

DeKalb County gets economic surge from state football championships

Published: Monday, Jan. 25, 2016 11:47 p.m. CST

DeKALB – The 2015 Illinois State High School Association’s football championships earned DeKalb about \$800,000 and a hefty amount of exposure, according to research from the DeKalb County Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Illinois Office of Tourism.

The weekend, Nov. 27 and 28, provided an economic boost for the area, drawing more than 22,000 visitors and producing record sales for some downtown DeKalb businesses, DCCVB Executive Director Debbie Armstrong said.

“The weekend proved to be a powerful economic engine that fueled local and regional businesses and provided invaluable publicity and visibility for DeKalb County and Northern Illinois University,” Armstrong said in a Daily Chronicle [column](#).

At least 465 hotel room nights were booked in DeKalb and Sycamore, as well as 50 hotel room nights in Rochelle.

Local restaurants also reported a 35 to 50 percent increase in sales. Sycamore breakfast spot Eggsclusive, 265 W. Peace Road, typically does well around the holidays, since people have time off from school and work, owner Alex Henigan said. But the visits from out-of-town IHSA football fans really pushed business over the top Thanksgiving weekend, Henigan said.

“I think just because we’re on Peace Road, and I think so many people travel from I-90, Huntley, Hampshire, that area – that they drive past us and they go online and check for breakfast or lunch places, our name pops up,” he said. “They come try us if they’re from out of town.”

The average spending impact of the IHSA tournament came out to \$75 per person per day, Armstrong said. Since the tournament took place over Thanksgiving weekend, two high school teams even had holiday dinners delivered to their rooms.

The tournament went off just as smoothly, if not better, than the last time DeKalb hosted the IHSA championship in 2013, said Wendy West-Krauch, DeKalb IHSA Community chairwoman. Unexpected rain, however, might have affected turnout on Nov. 27, she said. Plans to improve 2017’s tournament, the next time the championships will take place in DeKalb, include better preparedness for poor weather.

Rain aside, the tournament could have longer-term recruitment benefits for the university, Armstrong said.

“It helps Northern Illinois University with student recruitment and the impact of the event has other residual benefits for hosting other events and meetings. The media coverage we got for hosting the event is priceless,” she said.

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