



OUR VIEW: RV industry an economic force for us

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Thursday, the recreational vehicle industry received much-deserved recognition for its positive impact on our local economy and we would like to throw in our two words — “well done.”

About 740 people gathered inside the cavernous conference center at the RV/MH Hall of Fame in Elkhart for the third annual RV Power Breakfast sponsored by the staff of RVBusiness. A parade of industry executives and politicians took the stage to talk about the industry. Soon, the event turned into something akin to a best-seller with each chapter written by a different author.

RICHARD COON, the retiring president of the industry’s trade group, the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, talked about how RV shipments are continuing to rise this year. RVIA chairman and CEO of Jayco, Derald Bontrager, praised those attending for being the envy of other industries because of the willingness to work together to make the RV industry better. Lt. Governor Sue Ellspermann said the industry’s growth has been amazing and the thousands of new jobs created have pushed the local unemployment rate down to 4.5 percent.

But it was Goshen Mayor Allan Kauffman who summed up local feelings when he said, “We certainly understand that this is the most significant industry that we have ever seen in this county.”

We agree.

Of all RVs made in the United States, 84 percent are manufactured in Elkhart and LaGrange counties. This year the RVIA is projecting 380,000 RVs will be manufactured and shipped to dealers. Those units account for tens of thousands of local jobs in the RV industry. In turn, the wages earned by RV employees are turned around in our communities as house and car payments, purchases of groceries, movie tickets, clothing sales, ice cream cone treats, etc. The success of the RV industry means success for many other businesses in Elkhart and LaGrange counties.

OF COURSE WE HAVE other industries thriving in the two counties, but it is the RV industry that is driving our economy forward at a rapid pace.

While we still believe the local economy needs long-term diversification to spread the economic footprint when the RV industry hits a periodic downturn, we understand that the RV industry has been, and will be continue to have, the greatest impact on the local economy for decades to come.

In the wake of all these praises at the breakfast event, we find this is a good time to add our thanks to all the investors, the executives and the line workers who keep the products rolling out of Elkhart and LaGrange counties and the revenue rolling in. Your hard work is much appreciated.