

Volunteers gear up for IHSA title games

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DeKALB – As high school football fans statewide gear up for the weekend’s Illinois High School Association football championship games, the community’s volunteers have been doing some preparation of their own to help DeKalb leave a good impression.

More than 125 volunteers have trained to help host the tournament, which is expected to draw more than 30,000 people to DeKalb, DeKalb IHSA Community Chairwoman Wendy West-Krauch said.

“We’re very, very lucky to have all these volunteers to welcome everyone to the community,” she said.

Volunteers will be taking tickets, ushering fans, directing parking and manning the spirit zones. With so much excitement packed into only two days, it’s no wonder so many people would want to volunteer, West-Krauch said.

“I think really, primarily it’s the love of football,” she said. “But also, this is a huge event fro the community and I think there’s a lot of people who would really want to showcase our pride as well as take place in an event that’s only every other year for us.”

Mike Gegner, an IHSA ambassador and former Northern Illinois University football player, knows how much the tournament means to high school athletes.

“My senior year we won the state championship in a double-overtime thriller. I know what the guys will be experiencing, what they’ll be feeling,” Gegner said. “That’s another reason why it will be nice to give back. It’s a great opportunity if you are a football fan.”

Aside from Stacey Canova’s job at the DeKalb County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, it’s a love for football that encouraged her to volunteer in the spirit zone, despite weather that could include snow.

“I’m looking forward to the fans,” Canova said. “I think they’re always really fun. I love seeing that aspect of people, being excited for their friends and their family. The tailgating atmosphere is always so much fun.”

If the volunteers make a good enough impression on tourists, the tournament could attract future NIU students and DeKalb residents, West-Krauch said.

“Just to see the looks on the students faces and just the vibe in the air and being in the state championship for football – it’s almost like you can’t even describe it,” she said. “. . . I’m really

hoping that it's a good recruiting tool for NIU whether it be students who are watching the game or student athletes playing football.”

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