

Triple Crown still good for business in Park City !

... Economic impact large despite fewer teams, again ... ?

by Andrew Kirk,

Park City, UT - Despite declining attendance, Park City's business community say hosting of the Triple Crown Fastpitch Softball tournament is great for summer business.

"It's still a significant piece of business. It has a not-quite-\$7 million economic impact on the community," said Bob Kollar, director of special events at the Park City Chamber/Bureau. Tournament coordinator Bill Walters estimated the lodging impact alone to be nearly \$1 million.

Unfortunately, 15 percent fewer teams attended this year, Walters confirmed. That's reflected in the Chamber/Bureau's pillow count showing a 14% percent decline from the same time last year. Despite year-over-year growth through 2007, this summer continues a decline begun in 2008 when gas prices were at \$4 per gallon. Next year will likely be more of the same.

Walters estimated the peak to be around 350 teams. Kollar estimated around 275 attended this year. Attending the tournament costs a team an average of \$8,000, Walters estimated. With only about a dozen girls on a team, that's a lot of money for parents to spend. There are many summer tournaments teams can attend. Triple Crown markets itself as a destination vacation event, he said, adding the families love the cooler weather and the opportunity to raft or ride horses.

With unemployment on the rise, however, Walters guessed that many parents just can't afford to come this year. "It's a sensitive group to the economy," Kollar said. Still, 275 teams and parents require a lot of beds and food.

Tana Toly Ireland at the Red Banjo Pizzeria said their party room has been booked every night of the week. The groups order a lot of food and the parents drink a lot of beer.

Jeanne Lehan, general manager at The Lodge at Deer Valley, said the teams come at a time when they aren't busy normally. Without the tournament, their summer business would consist mostly of outdoor concert attendees, and they come on the weekends. Tournament attendees are usually gone by the weekend.

~ continued ~



Triple Crown still good for business in Park City !

"It's wonderful business for us," she said.

Lehan said the girls are well behaved and well chaperoned. Additionally, the tournament introduces many of them to Park City for the first time, and she's seen a handful of them return to The Lodge in winter to ski.

Unfortunately, the bankruptcy troubles of what was Deer Valley Lodging has left several properties without a management company to rent condos to teams. The families can also be a little picky, Lehan has observed, and demand accommodations with a pool.

As a result, many are staying at Newpark Hotel in the Basin, giving it nearly full occupancy during the three-week tournament.

John Burdick, managing partner of Maxwell's across the street, said the tournament has been wonderful for business. The kids buy pizza and the adults buy drinks.

"Everybody's happy. It's been a very positive experience for our business," he said.

