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Discovery Park of America Sets Attendance Record

More students on field trips visited Fri., May 3 than any other single day in the museum's 5-year history.

Union City, Tenn. — Discovery Park of America was a busy place on Friday with a parking lot full of buses from schools as far away as Chattanooga. The 100,000-square-foot museum and 50-acre heritage park in Union City, Tenn. is filled with more than 1,450 students experiencing first-hand the organization's mission to inspire children and adults to see beyond.

It is a great way to kick off National Travel and Tourism Week 2019, the 36th annual celebration of the contributions and accomplishments of the U.S. travel industry that will take place on May 5-11.

 "One reason we've seen such steady growth in field trips is our dedication to advancing STEAM education," said Polly Brasher, education director and one of the first employees of the organization. "At a time when American schools face shrinking resources and growing demands, it's incredibly helpful for teachers and administrators to have DPA here in our region as a museum that supports their STEAM activities in the classroom. Together, we are igniting and inspiring the next generation of critical thinkers, problem solvers and innovators."

STEAM is a curriculum based on the idea of educating students in five specific disciplines — science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics — in an interdisciplinary and applied approach, integrating them into a cohesive learning program based on real-world applications.

Mark Ezell, Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development, noted the importance of the student group travel segment of the industry and DPA's unique position in the state. "Tens of thousands of students visit Tennessee's museums and attractions each year," said Ezell. "We have a tremendous opportunity to use travel as the tool to both educate and inspire

students. These opportunities are vital, and DPA has a significant impact on West Tennessee and beyond by offering students and teachers the opportunity to apply classroom learnings in a state of-the-art, interactive museum."

This year's theme for the U.S. Travel Association's Travel and Tourism Week—established in 1983 by President Ronald Reagan—is "Travel Matters."

Travel and tourism generated $2.5 trillion for the U.S. economy in 2018 across all U.S. industries, and tourism is the No. 2 industry in Tennessee behind agriculture. Tennessee tourism's direct domestic and international travel expenditures reached an all-time record high of $20.7 billion in 2017, a 6.3 percent increase over the prior year.

"It's an incredible experience for all of us at DPA to see this many students experiencing our exhibits and activities, many for the first time," said Brasher. "But the biggest reward comes when you see a student connect with an idea or concept that has so far only been experienced in a book, lecture or lab. When we see that light in their eyes, we know we are truly making a huge difference in the lives of our young visitors."

About Discovery Park of America

The mission of Discovery Park of America, a premier world-class museum and 50-acre heritage park located in Union City, Tennessee, is to inspire children and adults and to see beyond. Included is a 100,000-square-foot museum featuring 9 interactive exhibit galleries with additional space for temporary exhibits from around the world. Discovery Park of America is a 501(c)(3) public charity funded by generous individuals, corporations and foundations including its principal funder, the Robert E. and Jenny D. Kirkland Foundation. For more information, visit DiscoveryParkofAmerica.com, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

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