

DCCVB View: Investment in tourism pays off

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I just returned from the fall Illinois Council of Convention & Visitor Bureaus meeting in Champaign. These meetings give industry professionals the chance to explore other regions of the state, attend valuable education sessions and network.

One of the most important things the DeKalb County Convention and Visitors Bureau does for the county is keep the Illinois Office of Tourism informed about our attractions and marketing efforts. The DCCVB is the designated marketing organization for DeKalb County tourism. As a certified bureau, we have direct access to IOT and provide them with information about area attractions, meetings and events.

Success and a winning attitude starts at the top. Cory Jobe, IOT director, was one of our keynote speakers. He shared details of Illinois tourism efforts for the coming year and the need to encourage people to use their vacation days.

The leadership Jobe and his staff provide is critical to our success. They lead the charge for tourism promotion in Illinois and provide industry professionals with the backup and tools they need to continue to generate economic impact from visitor spending for the state and their regions.

Our “Find Something More” campaign received the U.S. Travel Association’s Mercury Award for best integrated marketing campaign at the 2016 Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations.

From March through July 2015, the campaign sought to increase the economic impact of travel in Illinois by encouraging visitors to extend their stay in the state. “Find Something More” showcases how transformative the experience of travel can be.

The campaign strategy was inspired by revelations from the U.S. Travel Association’s Project Time Off initiative, which found that Americans leave more than 429 million vacation days unused each year. The emotionally charged campaign reminded travelers of the myriad benefits of travel through television and online advertising, social media and strategic partnerships with Orbitz and Yahoo!

Project Time Off is an initiative the Illinois Office of Tourism is embracing to win back America’s Lost Week of vacation. We aim to shift culture so that taking time off is understood as essential to personal well-being, professional success, business performance and economic expansion. The initiative is supported by the Project Time Off Coalition, a broad-based group of organizations focused on changing America’s thinking and behavior about vacation time.

Vacation days can impact America’s bottom line. If Americans used all their vacation days, it would deliver a \$160 billion jolt to the U.S. economy, create 1.2 million new American jobs and generate \$21 billion in federal, state and local tax revenues.

Even if you aren’t able to travel outside of Illinois, there’s much to do and see here that is worth experiencing. For more ideas on planning an Illinois Getaway, visit enjoyillinois.com or request a

Travel Illinois Magazine.

The IOT “Illinois Made” campaign celebrates our artisans, makers and creators. Each CVB was asked to nominate people from our area that fit the parameters of the program. We nominated and wrote recommendations for each of our bold spirits artisans last year. Whiskey Acres was selected as one of the “Illinois Made” attractions to be featured. It resulted in a two-page spread in Travel Illinois Magazine, which reaches more than 600,000 visitors. The Illinois Office of Tourism will present them with their award next spring when they come to film a video that will promote Whiskey Acres on EnjoyIllinois.com. “Illinois Made” has bolstered the number of views on the website and provided in-depth stories for visitors, leading to more visitors coming to explore our attractions.

Another opportunity Jobe’s office provided to CVBs came from its partnership with AMTRAK. For nearly a year, IOT has made Travel Illinois magazines available to commuters at Chicago’s Union Station, one of the most heavily trafficked areas in the city. Now, this same arrangement is available to all Illinois Convention and Visitor Bureaus. We just shipped 1,000 of our county visitor guides to Union Station, increasing our visibility.

Thank you to Cory, his team, all of our local attractions and partners for the support and investment that is paying off for our economy!

Visit our website, dekalbcountycvb.com, to explore and find all things amazing in DeKalb County.

Safe travels!

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