

Overall Organization Budget: Medium Community overall budget (\$100,001 - \$499,999)

Submission Category: Integrated Campaign

Organization: Merriam Visitors Bureau

Who worked on this Project (internal/external): Staff Internally

Integrated Components or Type: Web, Tradeshow, E-news, Postcard, Profile, Print/Digital Ads

Project Description: Promote "Tour Merriam" to tour operators and planners wishing to discover new, hands-on tours in the Midwest.

Project Goals: Encourage motor coach visitation to Merriam tour stops.

Collect tour operator data for future promotional activities and 3-year follow-up.

Highlight Merriam tour locations, new features, affordable tours and close proximity to group-friendly dining, shopping, lodging.

Problem to Overcome: Assist in hotel bookings during non-popular visitation times.

Allow Merriam to stand out among KC community for hands-on, experiential tours.

Increase day-trips in Merriam by providing 40+ visitors in merchant businesses at one time.

Background: Merriam did not have a group tour program until the Visitors Bureau established it about seven years ago. In the beginning, we simply listed places that would be of interest to tour planners wishing to visit. We had no tracking system or way of knowing who brought what bus and when. Today, we have a very robust tour program where each tour operator is able to research, book and confirm tours through one call or visit with the Visitors Bureau staff.

Community Resources: Merriam's tour stops are featured in all group tour marketing promotions and given the opportunity to provide sample products or discounts to tour patrons at the time of their tour. For example, tour planners stopping by Merriam's booth at a local group tour showcase would each be able to take home a loaf of the famed Strawberry Hill Povitica--FOR FREE (\$23 value), which then helps sell the factory tour where attendees typically buy over \$600 of Povitica in one tour.

Results: Merriam's collective group tour marketing efforts have yielded approximately 5,000 attendees at six tour stops across Merriam. We've been featured on numerous state and regional FAM trips and many tour locations (KC Strings, GuitarLamp, Povitica) have yielded world-wide television and web exposure for their unique products and tours. Tour operators call me the violin girl or the dessert bread girl at tradeshows and they are eager to discuss available tour dates.

Web Link: <http://www.exploremerriam.com/753/Tour>