

Around Town

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By Billy Ray McKelvy

De Queen Mayor

Two recent sports events brought visitors -- and dollars -- to the City of De Queen.

The Mini Hoops basketball season concluded with a tournament Feb. 17 through 20 with teams from De Queen, Horatio, Lockesburg, Mineral Springs, Foreman and Dierks. Forty-six teams participated in the tournament. Teams averaged 10 players per team for a total of 460 players participating.

Estimating that each player was responsible for two other people attending (parents, siblings or coaches) that equals 1,380 visitors. If you further calculate \$10 per person per visit for food, fuel and lodging, that's \$13,800 added to the local economy in less than a week. Over half of the players made at least two visits to town.

Of course, the youth basketball program and the tournament are not just for business. The program cultivates young athletes and parents who are proud of their achievement. Many of these youth players will go on to play sports in school programs.

De Queen High School hosted the Regional Basketball tournament at the new De Queen Basketball Arena last week. This tournament featured 16 teams from the southern half of the state. Estimating a team at 15 players, that's a total of 240 high school athletes. Many of them were accompanied by parents and supporters. At least three-fourth of the teams were from towns far enough away to require overnight lodging and meals.

More than 1,500 people paid admission to see the games. Even though the Arkansas Activities Association receives admission money, the school benefits from concession stand and program sales.

The De Queen School District has to bid for the right to host such tournaments. Last week's tournament was a good opportunity to showcase De Queen High School's new arena and a big economic boost for the town.