

Shoreline Grill

Courtyard Winery

The Cove Bayside Restaurant & Tavern

Cumulus Media

The Dinor at Lawrence Park*

Diver's World of Erie

Donatos Pizza

Double D.A.B. Riding Stables

Downtown Corry Business Association

Dunkin Donuts

eBike Drop*

Econo Lodge*

Baymont Inn & Suites

Beach Zero

Before the Barrel Distillery *

Bella Salon and Day Spa

Black Monk Brewery

Board & Brush Erie

The Brewerie at Union Station

Buona Cucina Oils and More

C B & C Tours

Calamari's Squid Row

Camp Sherwin (YMCA)

CartHorse Distilling *

City of Erie

Claudine's Consignment

Coach USA

Cobblestone Hotel and Suites



Partners

**Indicates new in 2022*

Edinboro Lakefront Resort & Sunset Grill

The Elsie Greer House Bed & Breakfast*

Epiphany's Emporium

Erie Ale Works

Erie Apparel*

Erie Area Council of Government

Erie Art Museum

Erie Arts & Culture

Erie Bank

Erie Cemetery Association

Erie Commodores National Premier Soccer League

Erie County Historical Society and Museums

Erie Distillery

Erie Station Dinner Theatre

Erie Times News

Erie-Western PA Port Authority

Erie Yesterday

Erie Zoological Society & Botanical Gardens

ERIEBANK Sports Park

Escape Game Erie

expERIENCE Children's Museum

Fairfield Inn by Marriott

Federal Hill Smokehouse*

Firebirds Wood Fired Grill

FishUSA

Flagship City Food Hall*

Flagship City Public Market*

Erie Downtown Partnership

Erie Events

Erie Food Tours

Erie Golf Club

Erie KOA Kampgrounds

Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority

Erie Otters Hockey

Erie Philharmonic

Erie Playhouse

Erie Regional Airport Authority

Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership

Erie SeaWolves Baseball

Erie Sports Center



Partners

**Indicates new in 2022*

Flagship Niagara League/Erie
Maritime Museum/Brig
Niagara/Lettie G. Howard
Flying Monkey Inflata Park
Folly's End Campground
Glass Growers Gallery
Glass House Inn
Golf Erie*
Gone Local Erie
Goodell Gardens & Homestead
Grape Discovery Center
Grasshopper Boutique
The Green Roof Inn
GypsyLyn Fishing Charters
Hampton Inn Erie
Harbor Ridge Golf Club and Harbor
View Grill

Harley-Davidson of Erie
Hawthorn Suites
Hidden Harbor Erie
Holiday Inn
Holiday Inn Express & Suites
North East
Home2 Suites by Hilton Erie
Homewood Suites by Hilton
Hudson Lofts
Hulings Blueberries and Farm
Market
iHeart Media Erie
The Isle Surf & Skate*
Jersey Mike's Subs
JET 24/FOX 66/YourErie.com
John Russell Brewing Company

Johnson Estate Winery
JR's on the Bay/Sloppy Duck Saloon
Julius*
Kellar's Comedy Club
Kelso Beach Rentals
KimKopy Printing
Knox, McLaughlin, Gornall, and Sennett P.C.
Koldrock Waters
Lake Erie Ale Trail
Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier Park (LEAF)
Lake Erie Speedway
Lake Erie Wine Country
Lake View Country Club
Lakeview on the Lake
Lakeview Wine Cellars
Lavery Brewing



Partners

**Indicates new in 2022*

Leader Graphics
Lighthouse Inn & Dining
Like My Thai
Lilly Broadcasting
Locale Wine Tours*
Luminary, Distilling, Eatery, and Fuhrman's
Cider*
Madeline's Restaurant and Events
Manufacturer and Business Association
Mazza Vineyards (Mazza Winery, South Shore
Wine Company, and Five & 20 Spirits & Brewing)
McCarty Printing
Millcreek Mall
Monacella Massage & Kinesiology
Moose Head Pottery
Motel 6 Erie
Mound Grove Golf Course

Mount Pleasant of Edinboro
National Comedy Center
North East Area Chamber of
Commerce
Nostrovia Brewing Company
Oasis Pub & Tiki Bar
The Original Popcorn House
PA Botanicals*
PA Route 6 Tourist Association
PACA- The Performing Arts
Collective Alliance*
Painted Finch Gallery
Penn Shore Vineyards
Pier 6 Rooftop Bar & Restaurant
Pineapple Eddie Southern Bistro
Play Port

The Plymouth Tavern
Port Erie Sports
Port Farms
Presque Isle Boat Rental/Presque
Isle Canoe & Boat Livery*
Presque Isle Boat Tours/The Lady
Kate
Presque Isle Downs & Casino
(Churchill Bourbon & Brew, LBV
Steakhouse)
Presque Isle Gallery & Gifts
Presque Isle Lighthouse & Erie Land
Lighthouse
Presque Isle Passage RV Park &
Cabin Rentals



Partners

**Indicates new in 2022*

Presque Isle State Park/Tom Ridge
Environmental Center
Presque Isle Wine Cellars
Pressed Books & Café
Printing Concepts*
Pulakos Chocolates
Purrista Cat Café
Quality Inn & Suites Presque Isle
Red Letter Hospitality (*Molly Brannigan's, The Skunk & Goat Tavern, The Cork 1794*)
Red Roof Plus+ and Suites*
Relish Studio & Gallery
Rita's Downtown Erie*
Riverside Brewing Company
Riverside Golf/The Rambler
Riviera Motel
Romolo Chocolates
Rum Runners

Rupp Limousine
Samurai Kitchen & Sushi
Sara's Restaurant
Sallywags Pirate Adventures
Scott Enterprises (*Applebee's, IHop, Oliver's Rooftop and Beer Garden, Quaker Steak & Lube, Hooch & Blotto's, Dunkin Donuts, Erie Axe Throwing, Ambassador Banquet & Conference Center, Splash Lagoon Indoor Water Park, Country Inn & Suites, Comfort Inn, Hampton Inn & Suites Erie Bayfront, Holiday Inn Express, Courtyard by Marriott, Hawthorn Suites, Hilton Garden Inn, Peek'n Peak*)

Sheraton Erie Bayfront
Hotel/Bayfront Grille
Shops at the Colony
the Shops on the Hill
Smugglers Wharf Restaurant
Sparrow Pond Campground
Spencer House Bed & Breakfast
SpringHill Suites by Marriott
Steelhead Inn
Storming Crab*
Sunview Golf at Nick's Place*
Sure Stay Hotel
Swanson's Cottages
Syd's Place
Tight Lines Sport Fishing
TownePlace Suites by Marriott



Partners

**Indicates new in 2022*

TREC Foundation

Twisted Elk Brewery

U Pick 6 (*Harbor House, Public House, Tap House*)

Underdog BBQ

UPMC Hamot & UPMC Health Plan

Victoria Inn

Victorian Princess

Village West Shops

Virginia's Beach Lakefront Cottages & Camping

Voodoo Brewery

Waldameer Park & Water World

Wegmans

Wingate by Wyndham

Woody's Backwater BARge & Grill

World of Music

Yellow Bike Rental Company*

Your Sailing Adventure



38

RFPs Received

21

Conventions Booked

\$5,497,908

Estimated Economic Impact

13,796

Total Room Nights

4

Site Visits Hosted

CONVENTIONS & MEETINGS

Although the convention market was slower to bounce back from the pandemic, VisitErie hosted regional and national conventions with positive results. Nearly one third were repeat business and more than half were a direct result of leads from the local community.

Top Conferences/Conventions

- Pennsylvania Fraternal Order of Police, Biennial Convention
- Marcellus Shale Coalition, Shale Insight



74

Events Hosted

30,431

Total Room Nights

\$20.8 million

Estimated Economic Impact

20

Total New Events

166

Total Event Days

ERIE SPORTS COMMISSION

Throughout the year, Erie Sports Commission-hosted events had a positive influence on Erie sport tourism, and recorded the highest economic impact numbers in the organization's 10-year history.

Top Sporting Events:

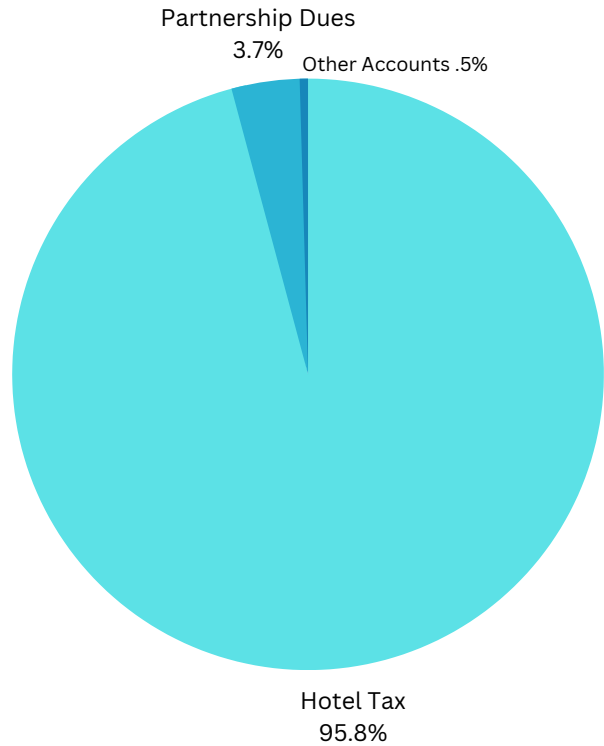
- Strongman Corporation National Championships
- Great Race
- Keystone State Wrestling Championships
- Sarah Backstrom Memorial Tournament
- National Collegiate Basketball Association Men's and Women's Basketball Championships
- VNEA World Junior Pool Championships



Financial Summary

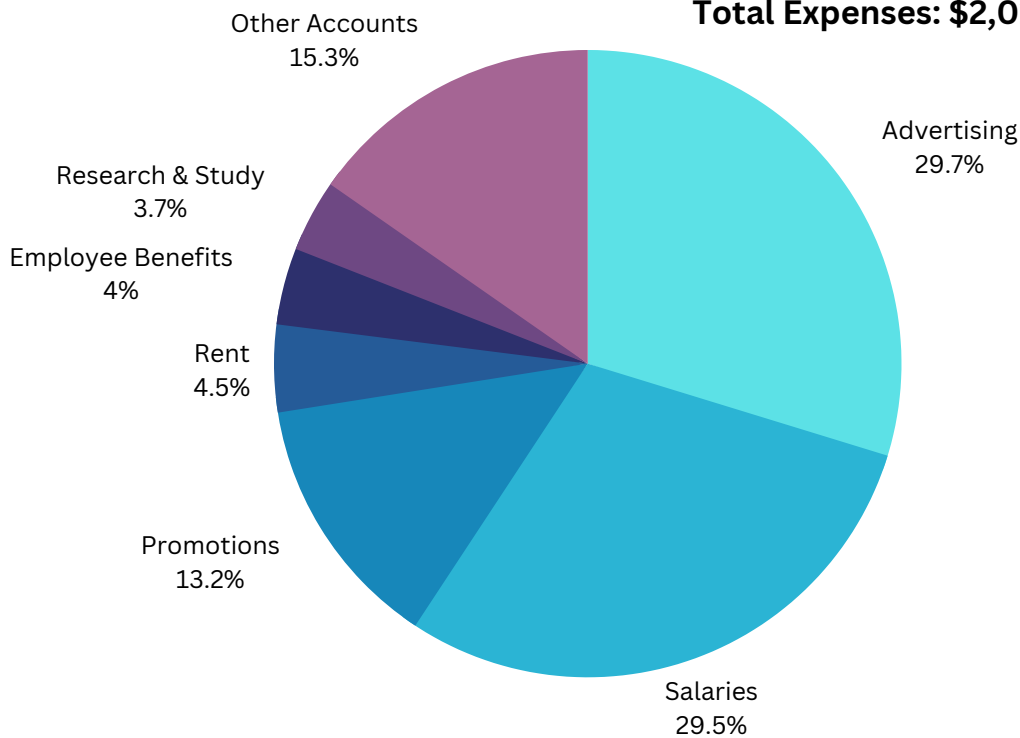
Revenue

Total Revenue: \$2,637,838



Expenses

Total Expenses: \$2,022,304.32





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VisitErie.com