

**Aspire Large Group  
Johnson County REMC  
April 25, 2018, 8am-9:30am**

Welcome, round robin introduction- Kent DeKoninck

Recognition of Kent for being co-chair. Dana presented plaque.

**Johnson County Tourism presentation-Ken Kosky**

Don Cummings, as well as others, got Journey Johnson County Started through LJC project. Dana kept it going from 2015-2017, especially on social media.

Why Tourism? We know that plants create jobs, but did you know Indiana's 6th largest industry was tourism bringing \$12.2 billion in consumer spending. Tourism highlights not just attractions like Mallow Run, Taxman, Apple Works, but tell the story of the whole destination, Johnson County.

Every dollar invested in tourism, brings back \$12. Colorado cut their tourism, and everyone started going to Utah.

Michigan double its tourism funding to \$12.2 million resulting in \$606 million in visitor spending.

Do you know what county Niagara Falls is in? People don't know the county they are visiting when they travel. Every community in our county has festivals, so came up with Festival Country IN. Festival Country has seen increased web traffic 5x in 2017. 12,000 visits to website in just one month. Did have 2000 likes on Facebook, now 16,000. In a week will pass up Hendricks County in popularity on Facebook.

Ken writes monthly blogs for [visitIndiana.com](http://visitIndiana.com) Helped to get the Willard nominated in best tenderloin contest (took 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place).

Hosted travel writers. Visit Indiana week happening soon, and a lot of our attractions will be featured. Planning to do economic impact study to find out how much tourism is benefitting our county now and then will repeat.

Hotels occupancy rate up 3%, rate charge is up 5%

Working with media in 2017 brought \$37,700 worth of free coverage. Built photo library and added 5700 images. Competed video with 50,000 views for a single video.

Initiated a grant program to start festivals, new disc golf course, etc.

Testimonials - nice to see response from PD Flower Farm, Visit Indiana etc.

2018 projects- printed guide. Currently rolling out full marketing campaign. Working on a series of posters featuring: Apple Works, Artcraft Theater, etc.

Collaboration: government, non-profits, improve access to public restrooms. Countywide wayfinding signage- put up signs to get people off the highway, direct you to downtown, etc.

Showed sample of digital advertising. Watched main video. Also brought printed guides and annual reports for everyone to take.

Questions?

July 21st meeting to do the horse, train and disc golf activities at Johnson County Parks- will be its own video.

Marketing target for initial advertising? Indy+ donut counties, Louisville, Champagne. Hirons has done all the testing to know where people will travel from. Demographics- women, they are the planners of travel, more affluent, college educated. Digital marketing reaches other test demographics.

Immediate distribution for printed guide: hotels, government, attractions, visitor's center, and rest stops entering county from either side. Also, activity guide will be put on website to view and to request copy. Some event they'll be present out to give out copies- dance event here for 5 days. Goal to keep them in the county.

Michigan- Pure Michigan ads attracted people for golf. Trying to get people to play golf in IN "for free" instead of paying to travel to Michigan. Ken said they are trying to get a golf package together, but courses weren't interested at that time; did some online advertising for golf independently.

Hotel tax was concern, but hotel tax has gone up and so has occupancy. When you travel you don't cancel when hotels charge a tax. Johnson County tax still much lower than in Indy. 90-95% of people that stay here don't live in state. People haven't been scared off by the tax. They see the revenues going

up and new hotel projects are coming. Tax encourages hotels because they know they'll be promoted.

How are you prioritizing the Festivals and promotion/ marketing? Are you using the festivals to get people to travel here? Up until now, they've been promoting the area overall. Got free passes for Death and Taxes on their website and Visit IN to give away to visitors. Smoke on the Square, WAMM, will be giving away passes. Ken will use to get people to come to that festival.

What about support for smaller communities? Whiteland, growing some of the smaller festivals? Ken said they plan to spread the wealth. Edinburgh got a grant to expand their festival, Whiteland new parkour park, etc.

Ultimate goal is to make festivals more than one day to encourage people stay in hotels.

Any progress on signature festivals? Greenwood got grant, looking into expanding Freedom Festival. Goes to 11pm. People are asking where to stay. Had large uptick in vendors coming from farther away.

Also giving money to pay for to a regional band that they would travel for. Day visitor typically will spend \$50, where an overnight stay is \$115.

What are we missing? We don't have a huge attraction like Indiana Dunes. Product development- working with Megan at Johnson County Parks. Need to build things that are different than everywhere else. Supporting parkour park, for example, will draw people that are interested in that activity.

A lot of ideas will be community driven; some of Ken's ideas, he'll be approaching people to see if they can do.

Quirky selfie list- shown in the back of their guide. If you want to invent an attraction, get a grant and make it happen. World's biggest popcorn ball or wine glass for example.

How about attracting people to Johnson County to live? When you say \$50 day visit, \$115 overnight, compared what they would spend if they lived here. Can you market for that? He's talked with Dana, if you wanted to attract companies in the past, offer cheap land, tax breaks. Today companies want a community where there are attractions, trails, great night life, etc. Business owners #2, #3 reasons to relocate- vacationed somewhere and decided to move. Tourism is the front door to economic development. Dana mentioned company recently that wanted homes with close access to multiple family entertainment venues and amenities. Very much on the mark.

Retaining employees job satisfaction is related to what their life is like after work- they don't want a great job in bad town.

Endress+Hauser- had their own visitors guide, bringing people in for training, but it was all Indy restaurants and amenities. Ken worked with them to highlight Johnson County/ Greenwood items.

What would you like to see amenities wise? What are some of your dreams for Johnson County?

We're already working towards a trail plan. How do you see highlighting what we have and making connections? Fitness recreation opportunity in Johnson County parks in summer. Work on trails as long-term goal. Did rails to trails at Indiana Dunes. 20 miles of trails and places to stop along the way will attract people.

Observation from guide- seeing from December until March where nothing's going on. What can we develop to fill that gap? Has a winter list and fall drive in activity guide. Wants to work with cities- ice carving, ice skating rink in downtowns. Going to do outreach so together we can come up with something.

Artcraft Theater working on staging, could have indoor music festival.

Are you marketing to current residents, to share to visiting friends and family? Ken encourages us to take a brochure and tell others about it. Bring family and friends to Johnson County to experience as well. Want people from outside, but also from here to spend their money in Johnson County. Makes us all better ambassadors for Johnson County.

Concern about bigger bands from outside vs. local? local talent festival, so they are still given an opportunity. Didn't fully answer, one goal is to work with cities, do you want a grant to have a local musician downtown every Friday and Saturday night. Everything they do is to make them bigger, but also utilize the small to make better.

Recognized Ken for doing a great job!

What about sports/ music venues? Does the North side have an advantage right now? Current and future of sports, Westfield, has the best offering where the entire tournament can come to one spot, but they are losing money. Can't compete with that. We're going to focus on serving existing sports business that is smaller in scale. Can't be everything to everyone.

Center Grove soccer club, great way to promote things to people that are visiting. Great to have a table at tournaments to direct people to lunch spots, etc.

Westfield fills hotel with sporting tournaments- people are spending money on food, but actual sports property is operating at a loss. Recommends study on sports before committing to build. Franklin Performing Arts Center- trying to do events, but so far hasn't been a big money maker.

Dana is really excited to see tourism grow and move forward. Share with family and friends to be a Johnson County Ambassador.

**Bridges Alliance- Beverly Martin-** update from 1 year ago when No Place to call Home presented to Aspire. Passed out brochures. Organization is not yet 501C3. Working with Circles and Johnson County Community Foundation. Work with people that are living in poverty level, to not just survive, but thrive. Founded on Ruby Payne "Bridges Out of Poverty" based on class rules that we don't always think about. When living in poverty- money is constantly on your mind. Middle classes are focused on saving: trips, education. Living with Wealth- money mindset: it's invested, you don't really think about it. Looked at Bridges out of poverty programs, as well as, Circles on how to do budgeting, education, but if you don't build relationships, networking, there often, is no success. Encourages people to take leadership of their life over 14 weeks. Bridges Alliance offer classes, advocacy for those in poverty. Poverty simulation- really encourage everyone to give it a try on June 2nd at Franklin High School.

Classes are starting Wed. May 2nd, great opportunity (at Grace Methodist). Still need volunteers to be allies (supporter). Allies are not solving problems, but being a friend, consultant, helping to set goals to accomplish. Working towards on filling roles for allies. May 30th ally training to 2 to 1 ratio. Ally training takes place and they will attend a couple of meetings per month: Big picture- cross county things are promoted & 1 meeting per month where you interact with your member.

Right now, affiliated with Circles Indy which has 77% success rate moving people from poverty to 200% of poverty. Works with KicIt too to move people from being homeless. Give it some thought and see what they are doing in the county. Will need memberships to be self-sustaining. Working collaboratively already across the entire county. Organizing part wasn't difficult. Spoke at the Greenwood Chamber and did a program for them. Want

to work with supervisors and rules so they become more understanding about the challenges when in poverty.

Questions? Currently doing networking with current community service providers- food pantry. Participants need housing, to be stabilized. Erin will speak to some of the Ivy Tech staff today. If you know of someone, get them in touch. They have applications at food pantry, the Boys and Girls Club, United way, etc.

For May 30, what type of group size? 30 ally's/15 people works well for group. Poverty simulation will hold 100- can you register through website. Library has been great- will do child development/child care activities agreed to 14 weeks of volunteering. Need people to greet or serve meals. Lots of opportunities: [Signup.com](http://Signup.com) to volunteer. Very blessed that kitchen has been certified. Second Helpings will supply food, but need food heated and served by volunteers.

Anything in poverty simulation for seniors? Sees a lot. Definitely eligible to participate. People on disability- deal with cliff effect of losing benefits, but that doesn't happen immediately. Very large challenge in our community, have a long way to go. Seniors don't want to talk about if they are skipping meals or giving up medicine. Identified transportation- Uber to get people to the meetings. There is a flyer for the poverty simulation - will get to Jennifer to distribute.

Dana- We aren't good at patting ourselves on the back. Carmen showed our check and talked about Rock the Block. Coordinated by Pay It Forward Johnson County. Needed 20 registrations to start eligibility. Next step April 19th to get as many registrations as possible. Very proud of our efforts. Made it to the top, then down to 4th, ended up tied for 2nd. Awarded \$2500 to kick off our trail plan. Probably will need to raise \$75,000. Raised awareness of trails at event with our booth. Next phase, more conversations to accelerate fundraising. Has signup sheet to receive communication about trails. Wants to showcase what we currently have. Build a supporter list for public meetings down the road. Strategically work advocates into game plan. Revenue development subcommittee to look at grants, events down the road. Also, marketing/ social media. See Carmen if you're interested.

Dana- applying for grants currently with different foundations. Thank you to Carmen.

Eric and Steve come to the front. Kent DeKonick has finished his term. New co-chair of Aspire is Eric Vermilion. Has been involved for 2 1/2 years and co-chaired Growth and Planning. Excited to work with all of us and grow this county. Continue to make this a greater place to live, work, learn and play.

Steve thanked sponsor FCFCU. Thank you to speaker and to everyone for your engagement.

Dr. Carolyn Goerner will be coming to speak Aspire about Generational Differences in May.

Minutes submitted by Jennifer Hollingshead