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DUPAGE TAKES THE SPOTLIGHT AS DCVB CELEBRATES TOURISM GROWTH AND PARTNER AWARD WINNERS

OAK BROOK, IL — The DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau (DCVB) celebrated a year of tourism growth, nationally significant events, and the people helping to strengthen DuPage's visitor economy during its 2026 Annual Meeting Tuesday at the Westin Chicago Northwest.

With the theme "DuPage Takes the Spotlight," the meeting highlighted the county's \$3.4 billion visitor economy in 2025, the opportunities created by three major 2026 milestones, and the DCVB partners whose work gives visitors reasons to choose DuPage.

A \$3.4 Billion Visitor Economy

Visitors generated \$3.4 billion in tourism revenues in DuPage County in 2025, an increase of 7.3% over 2024, according to DCVB's 2025 economic impact data.

The visitor economy also generated:

- \$1 billion in payroll, up 6% year over year
- 26,857 tourism-related jobs, up 2.7% YOY
- \$236.1 million in state tax receipts, up 6.7% YOY
- \$106.2 million in local tax receipts, up 7.7% YOY

Visitor spending included \$790.4 million in eating and drinking, \$636.4 million in lodging, \$309.8 million in recreation, and \$253.3 million in retail.

"Tourism isn't something that just happens in DuPage," said DCVB Executive Director Beth Marchetti. "It is all our work that drives visitation. Our industry touches communities, businesses, and people across the county, and that's why the work we do matters."

A Year Unlike Any Other

The 2026 tourism year brought three nationally significant moments to DuPage: America250, the 100th anniversary of Route 66, and Presidents Cup at Medinah Country Club.

America250 provided an opportunity to tell the stories of DuPage's place in American history, from Underground Railroad locations to the quarries and brickyards that helped rebuild Chicago after the Great Fire. Route 66's centennial offered another opportunity to connect DuPage to one of the nation's most recognizable travel stories, with four DuPage communities along the historic route.

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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.

900 Jorie Blvd., Suite 122 | Oak Brook, IL 60523

Presidents Cup provided an international platform for a destination with more than 50 golf courses and deep ties to the sport. DCVB worked with Medinah Country Club, PGA TOUR, and local partners to showcase DuPage beyond the tournament and introduce new audiences to its communities, hospitality, and visitor experiences.

DCVB's sports tourism efforts also continued through the DuPage Sports Commission, including a partnership with Perfect Game that resulted in 18 championships throughout the area. Major events returning to DuPage included the USA Swimming Pro Swim Series, 2026 USA Powerlifting Raw Nationals, and USA Archery Indoor Nationals.

Bringing Business to DuPage

DCVB's sales team generated more than \$100 million in estimated economic impact through booked meetings and business travel during the past fiscal year, not including leisure visitation. The team attended 16 tradeshow, completed 27 site tours, and hosted one of its largest familiarization tours in recent years, connecting meeting planners with DuPage hotels, venues, and experiences.

Recognizing the People Behind the Destination

The highlight of the Annual Meeting was the DCVB Partner Awards Ceremony, recognizing the breadth of talent and commitment within DuPage's tourism community. With more than 350 businesses and organizations working alongside DCVB, the award recipients represent the many roles that contribute to a strong visitor economy—from hospitality and sales to marketing, community engagement, and the day-to-day work of creating exceptional visitor experiences.

The 2026 Partner Award winners are:

Community Impact Award — Village of Woodridge

Recognized for its active engagement with DCVB, advocacy for local businesses, and support of the Discover DuPage brand.

Storytelling Award — Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

Recognized for its powerful digital storytelling and ability to engage a large audience around DuPage's natural spaces.

Hospitality Excellence Award — Ann Erce-Divello, Kohler Waters Spa

Recognized for her engaged, collaborative approach and commitment to an exceptional guest experience.

Sales Star Award — Marcia Zeller, Chicago Marriott Naperville

Recognized for her professionalism, energy, and longstanding partnership with DCVB.

Rising Star Award — Erin Splan, Hyatt House Oak Brook

Recognized for the impact she has made in hospitality and her recent promotion to Director of Sales.

Newcomer Award — Michael Queroz, City of Elmhurst

Recognized for quickly becoming an engaged partner and bringing fresh ideas and energy to Elmhurst's community story.

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Above & Beyond Award — Jim Staley, Midwest Transit System

Recognized for his long-standing partnership, attention to detail, reliability, and commitment to exceptional service.

Hospitality Heart Award — Khriston Jones, Alter Brewing Company

Recognized for the warmth, welcome, and genuine care she brings to her team and her work with DCVB.

In addition to the Partner Awards, the Honorable Terra Costa Howard was recognized as DCVB's 2026 Tourism Champion for her public service and advocacy in support of DuPage's visitor economy. She currently serves as a Resident Circuit Court Judge in the 18th Judicial Circuit (DuPage County), Fifth Subcircuit, and previously served as Illinois State Representative for the 42nd District.

"Behind every event, every visitor experience, and every piece of business are people," Marchetti said. "People who open their doors, create experiences, welcome visitors, tell DuPage's story, and raise their hand and say, 'We can do that.' Today was about recognizing those people."

The 2026 Annual Meeting also recognized the contributions of DCVB's Board of Directors, industry partners, and communities throughout DuPage for their continued support of the visitor economy.

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Media Note: A group photo of the 2026 DCVB Partner Award winners is available with this release. Individual winner photos are available upon request.

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