

RACVB JG VOICE COLUMN for MAY 2013

WHY VACATIONS ARE IMPORTANT

By John Groh, RACVB CEO

Most people know that vacations are a good thing. You get away, relax and come back recharged with fresh energy and enthusiasm.

Now there is new research conducted by Harris Interactive for the U.S. Travel Association that confirms this and sheds light on the important “hidden” impacts of travel.

The study shows that traveling together as a family strengthens bonds and creates a lifetime of memories. As chamber members, we focus a lot on our work. But, we value our personal lives and want to have the highest quality time with our families and friends.

Remember, a “family” is more than two parents and children; it could be an aunt and her niece or a bunch of cousins, and can even extend to a close-knit group of friends.

Vacation Survey Results

Here are some of the findings by Harris Interactive.

- Adults say that family vacations are clearly remembered decades later. Of the adult surveyed, 62 percent said their earliest memories of family vacations were when they were between 5 and 10 years of age. Those vacation memories were stronger than memories of school events or birthday celebrations.
- Youth surveyed said their vacation memories will last a long time. A significant 64 percent said that they get to see and do things on vacation that they’ll remember a long time; 53 percent said vacations bring families closer together.
- Parents underestimate the value of including grandparents on family vacation. Children who traveled with their extended family reported that they spent quality time with their grandparents, 78 percent; felt closer to them, 60 percent; and liked to remember stories about what they did with their grandparents, 65 percent.

How to Plan a Family Vacation to Remember Forever

1. Plan some activities to do as a family.
Kids say vacations are a time when they get to spend quality time with their parents. Take advantage of this opportunity.
2. Consider including the children’s grandparents.
Well over half the children reported feeling closer to their grandparents when they vacationed together. That’s priceless.

3. Focus first on vacation activities.

More children said *what* they did, rather than where they stayed or where they went, was their favorite memory.

4. Do something adventurous or try something new.

More than two-thirds of the children believe that a family vacation is a chance to try things they cannot do at home. These activities can broaden your children's horizons, bring your family closer and create lasting memories.

www.traveleffect.com.

Local Culver's Co-Owner's Vacation Tips

Stephanie Koch, co-owner and marketing manager of five Culver's in Rockford and Roscoe, said vacations are "absolutely important" to her family. She and her husband have three daughters. "Day-to-day life can be so fast paced that having a few days set aside to intentionally connect and relax with family definitely strengthens relationships." Her tips for successful family vacations are to think through the dynamics and activities for all ages beforehand and have one person in charge of important documents and handling reservations.

As to the importance of visitors to Rockford, she said Culver's "definitely benefit from the influx of visitors and special events that draw people to Rockford. We try to make sure they have a great experience, give them a little taste of Rockford, help them with directions, etc. Guests have even left our stores with a napkin-drawn map and our phone number in case they get lost. We are big fans of the event calendar that the visitors bureau puts together and use it when scheduling our stores to maximize those busy athletic weekend events."

National Travel & Tourism Week, May 4-12, 2013

Each May we celebrate National Travel & Tourism Week. It's one more chance to share these facts about our local visitor industry.

- Visitors add \$311 million into our local economy
- That means \$5.07 million in local tax revenue, thanks to visitors, and
- Visitors support 2,600 hospitality jobs in Winnebago County

Remember, it's the vacation journey together as a family that can make a lifetime of memories. Plan your summer vacation now, and encourage your friends and families to spend their next family vacation in the Rockford Region!