

Great Rivers and Routes annual Tourism Summit looks at tourism's impact on community

by Steven Spencer, Staff Writer
January 18 2019 10:25 AM



ALTON - The Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau held their annual Tourism Summit Thursday morning at the Best Western Premier in Alton to discuss the impact of tourism throughout Madison, Macoupin, Jersey and Calhoun counties.

John Hopkins, board chairman for the Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau, said it's exciting looking back on last year as well as the year ahead as tourism continues to be a driving force in the area.

“If you build a place where people want to visit, then you have built a place where people will want to live. If you build a place that people want to live, then you have built a place where people want to work and if you build a place where people want to work, then you have built a place where business has to be,” he said. “It all starts with a visit and that visit doesn't happen without each and every one of us as the driving force promoting this place.”

2018 saw a new Glen Carbon brochure, a total of 22 travel writers hosted in the region and a calculated media earning of \$690,668. An estimated \$2 million in earned media was one of the results from last year's visit to Alton from Deluxe's Small Business Revolution.

The biggest impact on the area has been tourism helping employment go up four percent and earning \$538.8 million in visitor spending.

Thursday's summit also saw the welcoming of Mac Lenhardt from Mac's Time Out as the newest addition to the Local Legends series as well as Fred and Sherri Whitworth of Josephine's Tea Room and Gift Shop.

Looking ahead at 2019 the Tourism Bureau excited to see “great stories start here, with great moments.”

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