

Effects of tourism trickle down far

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In Josh Austin's eyes, almost everyone who works in Gettysburg is in the tourism business.

"Whether it be us as contractors, or local business owners who are not directly affected by tourism, we deal with people who come here and benefit from them," said Austin, who works for his father's business, Mark Austin Builders of Littlestown.

It is likely that Austin's latest project, the new Appalachian Brewing Company on Steinwehr Avenue, would not have happened if thousands of people did not come to Gettysburg every year. The same could be said for other clients, such as The House of Time, Gettysburg National Military Park, Civil War Preservation Trust, and Hauser Estate Winery.

"One of the things that has always been part of who we are and how my dad has drilled into us is that these people who come to town, we are trying to conduct business but they are here on vacation. We want them to have a pleasant experience," he said.

A key component of that pleasant experience is patience on behalf of the locals. Austin drives Route 97 daily, and understands how frustrating it can be when someone is driving 20 miles under the speed limit while looking for the Visitor Center or another attraction.

"You have to remember that they are here on vacation. The last thing you want to be doing is blowing the horn," he said.

Another confusing part of the Gettysburg experience is navigating Lincoln Square.

"You have to be patient with these people, you want them to return," he said.

Austin and his crew of eight also do residential work, and many of his clients have moved here because it's Gettysburg.

"We have not only an international destination because of one of the most significant battles in American history but we also have a beautiful backdrop with the mountains," he said.

Austin and other contracting firms also have the opportunity to restore barns that may otherwise rot if it were not for their historical significance.

"When you are talking a million dollars for a barn restoration, that doesn't happen in Bedford," he said.

Austin also appreciates that tourism operators often hire local firms, whether it be his or others.

"They would rather have local guys than who has the cheapest numbers," he said.

Carl Whitehill, director of communications for Destination Gettysburg, said 7,587 people are employed in Adams County because of tourism, whether it be a direct connections such as a hotel or an indirect connection like a contractor.