

By DEBBIE ARMSTRONG

DCCVB View: Conference dedicates time to improving state tourism

I've just come back from the Governor's Conference on Tourism, which was held at the Rosemont Convention Center in Rosemont. About 400 industry professionals gathered to get information on tourism spending trends from the Department of Economic Development and the Illinois Office of Tourism.

The first day of the conference was devoted to round-table sessions with individual grant directors. They explained what types of tourism grants are available and answered questions on how to apply for them. We attended other seminars that provided successful marketing models and initiatives.

Networking with other tourism professionals always reaps innovative ideas and provides new ways to promote through collaboration.

The official state of Illinois 2009 travel statistics have been released. It's probably no surprise that revenue was down, which isn't the normal trend for Illinois or DeKalb County. The good news is the numbers being recorded for 2010 are already moving up and headed back in the right direction. Illinois counts on tourism and the revenue it generates to grow the economy. The tourism industry employs more than 300,000 workers in Illinois.

Travel expenditures for DeKalb County were reported at \$65.34 million. This category is defined as money spent by travelers on such things as public transportation, food service, auto transportation, lodging, retail and entertainment/recreation.

Our county travel statistics come from the U.S. Travel Data Center and U.S. Travel Association and are compiled by the Northern Illinois Tourism Development Office.

Domestic and international travelers directly spent more than \$27 million in Illinois during 2009. Other than Illinois residents visiting other parts of the states the other top states providing visitors to Illinois in 2009 were Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan and Missouri.

The top five international markets were Canada, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Germany and Japan.

This research provides demographic information that helps us target the right groups to execute strategic and successful marketing campaigns. It's worth noting that CVBs follow strict guidelines provided by the Illinois Office of Tourism for marketing campaigns. In order to be eligible to claim any matching funds, certified bureaus must promote their area as a tourism destination to visitors 50 miles outside of their radius.

Submit photos and videos to bureau

The DeKalb County CVB has been evolving this year with the unveiling of a new logo and a new website design that will take advantage of the latest technology trends.

We plan to launch the website in April. It will be more interactive and encourage visitor and community participation.

Help us promote DeKalb County by sharing photos and recording videos of the experiences you enjoy when you attend our events or visit attractions. We will review your submissions and select some to include in our new video and photo gallery sections of the website.

Email photos or videos to darmstrong@dekalbcountycvb.com or put them on a disc and drop them by my office at 164 E. Lincoln Highway, DeKalb. We can't wait to see which one of your videos will go viral on our YouTube channel. In the meantime, "Like Us" on Facebook at DeKalbCounty CVB1 and follow us on Twitter, too.

Remember that you can submit events to the website free of charge. This area of the site is always changing with new things to do and see. The only way to keep up with what's going on in DeKalb County is to become a regular visitor at www.dekalbcountycvb.com.

• *Debbie Armstrong is executive director of DeKalb County Convention and Visitors Bureau.*

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