

Insider
For July 23, 2008
By Kim Burger

July is a busy, busy month and this one is no exception! With fireworks displays, the Black Hawk Area Swim Team's Summer Sizzler, the Cedar River Festival, Movies Under the Moon, municipal band concerts, the 30th Anniversary of the College Hill Arts Festival, the Cedar Falls Historical Society's Garden Tour, Live to Nine and Friday'Loo events, Singin' in the Cedar Valley, theatrical performances at both community theatres, the Waterloo Open, the 132nd Iowa State Trap Shoot, and the re-opening of Cedar Falls Raceway, a person oftentimes finds herself double-booked and wondering how to decide what to do!

When events of this caliber occur, I often receive calls from my reporter friends looking for the economic impact resulting from visitor spending. These statistics make a nice addition to the other information these reporters have researched and new money being brought to us by visitors is certainly of importance to us all. Our State Tourism Office works diligently to provide average daily spending figures for our use in making these estimates, which often helps us judge how best to invest our grant monies and other kinds of support. In my line of work I find it fascinating that the average visitor to our state spends \$64.22 per day on lodging, \$60.69 per day for transportation, \$48.22 each day on food, \$25.45 for entertainment, and \$25.09 on shopping. I'm a numbers kind of person and these statistics help me justify providing support from our organization and to garner it from others on behalf of event planners.

I was recently reminded, however, by an extraordinarily kind and gentle caller, that these numbers only begin to tell the story. It's rather easy to push a pencil and throw out a spending figure, but it's much more difficult to measure the sense of community events like these create and how they contribute to our unique quality of life. The opportunity these events bring for us to socialize constructively and to showcase our community to others is impossible to quantify. There is also the matter of providing recreation so people find this an appealing place to live as well as to visit. Tourism carries a double impact we should not forget.

So as we prepare to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Cedar Falls Tourism and Visitors Bureau, I shall duly note the \$6,068,932.26 generated in hotel/motel tax collections, but maybe I'll devote less stress in trying to calculate the dollars and cents this investment has leveraged and simply marvel at how far we have come. I'll also be grateful for the passion and wisdom of those who came before me and laid the groundwork for the success we have come to enjoy. Hundreds of volunteers have devoted thousands of hours to create a warm and welcoming environment and to make visiting our community a memorable experience. As we celebrate this important milestone, I'll also take time to ponder on the memories we've been privileged to help create over the years.