

Be a tourist in your own backyard

Ozaukee County Tourism Council celebrates 22 years of promoting the county

From countryside to lakeside and everything in between, the Ozaukee County Tourism Council serves as a knowledgeable and energetic resource for visitors and residents looking to discover and enjoy the treasures Ozaukee County has to offer.

Since 1996, the nonprofit organization OCTC, made up of local organizations and business partners, including the executive directors of many of the area's chambers of commerce, has coordinated tourism marketing and promotional efforts in Ozaukee County. The volunteer board of directors meets bimonthly to discuss marketing strategies, promotions and activities, many of which connect the county to statewide initiatives, such as Travel Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism and in past years, episodes of "Discover Wisconsin."

The Tourism Council promotes events, activities, attractions, dining, shopping and more through its website, www.ozaukeetourism.com. For Facebook users, the Tourism Council actively posts and shares highlights and local happenings, as well as forecasting upcoming special events that would be of interest to the public. Since the group launched the Facebook page in spring of 2016, more than 1,600 Facebook users have become followers, and the number continues to grow.

The Official Ozaukee County Tourism Guide is the most distributed promotional piece coordinated through the council and circulated in- and out-of-state. Every year in May, 25,000 copies of the publication are distributed to visitor bureaus, statewide chambers of commerce, Wisconsin Welcome Centers and by mail via requests made through the OCTC toll-free number, 800-403-9898. Partners of the Tourism Council also participate in distribution by providing copies to patrons of their businesses or organizations, such



Photos submitted

The largest group ever, 125 people, participated in the Walk with Walker event in Ozaukee County, held last May. Tonette Walker, Wisconsin's first lady, visits some of Wisconsin's most picturesque trails, parks and landscapes, promoting health and fitness while showcasing some of the beautiful but lesser-known sites across the state.



as lodging facilities, restaurants and more. Guides can also be found along the Ozaukee Interurban Trail. Oftentimes, visitors contact the Tourism Council because they are coming to ride all or part of the 30-mile scenic trail. The trail map and guides are mailed to inquiring visitors to help them plan their tour.

The Council also promotes Ozaukee County through advertising, spending more than \$20,000 annually both online and in publications such as the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Chicago Life Magazine, Chicago Daily Herald, Our Wisconsin, Edible Wisconsin and Fun in Wisconsin, as well as other industry publications targeting specific arts, sports and entertainment groups.

"Not everyone realizes the economic impact tourism has on our state and more specifically our county. In 2016 tourism had a \$20 billion impact on the state's economy, up \$700 million or 3.5 percent from 2015. Ozaukee ranked 27th out of 72 in Direct Visitor Spending with a 2016 increase of 5.39 percent, taking its totals from \$92.5 million to \$97.4 million," said OCTC President Jennifer Andreas.

"Ozaukee County Tourism Council is a key in generating these great results. Working as a county, we are able to utilize our knowledge and resources from each of the communities to create experiences our visitors will remember for a lifetime," said Andreas.

To help support Ozaukee County Tourism and the council's marketing efforts, businesses and organizations are encouraged to become partners. The annual fee is \$125 with a reduction of \$25 for partners that belong to local chambers.

To become a member of the Ozaukee County Tourism Council, call 262-284-9288, or complete an online application on the tourism website at www.ozaukeetourism.com.