

# **The DeKalb County Convention and Visitors Bureau Puts Heads In Beds**

**November 16, 2010**

One of many things we do in trying to promote tourism here to generate a positive economic impact is help bring groups and their members here to hold meetings or competitions to help fill local hotel rooms and venues while providing customers for other local businesses like restaurants, shops, etc.

One such group, Pop Warner Football Cheerleaders, held their Spirit Competition here last weekend at the NIU Convocation Center and may have helped bring in up to \$250,000 in revenue. Staff from the CVB and Convo Center have worked with the Pop Warner event coordinator each of the past four years to bring the event here and it has grown each year, drawing from 2,000 to 4,000 people. We helped book 250 to 300 rooms-per-day in local hotels for this event.

Personal attention group organizers and their members receive from everyone in our community helps ensure a positive experience for these visitors and increases the chances of retaining such business.

## **It's a Process**

Such events don't happen overnight. Working with a meeting coordinator can require planning over the course of two to three years, starting with the group's planner contacting the DeKalb County Convention and Visitors Bureau to see if we can fulfill their specific needs.

Will the venue, whether it be as large as the Convocation Center or as small as a single conference room, accommodate the number of people they expect to have attend the event. We can also let them know if local hotels will have the rooms available for their needs on the date(s) of their event.

It's a very competitive business. Groups will submit bids to either the CVB or specific venue for their proposal and can include special request like complimentary rooms or helping them to fulfill special equipment (audio visual, for example) needs, meals and handicap accessibility, to name a few. We can also give planners on-site tours of local facilities, which can be crucial to landing the meeting, even if virtual on-line tours are also available.

The CVB meets with event planners to develop strong relationships that can help lead to retention of these events for years to come. Many meeting planners

won't work with cities that don't have a CVB. Basically, we are an extension of their workforce that provides local expert knowledge, contacts and objective recommendations to ensure their event is successful.

### **Targeting Visitors Every Day**

We have been working with all 14 municipalities in DeKalb County to gather information on attractions, shopping and restaurants as well as complete a calendar of events for our 2011 DeKalb County Visitors Guide. It is published each year and will be available at local hotels and attractions beginning in January. There's still time for businesses to purchase an ad. The Visitors Guide is sent to everyone requesting information on DeKalb County and is also available at both the DeKalb and Belvidere travel kiosks. You can also view the guide online at: [www.dekalbcountycvb.com](http://www.dekalbcountycvb.com).

- Congratulations to the J.F. Glidden Homestead Historical Center, which recently held the dedication for its new Blacksmith Shop, which is part of the long-term plan for this emerging museum.
- The DCCVB contributed to the group's efforts by providing information that led to it receiving a Tourism Attraction Development Program (TAP) grant from the state to help build the shop. Next spring, the group's board plans to add a new visitor information center to the mix. These additions will bring more visitors to DeKalb County.
- We had the pleasure of providing a tour of downtown DeKalb and Sycamore for 36 Thai students visiting Northern Illinois University for three weeks through the school's Southeast Asian Studies Program. It included introducing them to the Sycamore Pumpkins Festival. Students are staying with host families during their visit.
- Congratulations to the Genoa Park District and the City of Genoa on the renovations that are in progress at Chamberlain Park and the new Fitness Center that is being developed. This improves the quality of life for citizens and provides additional opportunities to host sporting events that bring visitors to DeKalb County.
- We update our Calendar of Events continuously. Tourism events can be submitted free through our website. Click on "Events" and then select "Submit an Event", which will take you to the events submission form. Visit the DeKalb County Convention and Visitors Bureau at: [dekalbcountycvb.com](http://dekalbcountycvb.com) or call us at 815/756-1336 to get information on all that there is to do and see in DeKalb County.