

Armstrong: Join the IHSA Destination DeKalb volunteer team

Oct. 10, 2017

The boys of fall are headed back to Huskie Stadium.

The countdown stands at a little less than 40 days until DeKalb County hosts its third IHSA state football championships on Nov. 24-25 at Northern Illinois University's Huskie Stadium. The IHSA Destination DeKalb Committee, led by chair Wendy West, the DeKalb County Convention and Visitors Bureau and NIU is busy planning to welcome thousands of visitors to the community.

In 2015, more than 26,000 fans cheered on the teams competing for football's top spots in the state in eight classes.

Sixteen teams will compete for a title. Eight teams play each day in games scheduled to kick off at 10 a.m., 2 p.m., 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. on both Friday and Saturday. It will definitely be the place to be on Thanksgiving weekend. Our goal is to provide the visiting schools, coaches, players and fans with the best possible championship experience again this year.

Local volunteers play a crucial role in the success of our IHSA State Football Championship weekend.

We are reaching out to area residents, booster clubs and service clubs to help welcome everyone and assist with the event to provide another memorable and first-class experience in 2017. Please join our team Nov. 24-25 and help make the 2017 State Championships another big win for DeKalb County. Volunteers are needed to help with game day operations such as ticket scanners, ushers and parking attendants. More details are available online through the automated volunteer registration. To sign up for the IHSA Destination DeKalb volunteer team, go to destination.dekalb.com.

The IHSA Destination DeKalb Committee is still seeking sponsorships for the state championships to help with the cost of hosting the event. Benefits and sponsorship levels are available at ihsadestinationdekalb.com or by contacting Brad Hoey at bhoey@niu.edu or me at darmstrong@dekalbcountycvb.com.

The "Spirit Zone" will be set up west of and adjacent to Huskie Stadium. We will have a main hospitality tent and individual team tents for the fans of the teams playing. There also will be a performance area for the competing schools' bands and cheer groups to help pump up their teams' fans prior to the games.

Fans will battle in the much-anticipated "Spirit Zone" tent-decorating contest between the competing teams from each of the designated classes. The winners will be selected by community judges based on the following criteria: creativity, sportsmanship, overall use of decorations and school colors.

We expect the IHSA state football championship weekend to generate between \$800,000 and \$1 million for the local economy. It's a valuable opportunity for the area, in terms of economics and exposure. Below is a recap of the results from the 2015 IHSA Destination DeKalb wrap-up meeting:

- At least 565 hotel room nights were booked in DeKalb and Sycamore
- 50 hotel room nights booked at Rochelle hotels
- 22,319 tickets sold
- Local restaurants reported a 35-50 percent increase in sales from Thanksgiving weekend 2014
- 262 million media impressions with an ad value equivalency of \$2.5 million
- Sports Illustrated (SI.com) coverage along with network television

- Gas stations reported an increase in sales
- The DeKalb Oasis estimated business for gas and food doubled
- 14 private caterings booked
- Several local restaurants booked private fan parties
- More than 200 community volunteers worked the event as hospitality/tourism ambassadors
- Some retail stores in downtown DeKalb reported their best sales figures since 2013
- Two teams ordered Thanksgiving dinners to be delivered to local hotels

Please join our IHSA Destination DeKalb Team! Help us welcome teams from across the state to DeKalb County.

We are hoping that we'll have some local teams competing in the IHSA State Championships as well. Check out ihsadestinationdekalb.com for updates as the countdown clock continues.

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

Copyright © 2017 Daily Chronicle. All rights reserved.
