

Hear About

Hamilton County Tourism News

Teens get a chance to learn about tourism

Westfield teens interested in tourism and hospitality can get a head start thanks to a pilot program created through a partnership between Hamilton County Tourism, Westfield-Washington Schools, Ivy Tech Community College and the IUPUI Department of Tourism Conventions & Event Management. Through this new Hospitality Immersion Certificate Program, students may earn up to 18 hours of college credit, plus get real-world experience in the hospitality industry.

Industry professionals will teach sports management, special event planning, guest services, lodging operations, event marketing, tourism development and food and beverage services. As part of the program, students will work in the hospitality, tourism or event business to gain hands-on experience. The program will begin in 2018. While Westfield High School is piloting the program, the goal is to grow it throughout Hamilton County.

“This unique certificate program offers students a chance to gain real-life experience in tourism and hospitality to see if it’s a career they may want to pursue after high school,” said Brenda Myers, HCT president and CEO.

Already several tourism partners have agreed to offer students paid internships as part of the program.



Big events mean more visitors

The idea that the tourism season begins after school's out no longer applies in Hamilton County. Hotels are already booked for several major weekends throughout the spring and summer as athletes and fans compete for rooms with tourists attending concerts and other major events in Hamilton County and Indianapolis.

HCT is expecting hotels to sell out or be near capacity for most weekends in April and all weekends in May, June and July. HCT is predicting high demand in early and late August. The influx of tourists will mean restaurants, shops and other nearby attractions will also reap the economic benefits of more customers.

Here's an overview of some of the major events coming to Hamilton County:

- The Circle City Women's College Showcase Feb. 24-26 will bring national championship teams and college scouts to Grand Park.
- More than 32 high school hockey teams from across Indiana will compete March 3-5 for the Indiana State High School Athletics Playdowns at the Fuel Tank in Fishers. It's the first time the tournament has been in Hamilton County.
- An estimated 4,000 runners will compete in the seventh annual Carmel Marathon April 7.
- More than 30,000 spectators (and a host of college scouts) will be at Grand Park for two weekends of the Crossroads of America College Showcase April 21-23 and April 28-30.
- Tom Petty & Heartbreakers will open the season at Klipsch Music Center May 13.
- In June, 120 baseball teams will compete in the Grand Park Frenzy.
- Noblesville Field of Dreams will host the Noblesville Youth Baseball World Series over the July 4 weekend. More than 84 teams are expected.
- The U.S. Club Soccer Nationals is expecting nearly 8,000 people at Grand Park in July.
- For the first time, Grand Park will host the USA Archery Outdoor National Championship, where approximately 1,000 archers, including Olympic hopefuls, will compete.

Hamilton County Tourism

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New staffers to promote and sell Hamilton County

HCT has two new staff members. Laura Kelner began Jan. 30 as sales director, and Whitney Riggs began Jan. 9 as communications coordinator. Kelner spent 14 years at Visit Indy, where she managed a 10-person sales staff for four years as director of sales. Most recently, she was the client care manager at Home Instead Senior Care. In 2002, Kelner co-founded Indiana Women In Need Foundation, an nonprofit that provides financial and personal assistance to women undergoing treatment for breast cancer. She continues to volunteer for the organization.

Riggs comes to HCT from Evansville, where she was the director of public relations for the Vanderburgh County Prosecutor's office. She also has experience as a reporter at the Tribune Newspaper in Seymour and was city editor at the Herald Journal in Monticello. She has been a volunteer for Make-A-Wish Southern Indiana, the YWCA mentoring program and was as a Big Sister for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southeast Indiana.



HCT launches new website

One of HCT's major goals for 2017 was to launch a new website that would be more responsive, more interactive, have more content, more photos and more videos. The site went live Jan. 24. It has several new features including links for related content throughout the site, which is designed to better engage users, increase their time on the site and ultimately get them to make a trip to Hamilton County. Stackla also is new to the site. This social media aggregator curates and displays content from visitors, residents and partners. Making the site more visual and showcasing authentic experiences around the county.

"This will help with authenticity, and the imagery is pretty amazing and really showcases the destination from the consumer's perspective," said Ashley Ledford, HCT's director of marketing and promotions. "Overall the site is more visually appealing."

You'll also find more video. HCT will continue to invest in video and use video throughout the site to feature events, attractions, cities and towns.

Check out the updated site at VisitHamiltonCounty.com.