

Increase in tourism inquiries causes backlog for state

By TAMMY BLACKARD
Staff Writer

The state agency responsible for promoting tourism in North Carolina said Tuesday it was unable to answer more than 90,000 inquiries this year because its budget did not increase at the same rate as tourism in the state.

"The state Division of Travel and Tourism generally gets about 430,000 requests each year, but that number has been increasing," said Sam Taylor, a spokesman for the N.C. Department of Commerce. "We haven't been able to add to our ability to respond to the inquiries. This year that resulted in a backlog."

Taylor said there had been a 9.23 percent increase in total inquiries, from 398,200 in 1986-1987 to 435,200 in 1987-1988.

In addition, there was a 23 percent jump to 129,000 telephone inquiries, he said.

Tourism revenues in the state have

gone up from \$5.2 billion in 1986 to \$5.7 billion in 1987, according to the vice president of McKinney & Silver, the advertising firm that directs the state's annual tourism campaign.

The packet-mailing was completed earlier this month as summer vacation season was ending. The state used prison labor to help clear the backlog of inquiries, Taylor said.

Both Taylor and Richard Myracle of McKinney & Silver said it was impossible to determine how much business may have been lost because of the late responses.

"I can't say that those unanswered inquiries amounted to a \$10 million loss in revenue," Myracle said. "We have to make some assumptions about the inquiries."

"First, you need to determine the value of the inquiries," he said. "The people most likely to visit are those who make phone inquiries. We answer those on a first-priority basis

because we assume about 52 percent of those people visit the state."

The second priority is inquiries made from coupons found in newspapers and magazines, he said. Forty-nine percent of all coupon inquirers are assumed to visit the state.

"The last priority is reader service inquiries where you check a card in a magazine if you're interested in North Carolina," Myracle said.

"These take the least amount of effort for people to complete. Our assumption here is that only 25 percent of these inquirers ever visit. It was some

of these last inquiries that went unanswered until very late in the season."

McKinney & Silver discovered in July that the travel division had failed to send information kits to 93,221 people who had requested them.

Myracle wrote a letter to the travel division in July.

"My intent in writing to the state was to say we need to get this done," Myracle said. "But they were doing the best they could with the manpower they had."

The travel division had requested

\$490,000 last year from the General Assembly to beef up its staff, Taylor said.

"We didn't get it, but we will request it again this year," he said.

Gov. Jim Martin was very disappointed after the General Assembly's session this year, said Karen Rotterman, the governor's director of communications.

"The governor realizes that tourism is a great economic benefit to the state and (that) manpower is very important in getting the job done," Rotterman said. "He knows we're at a

great disadvantage in publicizing the state with a small budget and staff."

Taylor said the division will be more prepared next vacation season.

"Most of the inquiries come in the first five months of the year," Taylor said. "By May this year, we were about 90,000 pieces of mail behind."

"We used the state prison system so we could have more help, and we have it set up so we can use them again this year," he said. "We're also changing the schedule of publications to be published so we'll make sure we'll have it on time."

Soviets to explore American culture through exchange

By JENNIFER WING
Staff Writer

A group of 14 Soviet students and faculty from the State University of Rostov On Don will visit UNC this year as part of a Campus Y-sponsored U.S.-Soviet Exchange Program.

The UNC committee has planned activities for the Soviet visitors, who will come either in October or January, that include "all kinds of forums on different topics like the role of each person in society, the role of the media in each other's countries, health issues and a tour of the health center, and ideas for projects in each other's countries," said Nancy Johnson, co-chair of the incoming delegation committee.

The Soviet students will also have the opportunity to tour Chapel Hill Senior High School, see a production in Playmakers Theatre, watch a sporting event, go to church, visit a farm, go shopping and sit in a number of classes at UNC, said Johnson.

Joe Nowakowski, the project coordinator, said the Soviets will be housed with UNC students. This will save money and give the foreign students a better feel of the campus, he said.

The Marriott Corporation and several downtown restaurants will donate dinners for the Soviet students, and the Playmakers Theatre and athletic department will donate tickets for events.

Fliers and banners will be placed all over campus prior to and during the Soviet students' visit, said Karin West, co-chair of the Publicity Committee. In addition, the Slavic and Russian departments will be notified.

"We are going through a press release to the local papers and the local radio stations," West said. "We are telling and inviting students to come to forums, debates and social activities. A lot of things are open to the campus."

The students will remain in the

Jordan criticizes Martin on management ability

From Associated Press reports

RALEIGH — After spending a week depicting Gov. Jim Martin's administration as unethical, Lt. Gov. Bob Jordan broadened his attack Tuesday, saying it deserved a gold medal for incompetence.

Jordan, a Democrat running to unseat the Republican governor, said managerial errors had plagued Martin's administration because he was "not minding the store."

"It is time we had a governor who is on the job and not one who is forever on the road or on vacation or on his sailboat," Jordan said at a news conference.

Martin campaign spokesman Tim Pittman said, "We hate to keep characterizing this as desperate campaigning, but clearly he's reaching here for issues that in most cases had an explanation or were not the fault of the administration or were corrected."

He said the Martin campaign "is going to make him answer for these negative charges starting tomorrow." The campaign probably will hold a news conference, Pittman said, declining to elaborate.

Jordan has aimed a barrage of criticism at Martin since mid-September, when a series of polls indicated Martin was leading by 8 to 11 percentage points.

Martin has accused Jordan of making personal attacks, and Jordan took pains to deny that Tuesday.

"He's a nice guy. I like him. I like his family," Jordan said. "The question is not who's a nice guy, but who will run North Carolina, who will determine what the problems are and do something about them."

Martin is not a good manager, said Jordan, a Mount Gilead lumber mill

owner. "I know if I had run my business like he's run this government, I'd be bankrupt."

Jordan recited a litany of problems that have surfaced in state government during Martin's tenure. Among them:

■ The Division of Travel and Tourism failed to answer 90,000 inquiries from potential tourists, costing the state's tourist industry as much as \$10 million;

■ The Division of Motor Vehicles erroneously restored driving privileges to 150 people who have been convicted of multiple drunken-driving offenses. Jordan did not mention that Martin fired the official he said was responsible;

■ Federal auditors said this summer they could not account for \$18 million allocated to the state Division of Aging. Administration officials said the money had been spent properly;

■ The state auditor found that the Department of Commerce could not account for \$500,000 allocated to North Carolina's office in Japan; and

■ The State Budget Office had to take over a \$14 million prison construction program because the Department of Correction "proved so incompetent," Jordan said.

"The list goes on and on," he said. "If this administration was a TV series, it would be called 'Bloopers, Blunders and Practical Jokes.' If incompetence were an Olympic event, the administration would have the lock on the gold."

Computers no health threat, doctors say

By DAVID BALL
Staff Writer

With the emergence of computers as a prominent component of the workplace have come fears about adverse health effects from computer terminals. But according to local health officials, neither birth defects nor eye damage, frequently cited fears, has been a proven result of working with computers.

According to Dr. David Eifrig, chairman of the UNC ophthalmology department, complaints attributed to computers are really just eye strain, a common problem.

"Most of the eye problems are due

to posture, comfort or the long periods of concentration involved," Eifrig said. "Absolutely nothing is wrong (due to computer screens)."

Bob Morehead, associate dean for computing and information services at the School of Public Health, said no permanent damage was likely, but other problems could arise from working with computers. Glare from the computer screens can result in eye discomfort, Morehead said, resulting in headaches and an inability to work comfortably.

The worry that pregnant women suffer a higher risk of miscarriages

from working with Video Display Terminals (VDTs) was based on one study that had such a small sampling group that conclusions cannot be made, said Dr. Robert Cefalo, professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the UNC medical school. No increases in birth defects were recorded, said Cefalo, and a larger, more representative study is being made.

Cefalo also said the many causes of miscarriages decrease the likelihood that computer terminals are solely responsible for an increase.

"Women who work face a greater risk of miscarriage," said Dr. Allen

Killam, director of obstetrics and gynecology at Duke University Medical Center. Killam said he did not believe computers posed a threat to pregnant women because the radiation amounts are too small to cause any damage.

Some solutions are available for problems that VDTs do cause. For example, screens are manufactured that cut down on glare, thus solving the problem.

But many employees are reluctant to try the screens, Morehead said. "They think it's too much trouble," he said.

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