

## CHAMPAIGN COUNTY AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL



### MISSION

*The Champaign County African American Heritage Trail is a celebration of the lives and contributions of African Americans in the Champaign County area. The mission is to educate today's residents and visitors about the rich cultural history of a people whose stories have been largely unrecognized, but directly shaped the place we call home. Our vision is to inspire conversation, expand understanding, and contribute to a better society. An important goal for the trail is to provide a free and accessible experience for visitors and all community members.*

From 1978 to 2011, the Park Street Mural, under the direction of Angela Rivers, existed at Park & 5th, telling the story of the African American experience from Africa to Champaign County, including life in Africa, the middle passage, slavery, tenant farming, African American farmers in Champaign County, religion, and community in the North End neighborhood.

Fast forward to 2020, among a community dialogue about creating various murals to address racial injustice, Visit Champaign County was approached about facilitating a downtown Champaign mural celebrating African American history to promote unity and to provide education for generations to come. After several discussions and realizing there was way too much history to share in one mural, a small committee determined the best approach to include a series of history murals centered around themes such as innovation, business, education, music, etc.

These discussions sparked an idea to include these murals as part of a countywide heritage trail that would include walking routes and driving trails identified by signage and interactive technology centered around historic buildings, parks, churches, museums, and public art.

Over the last few months, a larger community committee has come together to volunteer their time and efforts to map out this project under the leadership of Barbara Suggs-Mason and Angela Rivers. As descendants of family members who first moved to Champaign County in the 1860's, their knowledge, passion, and steadfast belief in education, history and the arts, has guided our efforts.

The committee officially announced the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail to supporters, stakeholders, and community members at the Illinois

Terminal on November 17. During the event, Barbara and Angela unveiled the mission of the trail and the timeline of the project to date and moving into the future.

Two signature projects were presented to launch the Trail in 2022. Local artist, Keenan Dailey, is currently creating a bus wrap for the Champaign Park District, highlighting the rich history of Douglass Park. This bus will serve as a traveling exhibit during school-age camps, at area parks, and local events, educating our children and our community. In another Champaign Park, plans are underway for further development of Skelton Park that will focus on the history of African American music in Champaign County. The park plans will include a sculpture and other features to engage and educate and will be developed in phases.

The most critical part of the Trail is capturing and curating the rich history of African Americans in Champaign County. The History & Archives committee is hard at work developing important stories and locations to include from Homer to Rantoul to the University of Illinois campus. When launching to Trail, a temporary website was developed sharing over a dozen future locations including Homer Park, the first Black churches of Champaign-Urbana, Frederick Douglass' visit to Champaign at what is now One Main Plaza, local schools, subdivisions, and sororities on campus. These stops are among the many stories that will be told along the trail through interpretive signage, immersive experiences, and curriculum that will be developed for area schools.

This project is facilitated by the Visit Champaign County Foundation, but led by the community. The scope is large and will be developed incrementally as funding is secured through corporate and individual donations, grants, and our funding partners.

To learn more and to donate, visit [ccafricanamericanheritage.org](https://ccafricanamericanheritage.org).



## FROM OUR CEO

Looking back on the second quarter for FY22, there is much to be grateful while still addressing challenges of the pandemic, along with staff and supply shortages across the hospitality industry.

We celebrated the sneak preview of the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail on November 17 (see cover article.) We appreciated the opportunity to present to our destination partners including Rantoul (October 5); Urbana (October 18); St. Joseph (October 26); Mahomet (November 16); Savoy (December 1) with Champaign (January 11) and Champaign County (January 20) on the horizon.

We celebrated destination development projects, such as the Hotel Royer Groundbreaking (October 28) and the recent opening of Gather Illinois living community (September 8) and hotel (December 15) both in Urbana, plus the B-52 Hangar MX motocross facility in Rantoul.

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 the Holiday Showcase at Allerton Park & Retreat Center, the Champaign Center Partnership's Parade of Lights, seeing "The Bat" to commemorate the 100th birthday of the Virginia Theatre, the Junior League of CU's Festival of Trees, Champaign Park District Senior Holiday Dinner, Illini Athletic events, and much more!



A shout out to Curtis Orchard for hosting our October board meeting, to Holiday Inn for hosting our November board meeting, and a huge shout out to Neil Street Blues for providing an absolutely wonderful setting for our combined VCC Board and VCC Foundation Board holiday meeting/social in December.

We also recognized Lynne Barnes, Carle, who is stepping down from our VCC Board and will be replaced by Caleb Miller, Carle. And we welcomed Matt Buchi, IL Men's Wheelchair Basketball Head Coach, plus Lynne, to our VCC Foundation Board.

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



## visit **champaign county** FOUNDATION

### VCC Foundation Update

The VCC Foundation Board hosted the Champaign County African American Trail sneak preview on November 17 (see cover article.) The VCCF serves as the portal for financially supporting the heritage trail, plus major events, including IHSA State Wrestling (February 17–19, 2022), IHSA State Boys Basketball (March 10–12, 2022), Illinois Middle School Basketball Championships (March 18–20, 2022), Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon (April 28–30, 2022), among upcoming events next summer and fall. The VCCF Board continues to re-imagine the board membership structure to reflect the diversity of our community and to support the recently adopted community benefit funding model for Visit Champaign County.



### Intern Wrap-up

Dylan completed his fall internship with Visit Champaign County after completing numerous projects and shadowing other tourism professionals in our community. Dylan made a lasting impression and left VCC with the tools to become a more sustainable workplace. Following shadowing at Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery, they noted, "Thank you for sharing Dylan with us. He is a very nice young man with a great personality for hospitality. He stepped right in to help wherever needed and was great with the public. He was very positive and helpful, took initiative and I think he will have huge success wherever he lands. Anyone considering hiring him in the future will be lucky to have him."

### Restaurant Week Preview

The 6th annual Champaign County Area Restaurant Week returns January 28–February 5. Being mindful of the uptick in COVID-19 cases, restaurants are offering both in-person and carryout specials. Over 30 participating restaurants will highlight special menus from breakfast, lunch, dinner, and dessert! Make plans to support our local restaurants at [ccrestaurantweek.org](http://ccrestaurantweek.org).





# OUT & ABOUT

## ICCVB Fall Conference

Jayne and Terri attended the Illinois Council on Convention & Visitors Bureau (ICCVB) in Skokie, October 13–14, to learn and network with colleagues across the state. The program focused on destination development, cannabis tourism, advocacy, and other relevant topics.

## Illinois Governor's Conference

After more than a year delay, the Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism returned with a robust program at Navy Pier in Chicago, December 6–8. Jayne, Terri, Caitlyn, and Mike attended a variety of sessions on advocacy, diversity, sales, and marketing as well as poignant keynote sessions. Governor Pritzker spoke during the opening night event about the resiliency and importance of tourism in the state of Illinois. The Governor was also presented with handblown glass ornaments from Prairie Fire Glass by ICCVB Chair Dave Herrell.

## UMCVB Board Retreat

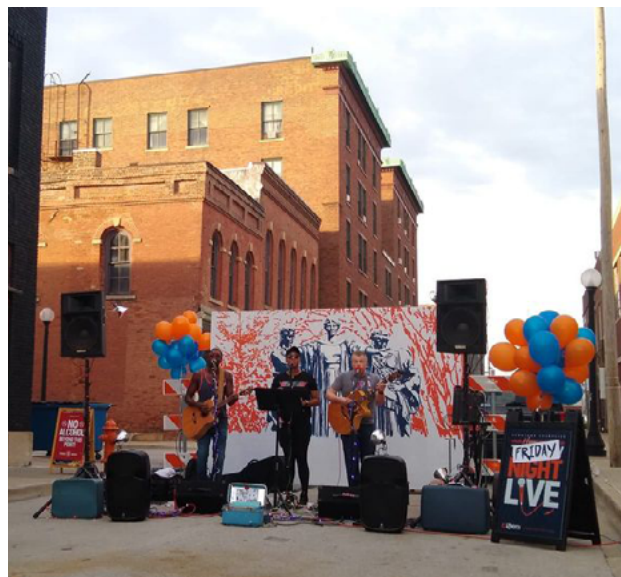
The Upper Midwest CVB Board site visit, November 11, featured representatives from six states to tour our community in preparation for the 2022 conference we are hosting at the I Hotel & Conference Center, September 12–14, 2022. During their visit we met with the I Hotel staff to discuss logistics as well as previewed some of the experience tours that attendees will be able to participate in during the conference. Stops included Prairie Fruits Farm and Creamery, Krannert Art Museum, Riggs Beer Company, a downtown Champaign walking tour, as well as the Virginia Theatre and Memorial Stadium which will both be evening entertainment destinations during the conference

## IEDC Conference

Terri attended the International Economic Development Conference with Carly McCrory-McKay, Champaign County EDC, in Nashville, October 3–6. This year's conference had a focus on tourism, highlighting how economic development and tourism collaborate to attract and support businesses and talent. Terri attended several helpful sessions, including one on talent attraction, and art as economic development.

## Illinois Homecoming Community Events

For the first time, Illinois Homecoming was celebrated off campus with special events in downtown Champaign. Terri serves on the Homecoming Committee and worked with 40 North to develop a special "Thursday Night Live: Homecoming Addition." As part of the event, Kelly White at 40 North secured 9 artists to paint large block I's that were then displayed in downtown businesses. The I's were very popular and can now be seen at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. Rain hampered the live music, but 90's Daughter moved their set indoors at Pour Brothers, while New Souls played outdoors on Market St. the following evening. Plans are underway to grow the event for Homecoming 2022.



# SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS



## Tourism Academy

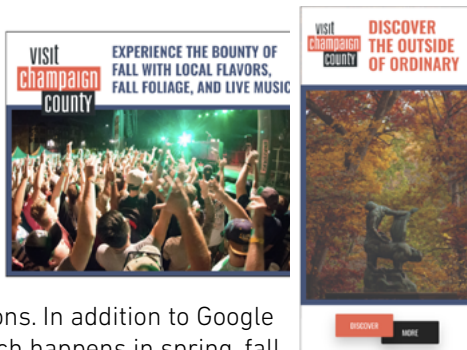
Caitlyn attended the iDSS Tourism Academy that in Philadelphia, October 12– 15. This conference is put on by our CRM provider and gives onsite training sessions as well as tourism education sessions. It provides a great opportunity to meet other DMO's from across the country who utilize iDSS for discussions on best ways to utilize this platform.

## Sports ETA

Mike attended the Sports ETA Symposium in Birmingham, AL, October 25–28. At their first Symposium since May 2019, sports tourism as a leader in economic recovery was a common theme during sessions. Mike had 22 one-on-one appointments, of which American Cornhole, U.S. Quidditch, and Perfect Game USA are all pursuing events in Champaign County. Nine Illinois sports destinations in attendance hosted a private outing for event planners at Top Golf near the convention center to further conversations with potential clients.

## Digital Ad Placements

Raising awareness for the greater Champaign County area across digital channels is as important as our print advertising in travel-related publications. In addition to Google Display advertising which happens in spring, fall, and during Restaurant Week, and search engine marketing all year-round, we place digital ads through travel-focused sites that are data-driven, providing us with insights while furthering our brand. This fall, a campaign through Sojern resulted in 227 confirmed travelers to our community, with 163 confirmed hotel night stays, and 37 flights booked. The estimated economic impact of these travelers is \$113,500 and the return on ad spend was \$9.46 per \$1 spent. The top two destinations travelers who flew to the community booked from Dallas/Ft. Worth and Ft. Myers/Naples. The top two destinations of those that booked hotels were Chicago and Indianapolis. This data helps us further plan future promotions and focus on targeted areas for promoting to travelers.



## Occupancy Rate

Reporting September–November 2021

Champaign County	56.0%
Bloomington	70.4%
Peoria	46.9%
Springfield/Decatur	51.9%

## Average Daily Rate

Reporting September–November 2021

Champaign County	\$97.71
Bloomington	\$97.29
Peoria	\$95.29
Springfield/Decatur	\$90.77

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

## SPORTS, EVENTS, & FILM

5 leads	3 tentative	3 definite
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1,200  
estimated room nights

## CONFERENCES

7 leads	3 tentative	4 definite
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2,200  
estimated room nights

## GROUP TOUR

0 leads	0 tentative	0 definite
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**LEAD:** Potential business distributed to hotels

**TENTATIVE LEAD:** Potential business, no commitment yet

**DEFINITE LEAD:** Business secured



## Women-Owned Businesses

In collaboration with Miss Market, Visit Champaign County is highlighting women-owned businesses in promotions for those looking to support those small businesses in the community. We identified 63 retail and food & drink businesses in the area that are partially or completely owned by a woman. The businesses can be found under the Food & Drink and Shopping sections of their website, [visitchampaigncounty.org](http://visitchampaigncounty.org), under the "Woman-Owned" category. In addition to the new sections on the website, information will be shared with meeting planners and sports planners whose events have a focus on women and girls.



## Shop Local Promotions

Visit Champaign County published its Shop Local 2022 guide weeks before Thanksgiving to give everyone a head-start on keeping local retailers in mind this holiday season. The guide, which was repurposed for additional blogs and social media stories, also inspired a series of TikTok videos

showing off businesses all over the greater Champaign County area. Additionally, ciLiving hosted Terri on the show for four days the week of December 13 where she highlighted 23 local retailers ranging from women-owned businesses, gifts for foodies, active people, gifts for the home and art lovers, and gifts for entertainment and for kids. Plans are underway to do another shop local takeover on the show in December 2022.



Take home something Outside of Ordinary.

WOMAN-OWNED SHOPS

SEARCH BY KEYWORD

SEARCH

Advanced Search

<b>CINEMA GALLERY</b> 130 W. Main St. Urbana, IL 61801 217-367-8211	<b>JANE ARDAMS BOOK SHOP</b> 208 N. Neil St. Champaign, IL 61820 217-356-2555	<b>A BLOOM ABOVE &amp; BEYOND</b> 204 E. Southline Rd. Tuscola, IL 61953 217-253-2314	<b>ART MART</b> 1705 S. Prospect Ave. Champaign, IL 61821 217-344-7979
<b>BACKYARD BEAUTY</b> 1429 E 2000 North Rd. White Heath, IL 61884 217-714-9023	<b>BENEMOTH DURABLE GOODS</b> 105 S. Walnut Champaign, IL 61820	<b>BELLA MIA BOUTIQUE</b> 1107 Windsor Rd. Champaign, IL 61821 217-352-2222	<b>BLOOMING BOUTIQUE</b> 212 W. Green St. Urbana, IL 61801 217-351-1596

SHOP CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

BUSINESS UPDATES & CANCELLATIONS

THINGS TO DO

HOTELS & LODGING

EVENTS

PLAN YOUR TRIP

OUR STORIES

ABOUT US

# OUTSIDE OF ORDINARY

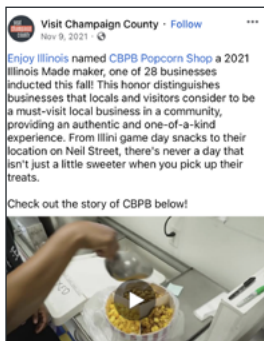
**BREAK ROUTINES. MAKE MEMORIES.**  
WE'RE SAFE, OPEN, AND SOCIALLY DISTANCED.

In the greater Champaign County area, we like to live Outside of Ordinary. What does that mean, exactly?

It means finding unexpected outdoor activities in the heart of the Midwest, perfect for safe exploration. It's discovering a "Rever" from a culture you've never tried, one of the many reasons we claim the title of Midwest Living's Greatest Midwest Food. It's finding sculpture rising from the prairie, enhancing the sunrises and sunsets on our big sky. It's discovering your new favorite band at our live music venues and outdoor concerts. It's being met with kindness and our signature Midwest Hospitality.

Safe Safety Outdoors

## TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



### Facebook

CBPB Illinois Maker  
27 shares  
3,200 impressions  
305 Engagement



### Twitter

IHSA Tickets  
8,090 impressions  
57 engagements



### Instagram

Illini Homecoming  
2,575 impressions  
211 engagements



9,228  
Followers



6,337  
Followers



6,034  
Followers

## Website Report

49,839 Visits  
84,526 Page Views  
40,732 New Visits  
1.70 Pages/Session  
01:10 Avg. Length of Visit

## Top Visited Pages

Calendar of Events  
U of I School Year Guide  
Pumpkins, Mazes & Farm Fun  
Food & Drink  
Top Outdoor Spots for Fall

72.8%

of website traffic is from outside the greater Champaign County area

31.8%

is from outside of Illinois

62

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](http://visitchampaigncounty.org/partners)



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**Sam Santhanam**, I Hotel & Conference Center  
**Dee Shonkwiler**, Village of Savoy  
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### Visit Champaign County Team

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**Terri Reifsteck**, Vice President of Marketing & Community Engagement  
**Caitlyn Floyd**, Director of Sales & International Travel  
**Mike Koon**, Director of Sports, Special Events & Film  
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**Brooke Mayer**, Visitor Experience Coordinator  
**Leslie Lundy**, Finance Manager



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**Jody Quiram**, Gordyville USA  
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