

CHAMBANA WELCOME CREW

The destination management cycle—credited to Maura Gast, Irving Convention & Visitors Bureau—shares the philosophy that when building a place people want to visit, you'll build a place people want **to live**. When you build a place people want to live, you'll build a place people want **to work**. When you build a place people want to work, you'll build a place where **business needs to be**. When you build a place where business needs to be, you'll build a place where people have **to visit**. It is this principle that has driven our recent efforts in recruiting and talent attraction, in collaboration with the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation.

For the past few years, Terri has worked with local employers to train and educate talent attraction & HR staff on the community story, enhancing the pitch to top talent to consider the greater Champaign County area as a destination to live and work. Together with Carly McCrory-McKay at the EDC, numerous resources and opportunities were created to help bolster the community during the hiring process, such as trainings, virtual and in-person tours, videos, seasonal checklists, and much more.

While these resources are critical to our local employers, there was still a piece of the puzzle missing. **How do we welcome new residents and retain them in our community?** A career is only one piece of living in a community, so developing a sense of belonging is a critical component to attract residents and keep them here.

The solution to this component is the [Chambana Welcome Crew](#), a new community ambassador program, launched with the goal of attracting and retaining new residents to the greater Champaign County area by creating a welcoming environment and a sense of belonging. The program is a collaboration between the Champaign

County Economic Development Corporation, Visit Champaign County, and the Dual Career Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Launched on August 12, the Chambana Welcome Crew features a dozen ambassadors with a range of backgrounds, demographics, and experiences, that will be matched to newcomers based on their interests to help them navigate their new home. Since the launch, seven new ambassadors have joined, with more applications currently under review. Community members that are passionate about the area that want to serve in an ambassador capacity are encouraged to apply at [the website](#).

Ambassadors will connect with their recruits to serve as a "first friend" in the community, helping find the resources they need to settle here. By sharing authentic experiences, our ambassadors will help new and potential residents find everything from a school for the children to their favorite new restaurant with the ultimate goal of the newcomers feeling engaged and embracing the community from day one.

New and potential residents can review profiles of all ambassadors on the Chambana Welcome Crew website and select who they would like to connect with or complete the application with their interests to be matched. Since launching, we have matched numerous recruits with our ambassadors to great success and positive feedback.

The importance of making our new residents feel welcome is pertinent to attracting and retaining talent, but also for promoting community pride. The Chambana Welcome Crew will play a vital role and has the potential to be transformational for the community.



VIEW PROFILES

CHAMBANA WELCOME CREW

yourewelcomecu.com/cwc



FROM OUR CEO

When we say “back to business” the first quarter of FY22 showed significant increase in tax revenues for hotels, food & beverage, etc. while still addressing challenges of staffing and supply shortages across the hospitality industry.

Internally, we continued addressing a budget shortfall due to decreased state and local hotel tax revenues from the past 18 months. Our VCC Board and VCC Foundation Board spent a considerable amount of time developing and ultimately, approving a community benefit funding model as the only way for our organizational sustainability and economic recovery in the near and long-term future. More details continue to roll out this fall.

As a community-shared value, we focus on residents as our primary customers. Our organization has never worked harder in developing this community as a destination to work, live and visit. Alongside like-minded organizations and our stakeholders, we will continue to advocate for our businesses, our residents, our visitors and potential residents.

While the work is hard, there is joy found in attending events, including Toast to Tourism, CU Black & African Arts Festival, Beep Baseball, American Junior Golf Association, CU Pride Festival, Pygmalion, Hot Rod Power Tour, Mahomet Soda Fest, Illini Athletic events, grand openings, groundbreakings, and so much more.

Also, a shout out to Urbana Park District for hosting our July board meeting at the Lake House at Crystal Lake Park, to Hans Groteleuschen for hosting us in August at the newly created Carmon's event space; and to our Rantoul friends for hosting our September Board FAM Tour (see separate write up.)

Grateful for our board leadership, our partners and our work force who support a community-based mission to promote a welcoming destination experience for visitors to strengthen economic opportunity and enhance the lives of residents. Everything starts from that point.

Jayne DeLuce



VCC Foundation Update

The VCC Foundation hosted the Toast to Tourism on July 28 and supported three major events, including the National Beep Baseball Tournament on July 10-11, the American Junior Golf Association (AJGA) event on July 19-22; and the Hot Rod Power Tour event on August 27. Plus, the VCCF will serve as the portal for financially supporting the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail, while continuing the process to re-imagine the board membership structure to reflect the diversity of our community and to implement the newly created community benefit funding model for Visit Champaign County.



Toast to Tourism

The annual Toast to Tourism was held on July 28 at the Venue CU, celebrating the hospitality industry. Daniel Thomas, CEO of TimeZoneOne, the PR firm for Enjoy Illinois, shared the state's efforts at getting travel back on track. Jayne shared VCC's efforts to support the local hospitality industry during the pandemic and future events and development that are critical to the future of tourism. During the event, we recognized our Tourism Impact award winners for their contributions to the community. This year's winners include: Armando Sandoval & Adam Lopez, Maize Mexican Grill; Marie DiBello, first Champaign-Urbana CVB Director; Isis Griffin and Alven & Ajza Allison, CBPB Popcorn Shop; Matt Kuntz, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve; and Mayor Charles Smith & Luke Humphrey, Rantoul Family Sports Complex. Watch their stories on how they've impacted the community [here](#).

RST Intern—Dylan Grammer



Dylan is currently pursuing a degree in Recreation, Sports, and Tourism, with a concentration in Tourism at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is completing his degree with an internship at Visit Champaign County, where he is eager to learn about the industry and gain any experience possible. He has hopes of finding an enjoyable and meaningful career in the tourism industry after graduation. In his spare time, Dylan has a love for the outdoors, traveling, and spending time with friends and family.

CCAHT Update

The Champaign County African American Heritage Trail committee continued to make progress this quarter. With strides made in artifact collection and organization as well as the acquisition of a website URL, the committee is prepared to announce the trail publicly on November 17 at City View inside the Illinois Terminal. With collection projects underway as well as the development of new public art and a Skelton Park project highlighting the history of local musicians in Champaign-Urbana, the working groups are all preparing content for a website launch and continued work towards developing this trail for our residents and visitors.



Community Tour with Illinois Office of Tourism

Karla Flannery, Director of the Illinois Office of Tourism, visited our community for the first time from September 21–23. Her goal was to discover the many places and people that make the greater Champaign County area a destination. Among the stops during the tour, Karla visited Krannert Art Museum, Riggs Beer Company, Maize Mexican Grill, Japan House, Curtis Orchard & Pumpkin Patch, CBPB Popcorn Shop, The Literary, Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery, Allerton Park & Retreat Center, Monticello Railway Museum, Prairie Fire Glass, Hartfield Book Company, Brown Bag, and Zybelle House.

In addition to these visits, Karla joined the VCC and VCC Foundation Board of Directors on our annual familiarization tour which took us to Rantoul. During that visit we were able to experience Hardy's Reindeer Ranch, the Rantoul Family Sports Complex, The Fringe Mini Golf, Taylor Studios, Baldwin Asylum, and ET's Downtown, where Scott Eisenhower and Amanda Vickery provided a glimpse into future development for Rantoul. The three days were full of Outside of Ordinary experiences, impressing Karla on the breadth of experiences available in our area.

OUT & ABOUT

Destinations International

Jayne participated in the Destinations International Convention on July 12–16 in Baltimore. Over 850 professionals gathered safely in this historic city to engage in topics around DEI initiatives, tourism recovery, and community shared values. During the convention, Jayne was also elected to serve on the Destinations International Foundation Board.



UMCVB Fall Conference

Jayne, Terri, Caitlyn, and Mike attended the Upper Midwest CVB Fall Conference in Des Moines, September 13–15. The conference brought together keynote speakers and tracks on sales, servicing, and marketing, discussing topics such as diversity, equity, and inclusion, utilizing TikTok, working with rights holders, and much more. The team paid close attention to the logistics of the meeting, as Visit Champaign County will host the meeting September 11–13, 2022 at the I Hotel & Conference Center. We look forward to highlighting our community to CVBs from eight states.

Connect Market Place

Caitlyn and Mike attended their first in-person trade show since 2019. The Connect Marketplace, held in Tampa from August 30–September 1, brought event planners from around the country and internationally. Mike and Caitlyn had 80 on-on-one appointments over two days, several of which have led to potential new business including the 2023 National Beard and Mustache Championships, the American Cornhole Tournament, and youth and adult tournaments at both Dodd's Park and the Rantoul Family Sports Complex. Caitlyn had a first of booking an event during one of her appointments at Allerton Park & Retreat Center with HelmsBriscoe who represents a firm in Chicago. Other strong meeting leads include the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar for their 95th conference in June 2024, and the Active and Retired Firefighters Association Reunion.



Community Events Wrap-Up

Late summer and early fall bring numerous events and festivals to the community, which were celebrated even more after a year off during the heart of the pandemic. The VCC team participates in and enjoys many of these events in order to share their authentic experiences. This quarter you could find our team members at the Crystal Lake Park Art Fair, CU Black & African Arts Festival, Mahomet Soda Festival, RC Fest, the inaugural Run to Remember, ELLNORA | The Guitar Festival, CU Pride Festival, and Pygmalion. Thank you to all the event organizers and volunteers for safely bringing these world-class events to the greater Champaign County area.

SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS



Small Market Meetings

Caitlyn attended the Small Market Meetings conference in Cheyenne, Wyoming from September 26–29. This tradeshow is specifically geared toward planners and groups who are looking to bring their events and meetings to tier two and three cities. She met with 32 planners with prospects for future regional meetings coming to our area including the National Deacon's Association and the National Construction Workers Association.

Meetings & Conferences Update

Fall in Champaign County is a busy time for meetings and conferences. Despite the surge with the Delta variant, meetings are still happening at our hotels. Notable meetings include the Illinois Baptist General group at the Holiday Inn and Conference Center October 22–24 and Illinois AISLE which will be coming to our area for the first time ever in November.

Group Tour Update

Group friendly attractions, such as Hardy's Reindeer Ranch in Rantoul, are reporting great numbers for late summer and early fall with the return of their loyal yearly travel groups. While there is still a strong emphasis on social distancing and traveling safely, it's great to see some return in the motorcoach and tour groups to our area!

You're Out Filming

Independent filmmakers spent 10 days around Champaign County from July 17–26 shooting *You're Out*. The film is a modern-day National Lampoon Vacation following two dads and a dog around the country in an attempt to get their sons noticed by college baseball scouts. The Champaign County Film office identified the sites, provided a day-long tour, and worked with representatives on logistics. The final sites for filming included the Rantoul National Aviation Center, AT&T Building in Rantoul, the Sidney Dairy Barn, Rund Farm in Pesotum, Market Place Mall, the Best Western Paradise Inn in Savoy, Illinois Field, Parkland College Baseball Field, Alpha Sigma Phi fraternity, Mo's Burrito Taco Truck at Riggs Brewery, Roselawn Cemetery, and Old Orchard Lanes and Links.



Occupancy Rate

Reporting July & August 2021

Champaign 65.5%

Bloomington 71.7%

Peoria 53.1%

Springfield/Decatur 60.5%

Average Daily Rate

Reporting July & August 2021

Champaign \$92.14

Bloomington \$91.27

Peoria \$97.18

Springfield/Decatur \$97.76

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

SPORTS, EVENTS, & FILM

7

leads

4

tentative

3

definite

2,235

estimated room nights

CONFERENCES

6

leads

3

tentative

3

definite

1,630

estimated room nights

GROUP TOUR

2

leads

0

tentative

2

definite

LEAD: Potential business distributed to hotels

TENTATIVE LEAD: Potential business, no commitment yet

DEFINITE LEAD: Business secured

SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS



Hot Rod Power Tour

Visit Champaign County and the State Farm Center hosted the HP Tuners Hot Rod Power Tour Driven by Continental Tire on August 27, the 4th time the event was held in Champaign County. The five-day tour brings gearheads and their hot rods from around the country. Champaign was the final stop on the five-city tour, which began in Norwalk, Ohio. A total of 4,500 cars and an estimated 55,000 spectators enjoyed the tour over its five stops. As is tradition, VCC handed out 2,500 commemorative pint glasses sponsored in part by Skeff Distributing, featuring Riggs Beer Company. We look forward to opportunities to host this event for a fifth time.

American Junior Golf Association

The American Junior Golf Association (AJGA) held the inaugural Visit Champaign County Junior Am on July 19 at Urbana Country Club and raised \$4,000 for AJGA charities. A total of 15 teams consisting of three community members with a junior player, including four sponsored by VCC, participated in the event. VCC team featuring Bob Bushnell, Steve Kelly, and Sara Seed, won the event. A total of 78 players aged 12–15 and representing 24 states and five nations, competed over three days at the 2nd Annual Urbana Junior All-Star tournament and an additional 78 participated in a qualifier on the Sunday before. Erica Lee from Arcadia, California, and Eric Yun from Menlo Park, California, won the girls' and boys' tournaments, respectively.



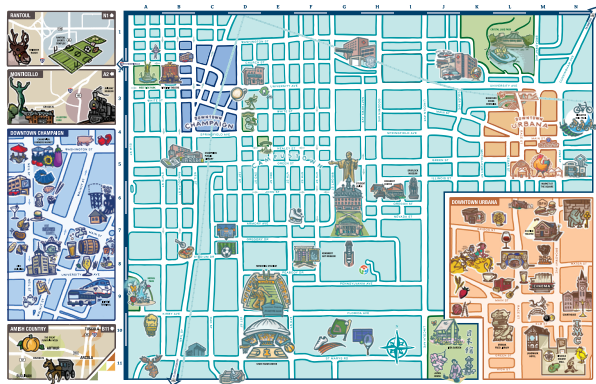
Beep Baseball

Despite the forecast, the inaugural Beep Baseball Tournament dodged the rain and ran a successful tournament, July 10–11 at Colbert Park in Savoy. The Indy Thunder won the event in the final game before the 2021 World Series in Wichita, Kansas. Other teams in the event included the Gateway Archers and the South Georgia Copperheads. Tournament Director, Darnell Booker, alongside Mike took part in several media spots including Penny for Your Thoughts and ciLiving. The event was a joint partnership between the Champaign Lions Club, the Village of Savoy, and VCC.



Your Places. Your Spaces. Our Community.

We launched a new campaign, "Your Places. Your Spaces. Our Community." to encourage residents to share their favorite experiences in the area. From restaurants to shops to parks and attractions, the destination management organization is wanting to see and share photos and video directly from area residents. Up to eight submissions will be selected to be featured in future marketing such as the annual Champaign County Area Experience Guide, on billboards, in advertising and promotional videos, and on the website. Winners will receive a professional photo shoot at one of their favorite local destinations, as well as a community t-shirts and a gift card to a local business. Residents of all ages, backgrounds, demographics, and abilities are encouraged to share photos and/or video of themselves enjoying their time out and about in the community. Residents can submit their photos or videos online at visitchampaigncounty.org/ourcommunity or by tagging @visitchampaign and using #ourcommunity on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or TikTok.

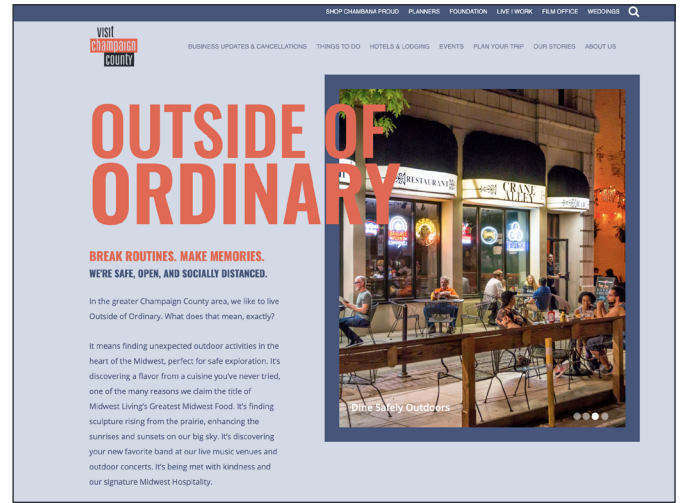


Maps | Function & Art

While our local business landscape does fluctuate regularly, the pandemic showed the futility of our walking map, highlighting all tourism-related businesses in downtown, midtown, and campustown. As businesses closed and new ones opened, the maps very quickly became out of date and were no longer functional. It became much more important to highlight districts in the greater Champaign County area, using illustrations to showcase the attractions and vibrancy of our community. Working with local artist, David Michael Moore, we created a walking map from downtown Champaign to downtown Urbana, with call-outs to surrounding communities and areas like Monticello and Allerton Park, Rantoul with the Sports Complex and reindeer, and Amish Country of Illinois. These new maps use art to visually showcase the vast number of districts, attractions, and opportunities to explore the greater Champaign County area. Since releasing, we've sent maps as far as California and Germany from past residents wanting to reconnect with Champaign-Urbana.

Champaign County Area Experience Guide

After forgoing a printed Experience Guide in 2020, we were excited to get this valuable resource back in people's hands as students, faculty, and many visitors returned to our community. The new guide focuses on telling our Outside of Ordinary story through tips from area experts, in addition to highlighting opportunities to explore local foods and agriculture, food & drink, arts & culture, family-friendly activities, historical sites, sports and recreation, boutique shopping and more. Through compelling editorial and engaging photos, the guide tells the story of the greater Champaign County area for visitors and residents, new and old.



TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Facebook

Curtis Orchard
Opening
474 shares
51,219 impressions
5,555 Engagement



8,708

Followers



Twitter

IHSA Hall of Fame
10,606 impressions
18 engagements



6,270

Followers



Instagram

New Map Release
4,028 impressions
342 engagements



5,817

Followers

Website Report

52,649 Visits
91.006 Page Views
42.808 New Visits
1.73 Pages/Session
01:10 Avg. Length of Visit

Top Visited Pages

Calendar of Events
Food & Drink
U of I School Year Guide
Hot Rod Power Tour
Outdoors

71.2%

of website traffic is from outside the greater Champaign County area

31.5%

is from outside of Illinois

68

events submitted on our website

Our Mission

We promote a welcoming destination experience for visitors to strengthen economic opportunity and enhance the lives of residents.

VISIT CHAMPAIGN COUNTY PARTNERS

Destination Founder

City of Champaign
Enjoy Illinois

Destination Leader

Busey
Carle
University of Illinois

Destination Builder

Champaign County
City of Urbana
Village of Rantoul
Village of Savoy

Destination Backer

Champaign County Chamber of Commerce
Foundation
Champaign-Urbana Hotel Lodging Association
Illinois American Water
Parkland College
United Way of Champaign County
Urbana Park District
Village of Mahomet
Village of St. Joseph

Regional Partners

Amish Country of Illinois
City of Tuscola
Monticello Chamber of Commerce

For information on our Tourism Industry Partner Program and how you can support our mission visit:

visitchampaigncounty.org/partners



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Charles Smith, Village of Rantoul

Visit Champaign County Team

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