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King?s promotion is paying dividends

By Mark Pavilons

More people from far and wide are ?experiencing King.?
The Township's website, marketing and Experience King branding are paying off and boosting local tourism.
With a modest budget of $30,000 annually, efforts by staff and Margaret Hastings of Clear Impact, are accelerating the momentum.
?The overall success of the program is measured through social media reach, website traffic and qualitative reporting from tourism stakeholders,? noted Jamie Smyth, King's economic development officer. ?Base on the metrics collected, tourism 2017 was an immense success and King is poised to have an more successful 2018.?
The user-friendly, interactive website (www.economicking.ca/experience-king-2017-update/) makes it fun and easy to access King's best features.
The Experience King campaign, Smyth noted, is aimed at increasing visitors to King by those outside the area. There's a market population of more than five million within an hour's drive of the municipality.
?People are looking for ways to step away from the hustle and bustle of their daily lives to be refreshed, recharged and revitalized,??Smyth noted. ?They hear about interesting things to do in King through the social media stories created and pushed out.?
The website promoted some 47 business and more than 27 local events last year. There was a marked increase in ?social reach? in 2017 as well.
Experience King, Smyth observed, augments and complements existing marketing activities.
The challenge is, of course, securing more funding. Promotion relies on the ?organic? spread of social media, which has proven effective. King hopes to leverage any available funding from other organizations such as Central Counties Tourism and Experience YORK.
King's three-year tourism plan was launched in 2014 and a new plan will be prepared and presented to council later this year.
It will assess marketing efforts; recommend enhancements to promotional efforts; produce a YouTube video for the Schomberg Fair; evaluate funding and service delivery methods.
?To generate measurable economic impact and results, King's tourism destination marketing and development efforts will require sustained and dedicated resources and programs,??Smyth noted in his report.
He's urging efforts at targeting non-King residents be continued and leveraged.
?It would be prudent of the Township to continue investing financial and staff resources in tourism marketing and development as part of the quality of cultural placemaking that is being emphasized and articulated in the draft economic development strategy? that will be presented to council in the coming weeks.
Mayor Steve Pellegrini said despite the limited budget, King is presenting a ?very professional image.?
Councillor David Boyd also suggested that some effort be directed to ?stay and play,? promoting the value of local attractions to our own residents.
Councillor Avia Eek called this a ?great news story??for King. This ?demonstrates the level of dedication and passion that has been put into our Community Tourism Plan. I never thought we would have come this far, in such a relatively short period of time, with so few financial resources! Thank you Jamie Smyth and Margaret Hastings. If we hadn't had you on board, I don't think we'd be where we are now.?