

Who is visiting the Jesse Owens Museum?

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If you thought the Jesse Owens Museum was going to be forgotten after its dedication in May, you're wrong.

Since the dedication ceremony, almost 1,000 tourists have journeyed through the back roads of Oakville to visit the facility that honors the Olympic great.

The visitation log shows that visitors, to name a few places, have come from Venezuela, Australia, Russia, New Zealand, Germany and England.

"Most of the visitors are tour groups from schools," said James Pinion, who is treasurer of the Owens Park Board.

Pinion distinctly remembers the group from Germany and the bus load from Ohio. Owens won his four gold medals during the 1936 Olympics in Germany and attended college at Ohio State.

"The people from Germany loved Jesse Owens," Pinion said. "They told me that didn't talk much about (Adolf) Hitler, but mention Jesse's name quite often in Germany."

The group from Ohio was touring the Civil Rights Museum in Birmingham when they decided to add the Owens Museum to their schedule.

"One of the ladies in the group had been here before and she loved the museum," Pinion. "They spent about \$1,000 in Lawrence County. This museum is helping the economy."

Admission to the museum is \$5 for adults, \$3 for children age 6-18 and \$4 for senior citizens. Youth groups with 10 or more people pay \$2 each, while adult groups pay \$3 apiece.

Tours can be scheduled by calling 974-3636.

Pinion said most people hear about the museum by word of mouth. The museum does have a web site: www.jesseowens.com.

"The web site is not completed, but we have a lot of articles about Jesse on it," Pinion said.

The museum has several souvenirs. A few of the limited edition park dedication pins are on sale. Park medals, post cards, books, T-shirts and caps are also on sale.

The latest book to go on sale in the museum contains over 40 pho-

tographs, including pictures of Owens' parents. The cost of the book is \$4.

Last month, a longtime friend of Owens, Eddie Bell, visited the museum for the first time. Bell, who played football at Penn State and with the Philadelphia Eagles, ran the Jesse Owens Junior Track Program in Arizona. He was a pallbearer at Owens' funeral.

"His (Bell's) daughter attends Alabama A&M and he was down for homecoming," Pinion said. "He called and wanted to see the museum."

Bell went to Germany with Owens when he filmed the documentary "Return to Berlin." The 45-minute film can be seen in the museum.

"Like most of the visitors, Mr. Bell was surprised when he got here," Pinion said. "He told me he heard about the museum and wanted to see it. He wasn't expecting anything this nice."

Pinion said Bell told him he had film footage of Owens.

"We hope to get copies of these films for the museum," he said.