

October 2014 Chamber VOICE

Visitors Boost Our Economy Like Sports Teams That Shop at CherryVale Mall

What brings a smile to a CherryVale Mall store manager, other than holiday shoppers?

A group of teens wearing out-of-state sports jerseys. Amateur sports teams that come here for tournaments often have downtime so they make a point of shopping at CherryVale Mall.

“We see sports team wearing shirts from another state quite frequently,” said CherryVale Mall General Manager Mark Peterson. He estimates that up to 5 percent of the 8 million shoppers annually are visitors to the region, or about 400,000 people eager to buy mementos or necessities.

Peterson says that tour buses are another common sight. “We make sure they get special attention so that these large groups have what they want and need, such as advance notice to the food court and other courtesies,” he said.

About CherryVale Mall

The regional shopping center boasts 150 stores staffed by 2,000 employees and an estimated combined sales of \$150 million to \$200 million annually. During the holidays, employment jumps to 3,000 jobs. The mall is unique as it offers both an enclosed mall and a outdoor lifestyle center. Lifestyle centers have upscale and moderate outdoor stores to which shoppers can drive and park curbside adjacent to the stores. The regional mall opened in 1973 and the lifestyle center was added in 2007.

According to Peterson, the mall has about 100 stores that are unique to the Rockford area. “This is the only place in north central Illinois that you will find a Soma, Barnes & Noble and H & M, just to name a few. So we believe that the mall adds to the quality of life here, with our unique shopping experience,” he said.

Regional Economic Impact of Visitors is \$320 Million

Recently the Illinois Office of Tourism released the economic impact results of 2013 tourism. Visitors to Winnebago County in 2013 spent nearly \$320 million at area hotels, restaurants and other retail businesses, such as CherryVale Mall.

That \$320 million spent by visitors, many in those sports jerseys, also supported 2,640 jobs in the hospitality industry. The visitors produced tax revenue of \$5,240 locally; at the state level it was \$17,650.

In related news, area attractions saw a record-high number of visitors, 6.8 million visitors in 2013.

Unique CherryVale Mall

Mall General Manager Peterson attributes the mall's location as one important reason for its long success. "Our primary shoppers are the people who live and work in the region, of course. But beyond that, our location allows us to draw from north central Illinois and south central Wisconsin. The region is at the junction of US 251, Bypass 20, Interstates 39, 88, 90 and 43 plus almost ten state highways. We are so accessible. More than 800,000 people or 400,000 households are within a 30-minute drive of the Rockford area and CherryVale Mall. For the entire region, our location at this junction is a great advantage."

Thanks to visiting sports teams and other tourists who stay at area hotels, dine at local restaurants and shop at Rockford-area stores, like the 150 shops at CherryVale Mall . . . visitors added \$320 million to our economy in 2013.