Oconee tourism ambassadors hold first formal meeting

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK
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SENECA — A group of Oconee ambassadors participated in their first formal meeting Tuesday evening at the Gignilliat Community Center.

They're the first members of Tourism Partners, an organization being formed by the Mountain Lakes Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"My desire is to have a broad group of all of our front-line tourism businesses that would include the rafting, boat rentals (and) boat tours, as well as some of our family-owned restaurants, our lodging, hotels, bed and breakfasts and vacation rental homes," CVB president Ken Sloan said. "Anybody who's a touch point for tourism, I want to have them in this group of tourism ambassadors."



Sloan

Sixteen people showed up for the first quarterly meeting. Attendees represented all aspects of tourism, from culture and the arts to recreation and lodging.

Sloan once owned an outdoor center, where he interacted with many visitors who had come to stay at Devils Fork State Park.

"They'd come and enjoy the beautiful lake, but they're here for about three to four days, so they'd ask what else they could do in the area," Sloan said. "My employees were from Salem, and they didn't know about the whitewater rafting or the waterfalls. I had to educate myself and them about other sites to see in Oconee."

He said the same scenario could play out with river guides who don't know about all the recreational activities available at the lakes. The purpose of Tourism Partners is to get everyone on the same page so visitors experience all that Oconee County has to offer.

"Ultimately, it's about creating a group of people to form a strong partnership among all the tourism operators who are going to benefit from the message," Sloan said.

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