



PONY BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND MUSEUM
P.O. BOX 225 • WASHINGTON, PA 15301-0225 • PHONE : 724-225-1060 • FAX : 724-225-9852
info@pony.org • www.pony.org

Good morning, my name is Abraham Key and I am the President and CEO of PONY Baseball and Softball, headquartered in Washington, Pennsylvania. PONY was founded in Washington in 1951 with six original 13 and 14 year old baseball teams and today is the second largest international youth baseball and girls softball organization in the world. We have more than 500,000 annual participants throughout the United States and more than 40 other countries.

In 1952, one year after our founding, the inaugural Pony League World Series was held in Washington. San Antonio, Texas was the first champion. In 1953 Lew Hays Pony Field was constructed in Washington Park and has been the site of 53 World Series. The Pony League World Series is Washington County's premiere sporting events and draws visitors from throughout the United States and around the world.

The Pony League World Series local organizing committee commissioned Washington and Jefferson College to do an economic impact study in 2010. At that time it was estimated that the value of the Pony League World Series was more than \$1.4 million dollars to the local economy. Since that time two additional teams have been added. It is conceivable that the economic impact could be well over \$1.6 million in today's dollars.

The Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency (WCTPA) recognized this impact and has identified the Pony League World Series as a significant tourism asset. The WCTPA has invested in the Pony League World Series the past three years and the leveraged investment has paid dividends. The WCTPA has invested in regional media buys, marketing, social media strategic planning and facility upgrades.

As a result attendance has increased, the Championship Game was broadcast on CBS/CW and ESPN 3, all games were streamed over the internet for the first time and sponsorship was at an all-time high. This has all been made possible from the proceeds of the Washington County Hotel Room Rental Tax. These funds are managed by the WCTPA and benefit local, regional, national and in our case international events that bring visitors and revenue to Washington County and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Washington County's economy is not only being driven by the energy and manufacturing but by a strong tourism industry. According to recent report prepared for the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Washington County's tourism industry supports almost 6,000 jobs and generates over \$80 million in federal and state tax revenues. In 2013 direct visitor

*"PONY Baseball and Softball is designed to **Protect Our Nation's Youth** by providing experiences in youth baseball and softball that will help young people grow into healthier and happier adults."*

Member USA Baseball • Member USA Softball

spending was more than \$754 million. In 2006 that number was only \$330 million. This was prior to the addition of tourism assets like the Meadows Casino, Tanger Outlets and the enhanced promotion and investment in current assets like the Pony League World Series, the Covered Bridge Festival, the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum and the Whiskey Rebellion Festival.

The County Commissioners focused on the county's Tourism Grants program that awards grants and advertising resources to tourism assets. In 2014 they dedicated more than \$285,000.00 in resources through a competitive tourism grant process to assist in capital improvements and marketing of our tourism assets. This was a 51% increase over 2013. Since inception the grants program has invested more than \$1.7 million in Washington County tourism assets.

It is important to remember that the successes we are experiencing in Washington County are not accidental. They are the result of years of strategic planning undertaken by the Washington County Commissioners, the business community, our economic development organizations and the leadership of our tourism assets.

The future of events in Washington County like the Pony League World Series is bright thanks to the investment of WCTPA.