

Tourism up in DeKalb County

Thomas Verschelde | Posted: Monday, November 7, 2011 8:42 pm

DeKalb County received \$71.64 million from tourism in 2010, according to the Northern Illinois Tourism Development Office (NIT).

According to the NIT numbers, this was over \$6 million more than in 2009.

"I am very glad to see that people are visiting DeKalb County and spending money," said DeKalb Mayor Kris Povlsen. "Anytime you have visitors, you have revenue. This revenue can be used to help the community and to help fund municipalities in the city."

NIT states that tourism in DeKalb County accounts for 510 jobs and \$11.71 million in wages paid to those who directly serve tourists.

Debbie Armstrong executive director of the DeKalb County Convention & Visitor's Bureau said DeKalb County is especially known for its agricultural attractions or agri-tourism.

Some agri-tourism attractions around DeKalb include Jonamac Orchard, Yaeger's Farm Market, the DeKalb Farmer's Market and various wineries located around the DeKalb County.

Lindsey Engelsman, Marketing and Special Events Coordinator for Re:New DeKalb said Re:New DeKalb organizes the DeKalb Farmer's Market every year in hopes to attract people to the city.

"The DeKalb Farmer's Market brings about 200 to 300 people a week to downtown DeKalb," Engelsman said. "We have about 20 vendors and have been in downtown Dekalb for the last 16 years,"

The DeKalb Farmer's Market is open from the beginning of June until the end of September. which results in 3,200 to 4,800 visitors annually.

Co-owner of Jonamac Orchard Kevin McArtor said the orchard was originally a roadside stand when his father bought it in 1984. It has since grown.

"My father wanted to own a farming type of business, and when the original owner wanted to retire he called my father [and we bought it]," McArtor said. "It was more of a road side stand originally, then grew over the years into what it is today."

McArtor estimates that Jonamac Orchard now receives about 40,000 visitors a year.

Povlsen said more people means more revenue for businesses to thrive.

"Any tourism is important for a city," Povlsen said. "It means people are spending money at our restaurants, hotels and gas stations. It is not only important of our community but also for our economy as a whole."