

Armstrong: State director of tourism visits DeKalb County

5:30 am

We celebrated National Travel and Tourism Week earlier this month with a visit from Cory Jobe, state director of tourism.

“Let’s Talk Tourism” was hosted by the DeKalb County Convention and Visitor Bureau.

Jobe is responsible for leading the state’s tourism industry marketing and development efforts. He works in collaboration with tourism industry professionals to promote visitor travel both domestically and internationally, and to help grow the tourism industry throughout the state.

Our thanks to the Egyptian Theatre for providing a stunning venue to welcome Cory and to the Lincoln Inn for providing refreshments.

Jobe was introduced by Brad Hoey, chairman of the DCCVB board. Mark Pietrowski Jr., DeKalb County Board chairman, presented the director with a proclamation honoring National Travel and Tourism Week and the economic impact that visitor spending generates for DeKalb County.

Jobe eagerly shared the newly released domestic tourism numbers for 2016. They reflect an additional 1 million domestic travelers who visited Illinois in 2016, bringing the total to 110 million. Of those, 17 percent came for business and 83 percent for leisure.

In the past 10 years, the number of domestic travelers visiting Illinois increased by 19 million. Domestic travelers spent nearly \$35.1 billion in Illinois during 2016, a 1.8 percent increase from 2015. They generated \$2.6 billion in state and local tax revenue, an increase of \$106 million from 2015. These figures reflect that every \$1 invested in tourism in Illinois generates \$9 in economic impact.

Domestic travel supported 302,000 jobs within Illinois, an increase of 9,600 jobs from 2015 on top of the 10,000 jobs created the previous year.

Jobe made a surprise announcement that delighted the crowd. Jonamac Orchard is the newest addition to “Illinois Made” from our region. “Illinois Made” recognizes the artisans, products and experiences that are unique to the state.

“This elite group of makers are small business owners that draw visitors from Illinois and around the world, creating jobs and growing our state’s economy,” Jobe said.

Jonamac Orchard joins Whiskey Acres as the second DeKalb County attraction to receive the honor. Our congratulations go out to Jonamac Orchard and Whiskey Acres for all they contribute to the thriving tourism industry in the county. We salute their hard work and celebrate this well-deserved recognition.

Jobe shared details on the state’s marketing programs and initiatives that are driving visitors to Illinois, including a new website. EnjoyIllinois.com features user-friendly content and travel suggestions, and state-of-the-art listing technology designed to inspire travel and exploration in the state.

Other highlights from Jobe’s presentation included videos of the new TV and online ads running in multiple domestic markets – including Cleveland, Detroit, Minneapolis and Milwaukee – as well as internationally. Each ad features travelers experiencing iconic Illinois destinations.

It was an honor to have Jobe select DeKalb County as one of the communities he addressed during National Travel and Tourism Week. The leadership he provides, along with his dedicated and talented staff, is keeping Illinois at the forefront of the tourism industry.

In closing, allow me to remind you about another event taking place in our region this month. We hope that you’ll take the opportunity to come out and enjoy the NCAA Division I Golf Championships. It is the first time they have been in Illinois. The May 19-24 women’s finals will be followed May 26-31 by the men’s finals at Rich Harvest Farms in Sugar Grove. Those 18 and younger are admitted free with a paying adult all tournament long. Weekend days during the event are also Kids’ Days, featuring special events and activities.

Thanks to Jobe and his staff, both the DeKalb County CVB, some of our local attractions and the Aurora Area CVB staff will be greeting visitors from the new Illinois Office of Tourism Mobile Tourist Information Center throughout the championships. It’s the first time the mobile center will be on display in the region. For a list of activities and ticket information, visit: dekalbcountycvb.com/2017ncaagolf.

Thank you to all our partners, who are the “Faces of Travel” for DeKalb County. You make us all look good.

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

