

Column – March 2017
By Carl Whitehill
Destination Gettysburg

Adams County takes the stage in group travel

Later this month, Adams County will host more than 500 group tour leaders as part of the Maryland Motorcoach Association's Annual Marketplace – an opportunity for the local tourism community to showcase its destination to those who plan group trips to our community.

Over the course of a day – March 30 – these group travel leaders will meet with businesses and organizations from Adams County and beyond, before heading out into the destination as part of tours aimed at highlighting a variety of experiences for group travelers.

Destination Gettysburg, who successfully bid to host this marketplace, realizes the importance of group travel – specifically as an economic engine for Adams County. Group travel represents a significant portion of the visitors to the county and thus generates tens of millions of dollars in spending and tax revenue, as well as supports thousands of jobs for our local residents.

Gettysburg is among the nation's top destinations for group travel – ranking fifth in 2017 by Byways Magazine, one of the leading trade publications for group travel. Annually, approximately 15,000 groups travel to Adams County to experience the rich history, great restaurants and shopping as well as the abundance of attractions and tours.

Destination Gettysburg's sales team works year-round to generate new group travel business and expand existing group trips to include additional experiences or additional overnight stays – an important effort in maximizing the economic impact on Adams County.

These visits by group travelers are built through relationships that Destination Gettysburg and the Adams County tourism community have built with group travel leaders and tour operators – those who plan trips for students, church groups, military veterans and senior citizens, among others.

A marketplace such as Maryland Motorcoach Association, however, provides Adams County with an incredible opportunity to bring 500 group travel leaders to see first-hand the experiences that this destination has to offer travelers.

Subjects of tours include Civil War battlefield and civilian tours, shopping and wine tasting, President Lincoln's visit to Gettysburg, the Underground Railroad and Destination Gettysburg's Authentic Adams County theme which highlights unique experiences throughout the area.

Adams County already welcomes hundreds of trips annually planned by the group travel leaders who will participate in the Maryland Motorcoach Association's Annual Marketplace this March, but the potential to increase this business, or expand on existing visits is crucial to the tourism industry of Adams County.

The addition of just one group to visit Adams County brings thousands of dollars into our community.

Tourism is big business in Adams County, with visitors spending more than \$660 million annually; contributing more than \$131 million in federal, state and local taxes; and supporting 7,500 jobs in Adams County. While group travel represents a portion of this overall economic impact, it's important that the destination maintain its standing as one of the top group travel destinations for group travelers.

For more on Destination Gettysburg's group travel marketing efforts, including the experiences that Adams County offers its group travelers, visit www.destinationgettysburg.com/grouptours.

Carl Whitehill is the Director of Communications with Destination Gettysburg.