

April 2009 Edition

Targeting tourists

Tourism helps county without taxation

New Strategic Plan to help guide county into the future

(April 2009) – We’ve all heard it before: “There’s not enough business tax base to pay for our county’s needs, so we have to raise your taxes.”

What would you think of an Oldham County agency committed to helping Oldham County grow without raising your taxes?

The new face of Oldham County Tourism is on target with an active director, an energetic board, and a new groundbreaking Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will work hand-in-hand with the Oldham County Chamber, Oldham County Economic Development, and Oldham County government to bring new revenues to Oldham County, but with a twist: Tourism provides these services without raising your taxes, since they are funded solely by guests who stay at our local hotels.

The first goal in the new Strategic Plan is to create an “External Destination Identity.” Who comes to Oldham County? What did they do? Why did they choose us? Where did they visit and stay while they were here?

Our second goal, a Hotel Cooperation Program, will gather survey information from hotel guests.

“The most important piece of information to come from these surveys will be where the guests traveled from and for what reason. This will allow us to pinpoint our target market,” said Tourism Chairman Shane Best. “

Our third goal is to create an infrastructure for Oldham County attractions to flourish through travel packages for tourists. These packages will include dining, attractions, shopping and complimentary activities, such as taking in a show at the Oldham County Schools Arts Center or Little Colonel Playhouse after visiting Main Street La Grange. During this recession, travelers still plan to take vacations but for shorter periods of time. I have learned that travelers typically look for weekend getaways and day trips that last two or three days without driving more than three hours to get there. We have just the ticket for travelers in Oldham County.

“In an effort to meet and interview those travelers around the region and create buzz about Oldham County, your tourism director attends the major travel shows and have just returned from the Indianapolis and Cincinnati Shows,” Best said. “Kim gathers incredible



information you do not get from surveys.”

The assumption in our county has always been that we naturally attract travelers from Cincinnati because we are on I-71. That is not the case. It was interesting to learn from the Cincinnati Show that residents are more naturally accustomed to get off I-71 onto I-75 and head to Lexington, unless they happened to be driving to Louisville. We learned that although most attendees I spoke with were familiar with La Grange, we needed to create a need for them to stay on I-71 and come to Oldham County specifically. That reason will be our Travel Packages. As research shows, travelers are looking for quick getaways that allow them a change of pace before heading back to the daily grind. A critical part of our Strategic Plan is developing future tourist destinations in Oldham County as well. Starting in spring 2008, tourism has been on a mission to find those “hidden gems” in the county that can be promoted as attractions. Last year, we discovered a fellow resident who had written a book about life on her farm. It is a children’s book written through the eyes of her horses. Additionally, an alpaca farm owner has shown interest in becoming open to the public for tours. As part of our Strategic Plan implementation, I am developing potential Agri-Tourism businesses in Oldham County in collaboration with Kentucky State Tourism’s new Agri-Tourism Division in Frankfort.

In another effort to carry out the Strategic Plan, I met in March with “Team Kentucky” from the state tourism office. Team Kentucky visits cities and counties in the state to take inventories of its lakes, sports fields, golf courses, and indoor sports facilities to evaluate the possibility of promoting and attracting local sports tournaments to that area.

“Kim will be working in collaboration with local coaches and Oldham County Parks and Recreation for their feedback on this initiative,” said Best.

Can Tourism really help Oldham County grow? Best says: “True to our mission, Oldham County Tourism is committed to pursuing new revenue growth for Oldham County businesses by actively marketing what we have to offer. In creating an identity for Oldham County, we will help make our existing businesses healthier and will help recruit new businesses to service our tourists. This will, in turn, feed Oldham County businesses additional revenue they desperately need – without raising your taxes.”

• *Kim Buckler serves as Oldham County Tourism Director. Call her at (502) 222-0056 or via email at: Director@TourOldhamCounty.com. For upcoming events, visit the website: www.TourOldhamCounty.com.*