

## Armstrong: Spring sporting events generate tourism dollars

March was a big month for tourism in DeKalb County because of the return of the Illinois Elementary School Association State Wrestling Championships and the Kishwaukee Family YMCA State Swim Meet. Approximately 12,000 visitors traveled here for sporting and cultural events this month.

Steve Endsley and his staff for the IESA State Wrestling Championships were welcomed back on March 9-10. Between 3,000-5,000 people visited the Northern Illinois University Convocation Center to support the wrestlers. This event was responsible for generating approximately 450 hotel room nights for the local economy.

The Convo staff and local resident and tournament manager Arch Richoz worked with IESA officials to ensure a successful event. Richoz has been the local tournament manager for 17 years. He works directly with the IESA to help coordinate the 250 volunteers from the DeKalb Wrestling Family Boosters who keep things running smoothly. Cooperation between venues and community volunteers are essential to winning bids for these types of events.

The Y hosted approximately 2,500 visitors (fans and competitors) for the state swim meet on March 16-17. The DeKalb County Convention & Visitors Bureau staff worked with local resident and swim team coach Brian Bickner to book approximately 350 hotel nights for swimmers and their families.

These visitors stay in our hotels, eat at our restaurants, spend money in our shops, visit our attractions, and purchase gas to get around town and to get back home, leaving important dollars with local businesses that boost the economic vitality in DeKalb County.

### Cultural tourism

Egyptian Theatre and Midwest Museum of Natural History teamed up to bring Jack Hanna and his "Into the Wild Live" show to DeKalb on March 11. The theater was packed with out-of-town visitors and local residents. The show was sponsored in part by Yvonne Johnson, Dave and Suzanne Juday, ZeaMays Holdings LLC., Bethany Animal Hospital, Berni Schelkopf and Upstaging Inc.

Kudos to Michael Embrey for hosting the United States Air Force Band of Mid-America Blue Jazz at the Egyptian Theatre on March 12. Embrey is a local entertainer/musician, a former member of the US Air Force Academy Band/Drum & Bugle Corps and the owner of FunME Events. Band members stayed in the county for three days while they were in the region for several performances.

### IHSA football bid

The DCCVB is part of a steering committee that is working on submitting a bid to be considered to host the Illinois High School Association State Football Championships. The bid will go to the IHSA selection committee at the end of the month. The host community will be announced in June. The event could bring up to 36,000 visitors to the county every other Thanksgiving weekend beginning in 2013. An event like that could have an economic impact of \$1 million for the area.

I only mentioned a few of the tourism events that took place in DeKalb County this month. There were many others. For a list of current events, go to [www.dekalbcountycvb.com](http://www.dekalbcountycvb.com).

- Debbie Armstrong is executive director of the DeKalb County Convention & Visitors Bureau.

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