

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 30, 2021

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NEW HIRE TO HELP GROW SPORTS TOURISM

DCVB and DuPage Sports Commission focused on next steps for DuPage County's sports tourism product as recovery efforts are underway.

OAK BROOK, IL — DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau (DCVB) today announced a new hire to work with stakeholders throughout DuPage County — hotels, park districts, athletic venues, business sponsors and municipal partners — to advance DuPage's presence in the lucrative sports tourism market. Igor Bakovic joins DCVB as Sports Market Manager, charged with helping to carry forth the DuPage Sports Commission (DSC) strategic plan.

Igor brings an unrivaled mix of experience to the position. Before joining DCVB, Igor was a Core Complex Sales Manager at Marriott International, representing 24 hotels in the Minneapolis, Des Moines, Iowa City, St. Louis and Kansas City markets with focus on driving top line revenue. Prior to his time with Marriott International, Igor spent six years in the Logistics and Supply Chain Management Industry working for Great Lakes Coca-Cola, Coyote Logistics as well as Fredonia Inc. After graduating from Ryerson University, Igor spent four years playing basketball professionally in Europe for clubs in Greece, Germany, Bulgaria and Austria.

"As we begin down the road to recovery from the pandemic, now is the right time to put more energy and resources into the sports market given the return on investment for our businesses and communities when participants, families and spectators spend their dollars in DuPage," said DCVB Executive Director Beth Marchetti. "In addition to being the right time, it was also about finding the right person. Having been a professional athlete with Marriott knowledge and training — it's a marriage of two worlds that will serve him well in building relationships and advancing collaboration."

In 2019 after having worked with two major sports consulting firms and a Sports Advisory Committee, DCVB launched the DSC in recognition of sports tourism's sustained growth and need to diversify DuPage's tourism portfolio. The DSC represents sports assets and partners under one regionally led brand, recruiting, retaining and facilitating sports events for DuPage County. As advocates for sports development, DSC's efforts help the DuPage region realize the economic, social and community-based benefits of sports.

According to a landmark study released in September 2020 by Tourism Economics, nearly 180 million people traveled to a sports event in the U.S. in 2019 either as a participant or spectator, which generated 69 million room nights and \$45.1 billion in spending across lodging, transportation, food and beverage, entertainment, retail and tournament operations. Over a five-year period from 2015 to 2019, sports tourism spending increased 16.7%.

DCVB and DSC use data-driven research and planning to help expand DuPage's market share and grow visitor expenditures to DuPage, which had reached \$2.9 billion in 2019. The sales team, led by Director of Sales Noonie Aguilar, along with Sales Market Manager Angela Rauhen will continue to represent DuPage County's two million square feet of meeting space, group venues and over 100 hotels to ensure that in the coming months DuPage remains front and center in economic recovery.

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ABOUT THE DUPAGE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

The DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau (DCVB) is the official destination marketing organization for DuPage County, Illinois' second largest County comprised of 38 communities. The DCVB works in partnership with community business and civic leaders to maximize travel and tourism opportunities which ultimately contribute to the economic vitality of the County and its residents. For more information, visit www.DiscoverDuPage.com.