

A pitch to put Stony Brook on Chinese itineraries

BY DONNA NEWMAN
DONNA@TBNEWSPAPERS.COM

Stony Brook was on display as a destination on a global scale this past weekend.

A group of travel product developers — those who design tours for the luxury market in mainland China — visited the Village Oct. 22 as part of a “familiarization (or fam) tour” of Long Island.

“We don’t have time to showcase the entire island, so we choose some places that are special,” Joann LaRosa, director of sales for the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau said of the visit. Evidently Stony Brook is one of those.

The tours encourage designers to add Long Island stops to their itineraries. She said five “fam” tours are going on right now, hosted by United Airlines, which provided the plane tickets.

A second entity participating in this travel sales pitch is the New York State Division of Tourism via its I Love NY campaign.

Anna Klapper, a manager for global trade development for Washington, D.C.-based Brand USA, is one of the guides accompanying the group on their journey.

“They flew into New York Oct. 19 and have been visiting places on Long Island,” she said. “Tomorrow morning we’ll ferry to Connecticut and make stops in New Haven, Mystic [Seaport] and Mohegan Sun.”

Klapper pointed out that she and colleague Philip Joseph have noticed that their guests are constantly online posting



Photo by Donna Newman

Left, the visitors enjoy craft beer at Brew Cheese in Stony Brook Village. Right, they express their enthusiasm for Stony Brook.

everything on social media — adding value to their sales efforts.

Brand USA is an organization that markets the United States as a destination to travel product developers worldwide. Its goal is to increase international tourist visits, thereby fueling the nation’s economy and enhancing its image abroad, as stated on the organization’s website.

The website further states it is “the nation’s first public-private partnership to spearhead a globally coordinated marketing effort to promote the United States as a premier travel destination and communicate U.S. entry policies. Its operations are supported by a combination of contribu-

tions from destinations, travel brands, and private-sector organizations, plus matching funds collected by the U.S. government from international visitors who visit the United States under the Visa Waiver Program.”

The visitors from China are also accompanied by Tina Yao, Brand USA’s Shanghai office director.

Gloria Rocchio, president of the Ward Melville Heritage Organization, made the arrangements for the visitors and was on hand to greet them.

“The LI Convention and Visitors Bureau picked Stony Brook for this visit,” she said. When asked if she knew why, she speculated, “perhaps because we have a 21st

century, world-class university and a picturesque, historic village on the water?”

Rocchio invited Yu-wan Wang, associate dean of international admissions at Stony Brook University, to meet the group, talk about the university and answer any questions they had about it. She also served as an interpreter, and when she asked William Wang of Shanghai to tell what he liked best about Stony Brook, she translated:

“I love the fresh air and to be so close to the ocean.”

Following a sampling of lavender and espresso cheese and craft beers, the party of 16 made their way across the streets to The Jazz Loft for a musical evening.