

Armstrong: Meetings have economic impact

The DeKalb County Convention & Visitors Bureau helped welcome approximately 20,000 visitors through the first quarter of 2012.

More than 1,000 hotel room nights were blocked by the DCCVB at local hotels in March. At an average of \$70 a night those rooms generated approximately \$70,000 in revenue for county hotels. That doesn't take into account the money generated from visitor spending on gas, dining, shopping and local attractions, which bring the economic impact to approximately \$500,000. The state estimates that \$106 in additional revenue is generated per night, per person for each overnight stay.

Do any of the groups you belong to host a meeting or event the DCCVB can help bring to our area? We have approximately 700 hotel rooms and more than 325,000 square feet of meeting space to accommodate them. Help us bring these meetings to DeKalb County to generate economic wealth from tourism for local businesses and our communities. The bureau provides discounted group hotel rates, free visitors guides, maps, coupons and personalized service to ensure your meeting is a success. Contact darmstrong@dekalbcountycvb.com to explore all that we can offer.

New marketing for DeKalb County tourism

We are always busy promoting DeKalb County as both a meeting and leisure destination. Check out our new meetings and events video at www.dekalbcountycvb.com.

Illinois Farm Bureau Magazine sent a photographer to DeKalb County to take photos for a tourism article that should be published in November. We spent an entire day traveling throughout the area to showcase the attractions they selected to highlight. The magazine will promote our tourist attractions to its readership of more than 330,000.

We've developed 60,000 new rack cards to promote four key segments of our market – Arts & Entertainment; Stay & Play in DeKalb County; Festival & Farm Fun; and Historical Attractions. The cards will be distributed at Chicago attractions including Navy Pier, I-94/Illinois & Wisconsin, and the Quad Cities from May through December.

The 2012 visitors guide brochure print ad ran in the Illinois Spring/Summer Getaway Guide on Sunday. The travel insert was in 825,000 key newspapers. The targeted distribution is more than 2.7 million readers and will be seen in six states. The insert should generate from 4,000 to 6,000 new leisure travel leads for DeKalb County.

At the end of the month we'll debut a new DeKalb County Tourism interactive brochure. It will be available at www.dekalbcountycvb.com and www.vacationfun.com. It is a 10-page brochure that highlights our attractions and features an interactive calendar of events and lists all the hotels that help generate sales tax revenue for the DCCVB.

Facebook is a great way to get new visitors to DeKalb County. Our new Facebook ads started in January and have resulted in an increase in fans by 43 percent.

Governor's Conference on Tourism

I was one of more than 450 industry professionals that attended the Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism last month at the Rosemont Horizon. This year's theme was the Power of People and Travel. The conference provides insight into cutting-edge marketing strategies and networking opportunities.

The DCCVB was recognized by Jan Kostner, deputy director of the Illinois Office of Tourism, for its contribution to the economic welfare of the county and state for bringing the untitled Ramin Bahrani farm film to Illinois. The film accounted for more than 4,000 hotel room nights from July to November.

Kostner said more than \$161 million was spent in Illinois last year that directly related to the film and television industry.

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

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