

Economic Development Insight

Tourism Development Work Continues

By Joan Bethell

As a result of the meeting last month, there are three groups of Greene County folks who are diligently working to further the progress on developing an effective and profitable tourism industry. Tackling the development of an entire industry is a huge task but, by breaking it down into much smaller tasks, effective progress can be assured.

During the meeting, each group identified its major goal, plus two or three quick goals that they will be addressing during the next thirty days, together with any challenges they anticipate. They will be meeting independently throughout the next month before the whole group gathers again on Thursday, May 14th at 7:00 p.m. at the GCEDC office.

The primary goal of the Product Development group is to “Put locally created products into the hands of tourists.” The current steps toward that goal include identifying our tourism niche, developing a list of products that are unique to Greene County and linking the websites of local artisans to the tourism section of the GCEDC website. This section is being developed so that, ultimately, it will be able to stand alone. Challenges include prioritizing the types of tourism (such as outdoor recreation, historic, ecosystem, agri-tourism, etc), so as to allow the group to focus on no more than one or two types at any given time, and coordinating the participation of local artisans at various events being held around the county.

Just a side-note: GCEDC has granted to the Friends of Goose Pond an 18-month exclusive right to use the brand image on ball caps, thereby creating a Greene County souvenir. GCEDC uses the brand image in its company logo but the image itself and the underlying geographic descriptive, “Greene County Indiana,” is available for use by any agency or business seeking to promote Greene County by submitting a request to GCEDC.

The Marketing group is targeting the updating of the tourism section of the website, seeking ways to make it more appealing and standardizing the website links, plus seeking State approval on the brochures that were developed last year. Potential challenges include getting the volunteer participation of a group of webmasters and attending to any issues identified by the State, if the brochures need to be modified.

The Destination group will be assessing the condition of the temporary wayfarer signage and determining how many need to be replaced or re-installed, plus they will start to seek sponsors for the development and placement of permanent signage. The signage is coordinated with the map of attractions in the brochure.

In addition, research is being conducted to identify some potential sources of grant monies that will help to cover some of the costs of producing the permanent signage and print this year’s brochures and event calendar inserts. Since joining the Linton-Stockton Chamber of Commerce four years ago, Cheryl Hamilton has continued the active promotion of all of Greene County at various statewide fairs, festivals and trade shows. Cheryl estimates that 30,000 copies of the brochure and insert are needed to cover a year’s exposure. This would include local distribution

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to key establishments, State-approved and reciprocity destination points, as well as outside requests received by any of the Greene County chambers.

Also, preliminary discussions have been held on forming a Greene County Visitors' Bureau (CVB). This would provide a central place for visitors to get information on attractions, events and local products throughout the county. Also, the CVB model provides the mechanism to facilitate the marketing of Greene County to our prime target market, which is everything within a 300 mile radius. This market is expected to increase with more folks deciding to scale-back their vacation plans, visiting more local areas instead of those farther afield.

There are 64 countywide CVBs listed on the Indiana Office of Tourism Development's website, some of which represent more than one county, as tourism promotion is even more effective when conducted on a multi-county/regional level. Greene County needs to position itself to effectively compete in this arena.

Finally, entrepreneurial opportunities related to tourism abound and a partial list was developed at a previous meeting. If you're thinking of starting a such a business in Greene County and would like a copy of the list or, if you're interested in any of the industry development activity and would like to get involved, please contact GCEDC staff.

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