

National Tourism Month Promoted by Local Visitors Bureaus

Submitted by Lake Erie Shores & Islands

In 1984 following a joint resolution passed by the U.S. Congress, President Ronald Reagan signed a proclamation establishing that one week each May would be designated as National Tourism Week. Citizens would be urged to observe that week with ceremonies and activities that recognized the economic, cultural, and social benefits created by travel and tourism.

Each year since, the U.S. Travel Association has promoted this annual celebration and provided assistance to communities planning their own events. This year's National Travel and Tourism Week will be celebrated nationally May 9-17 however the Lake Erie Shores & Islands Welcome Centers in Sandusky and Port Clinton will be holding a month-long celebration.

"One week isn't long enough to celebrate all there is to see and do in our area", said Joan Van Offeren, Executive Director of Lake Erie Shores & Islands East. "The activities and promotions we are planning will certainly require a whole month!"

Lake Erie Shores & Islands is a partnership between the visitor bureaus in Erie and Ottawa Counties. Millions of people travel to this part of Ohio each year to enjoy the many family fun and outdoor recreation spots. Statistics show that these visitors spend \$1.4 billion dollars annually and this spending touches nearly every type of business. Tourism dollars generally stay in the local economy and benefit each and every resident.

During the month of May, area residents will be encouraged to get out and explore the many destinations in their home county and also "cross the bridge" to visit places in the neighboring county that they may not have experienced before. Doing this not only means an enjoyable day spent close to home, but helps our residents become better able to communicate to others just how special this area is. Helping promote the area is a way that residents can help bring additional tourism dollars to the region, and in turn benefit themselves.

One way the visitor bureaus will be helping residents explore Lake Erie Shores & Islands is with special offers available with the new *Shore Savings Card*, a discount card that can be used at dozens of locations throughout the region. Card holders can save on attraction tickets, dining, lodging, golf, and many other activities. A special Cedar Point discount coupon is also included with the card. Discount offers are updated frequently and posted online at www.SHORESandISLANDS.com.

The *Shore Savings Card* is being featured for the first time in the Lake Erie Shores & Islands Official Travel Planner, a 144 page guide loaded with information about what to do, where to eat, and where to stay in our region. This planner is distributed annually to nearly 400,000 people.

The Travel Planner and *Shore Savings Card* are available at the two Lake Erie Shores & Islands Welcome Centers: 770 S.E. Catawba Road (SR 53) in Port Clinton and 4424 Milan Rd. (US250) in Sandusky. At the Welcome Centers you will also find brochures about our area destinations, maps, driving itineraries, special event information, and a staff of friendly travel counselors who can help you plan your own Lake Erie Shores & Islands getaway.

The Travel Planner is just one of the components of Lake Erie Shores & Islands' 2009 marketing plan. This plan includes television, magazines, billboards, internet, public and media relations, and many other approaches. Audiences and geographic areas are carefully selected to share the Lake Erie Shores & Islands message with and responses are tracked to make sure the choices are right.

We invite you to drop by one of our Welcome Centers this May to help us celebrate National Tourism Month and learn more about how we promote this wonderful part of Ohio. Each Friday we will be offering free refreshments and residents of Erie and Ottawa County will receive a little gift just for stopping in. We hope you will take the time to visit and learn more about the many visitor destinations in our area. Chances are you'll find some new things about places you've been before and discover places to visit you never knew were there.