

Travel matters in Mankato region

It's National Travel and Tourism Week, and it's time to celebrate the importance of the travel and tourism industry as it is a vital part of our economic health. Travel and tourism is one of America's largest industries, employing more workers than both the insurance and auto industries.

In Minnesota, the leisure and hospitality industry accounts for 11 percent of the state's total private sector jobs. Travelers spend more than \$ 33 million a day which accounts for 17 percent of the state's sales tax revenue. In fact, without travel and tourism's contribution to the tax base, each household would be taxed an additional \$ 1,000 per year.

Simply put: travel matters. It matters with job creation, productivity and regional economic expansion.

Travel matters to our national economy, and it matters in Greater Mankato.

The travel and tourism industry is diverse and wide- ranging. Consider the impact that thousands of leisure and business travelers create on our city's hoteliers, restaurateurs, retailers, museums and countless other businesses.

In Blue Earth County, tourism generates close to \$ 150 million in economic activity and supports 3,650 local jobs annually. Tourism to Blue Earth County also produces \$ 9.3 million in tax receipts. National Travel and Tourism Week (May 9- 15) was established by Congress in 1983 to underscore the economic, educational, cultural and social benefits created by travel and tourism.

This year the Greater Mankato Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) will celebrate by recognizing employees in the industry who do their best to ensure a traveler has the best experience possible while in our destination.

Once a visitor comes to Greater Mankato, it is up to the hospitality industry to make sure they have a good experience, and the CVB wants to show their appreciation to those employees who are the real engine behind the hospitality industry.

Their hard work and dedication not only keeps visitors happy, it keeps them coming back.

On Wednesday, May 11, the Greater Mankato CVB honored local hospitality workers by presenting an award in recognition of their above and beyond service in one of four categories: Attraction, Hotel,

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Restaurant and Friend of Tourism.

Travel is a catalyst that helps move the Mankato economy forward, and it is important to show appreciation to the people who keep that engine running.

Hopefully visitors will see even more smiling faces behind the hotel's front desk or serving their delicious meal in the coming year. Leisure and hospitality has been among Minnesota's top industries for job growth coming out of the recession.

It is projected that this year the state will see the most employment in this industry than it has ever seen.

And for an industry that really matters, this is great news for all of us. Please make the extra effort this week to thank those who are working hard every day in the travel and tourism industry. They are making a difference in our community.

Anna Thill is president of the Greater Mankato Convention & Visitors Bureau.



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