**Columnist Fred Snyder: Gettysburg Times**

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It's not only about what happened in Gettysburg in 1863 that draws visitors to Adams County, it's the mashed potatoes too. Several weeks ago I sat down with President Norris Flowers of Destination Gettysburg and Carl Whitehill, director of communications. Destination Gettysburg is the worldwide marketing arm that reaches out to millions of would be tourists telling them why they should visit our great community. I had profiled the individuals who come to Gettysburg and Adams County, but I wanted to know why they come and how Norris' organization attracts them. Norris tells me millennials will be the future visitors to Gettysburg and Adams County, and they are the key to his marketing strategy.

He says younger people will visit the Gettysburg Battlefield, but the Adams County experience with wineries, farm to table meals and food, along with some of the great events is what is and will bring people here. Norris says there are 60 million people within a 300-mile radius of Adams County. Ten years ago, the average visitor to Gettysburg spent four hours. Norris says they still see a large number of day trippers, but the average stay in Gettysburg and Adams County is two days. The reduction in gas prices is also making Gettysburg and Adams County more attractive for drivers.

Norris says 3.78 million people visited Adams County last year with an economic impact of $666 million. The pillow tax in Adams County generated about $1.7 million for Destination Gettysburg last year. Gettysburg realized about $145,000 of the total amount which was divided among several other municipalities with hotel rooms and police departments. Flowers did say that despite their tax exemption, Gettysburg College is the largest taxpayer in Gettysburg Borough.

A couple of interesting facts for you: bikers do generate more money county-wide than re-enactors, Norris pointed out that on a good year a re-enactment may generate about $10 million with bike week a few million more. He did say to keep in mind this is all weather-related. Norris tells me research shows Adams County gets visitors from all fifty states, and more than 90 foreign countries. He says foreign visitors always stay longer and spend more with the Chinese emerging market, and Australians making up a good percentage of foreign visitors.

Norris cited the importance of trade shows for inbound international visitors because many of the foreign visitors book trips through tour operators. Many book tours to cover cities like Washington, Philadelphia, Gettysburg, and New York as part of a package. Most foreign visitors are well educated about what occurred at Gettysburg and want to see where Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address.

Norris added that many Chinese learn English by reciting the Gettysburg Address. He says a large majority of international travelers to Adams County come from Canada, Great Britain, Germany, France, and of course China. Once again, research plays a big role in determining who visits with one of the major credit card companies providing Destination Gettysburg the visitor's home countries.

In conclusion, Norris tells me it's all about research and knowing who your visitors are; making their stay as interesting and entertaining as possible, and making them want to come back. He says other destinations would love the diversity Adams County provides with a re-enactment one week, Bluegrass the next, followed by the Apple Harvest Festival, and the list goes on. There is so much to do, see, and experience in Adams County. Find out more by going online at [www.destinationgettysburg.com](http://www.destinationgettysburg.com/). My thanks to both Norris and Carl for their time.