

## THE RETURN OF IHSA BASKETBALL

For the first time in over 25 years, the IHSA Boys State Basketball Tournament was hosted in our community. Following a successful bid for a 3-year contract for the event and a delay due the pandemic, teams and fans rolled into town March 10–12 bringing excitement and school spirit to the area.

This year was filled with changes for the Tournament, moving all classes to one weekend. With this new format, we saw an influx of visitors throughout the event and a massive crowd for Championship Saturday. Over 34,500 fans attended the tournament in Champaign.

Leading up to the event, Visit Champaign County was hard at work to ensure a successful weekend for all. Community hosts were assigned to each team for the weekend and made contact as soon as the teams qualified for State. Hosts were responsible for helping the teams and fans with hotels, restaurant reservations, practice facilities, and any other needs necessary to be ready for the tournament. Area hotels set aside rates and hotel blocks for fans, as well as several hotels serving as team hosts.

Welcoming messages were on display all over town from 10 billboards across Champaign-Urbana, to busboards on MTD buses traversing the community. Local businesses shared social media posts welcoming the tournament and fans, encouraging them to enjoy their establishments. The University of Illinois

Police Department provided police escorts to teams as they made their way to the State Farm Center for their semi-final championship games.

While the games were the main attraction, Visit Champaign County worked to create a well-rounded atmosphere in the State Farm Center. The ChambanaMoms.com KidsZone featured numerous activities such as button making, face painting, caricatures, and a dance party. A Tech Zone was available with the Illini eSports Club providing mini-game experiences and the Innovation Hub providing VR Experiences. The University of Illinois Admissions also hosted a college fair on Friday with several colleges at the University sharing their offerings with potential students.

Simultaneously, at the University of Illinois Activities & Recreation Center (ARC) on campus, the Unified and Wheelchair State Basketball Tournaments were also taking place. These games were held on Friday and Saturday, with an exhibition for the Wheelchair Basketball athletes at the State Farm Center on Friday night.

The games across all days and facilities provided many thrills with several overtimes and nail-biting wins. The excitement was palpable and the energy in the State Farm Center was electric. Feedback from fans, teams, coaches, and community hosts was secured following the tournament and VCC hopes to implement several changes to improve the tournament and showcase why Champaign County is the destination for state basketball.





## FROM OUR CEO

While we reflect on many FY22 third quarter highlights, the return of IHSA Boys State Basketball recreated a legacy for decades to come!

Advocacy continues as a top priority across local, state and national levels. Shout out to the Chamber of Commerce for facilitating our Champaign County First Virtual Advocacy Days on March 7–10 at both the state and national levels. Also a shout out to Brittany Henry, Jacksonville Area CVB, for hosting our ICCVB Board Strategic Planning Retreat on January 10–11, which advocacy remains a top priority for our statewide organization. We appreciated the opportunity to wrap up our destination partner presentations, including Champaign (January 11) and Champaign County (January 20.)

We celebrated alongside the community, including the Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration at Krannert Center (January 16); dedication of the Albert R. Lee portrait dedication (February 1); pop up dinner at Pear Tree Estate (February 11); IHSA State Wrestling (February 17–19); Tuskegee Airmen Film/Panel Discussion (March 25); and so many more events showcasing our community.

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. Thank you to Bill Geist, DMOpz, for sharing our VCC story [here](#).

A shout out to CU Flowerhouse for hosting our January board meeting, to Home 2 Suites for hosting our February board meeting, and to Lodgic Everyday Kitchen for providing a wonderful setting for our combined VCC Board and VCC Foundation Board meeting in March.

Thank you to Taylor Bauer, Communications Manager, for his wonderful service to VCC.

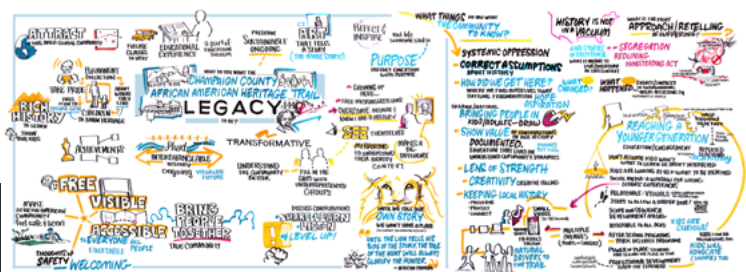
Grateful for our board leadership, our partners and our work force who support a community-based mission to promote a welcoming destination experience for visitors to strengthen economic opportunity and enhance the lives of residents. Everything starts from that point.

Jayne DeLuce



## VCC Foundation Update

The VCC Foundation serves as the portal for financially supporting the Champaign County African American 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), Teen Masters Bowling Championships (May 1, 2022) among upcoming events this 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.



WORKING GROUPS	STARTED PURPOSE	RESPONSIBILITIES	END GOALS	MILESTONES
HISTORY/ARCHIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify key historical events</li> <li>Research and document</li> <li>Preserve and archive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a timeline</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a timeline</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a timeline</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop educational materials</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop educational materials</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop educational materials</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop educational materials</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>
USER EXPERIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop user experience</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop user experience</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop user experience</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop user experience</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>
ART & MURALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop art and murals</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop art and murals</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop art and murals</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop art and murals</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>
FINANCIAL RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop financial resources</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop financial resources</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop financial resources</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop financial resources</li> <li>Identify key figures</li> <li>Research and document</li> </ul>

## CCAAHT Update

To further the planning of the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail, a retreat was held at Phillips Recreation Center on January 28. This was the first time many members of the organizing committee met in person. Facilitated by David Michael Moore, the planning session focused on overall goals for the Trail with the question asked—what legacy should this leave in the community? Among the goals shared are to allow our children to know their heritage and take pride in their history. The Trail should also make the African American community feel safe and seen. The discussion also centered on the various working groups, their purpose and responsibilities, as well as milestones to hit. This helped outline the coming months as we work to select sites, fundraise, and build the website. The planning session provided needed conversations on the ultimate goal for the Trail in serving as a connection to a younger generation, while also educating residents and visitors of this important history in our community.

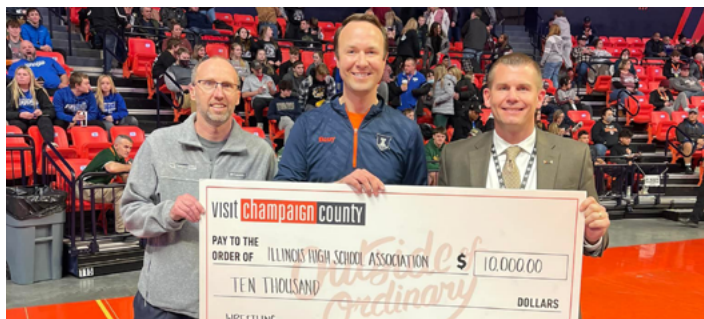




## Welcome Marcus Flinn, Communications Manager

Marcus graduated from Parkland College in 2021 with his Associates Degree in Graphic Design. Since then, he has been involved in numerous community projects such as painting a mural for Franklin STEAM Academy, being a photographer for MTD, and serving as a lead designer for the African American Heritage Trail. Marcus has a passion for art, community relations, and social media management.

# SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS



## IHSA Wrestling Wrap-Up

Despite a major ice and snowstorm to start the tournament, we hosted another successful IHSA Wrestling Tournament, February 17–19. Visit Champaign County Board Chair Bryan Snodgrass presented IHSA Assistant Executive Director Sam Knox with a donation to continue our support of the tournament to State Farm Center. The VCC team, board, and hotel volunteers hosted a welcome booth on Thursday and Friday and the Official's Reception on Friday at Eastland Suites. Nearly 31,000 fans came through the turnstile, including over 7,200 during the championship session. This event continues to generate significant economic impact of over \$3 million.



## Middle School Basketball Championships

The Illinois Middle School Basketball Championships were hosted in Champaign for the first time featuring almost 100 teams from around the State! after it previously being held in Rockford. The event, held March 18–20, took place at multiple venues including the ARC, the Leonhard Center, and The High School of St. Thomas More hosting 91 teams from around the state. Plans are underway to expand to additional sites around Champaign County for 2023. A total of 711 room nights were used through the official tournament room blocks throughout the county.



## 2022 Peer Group Conference

Caitlyn attended Heritage Club International (HCI) Peer Group Conference in the Quad Cities, February 21–24. HCI is a tour show for Midwest bankers who plan travel for their businesses and clients. Caitlyn met with 22 bank operators, two of which already have a stop to Hardy's Reindeer Ranch on their schedule. During the follow-ups, she had three additional operators request more information on our area and one is looking at booking a 3-day Amish experience this fall with a 30-person group from Crystal Lake, Illinois.



## Circle Wisconsin

Circle Wisconsin held in Bloomington, MN, March 27–29, provided Caitlyn with meetings with 40 group tour operators all of whom are eager to get their motorcoaches back on the road. Julie Hardy, Hardy's Reindeer Ranch, was also at the show and Caitlyn and Julie were able to both promote our area with great success. This is the top motorcoach show for our organization and the most traveled for DMOs in our state. Tour Illinois sponsored a dinner and gave away gifts from each area (VCC brought candles from FireDoll Studio) and gift cards from the different DMOs.

# SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS

## Bring It Home Campaign

Caitlyn is working on a new campaign to help our local economy on its road to recovery after the pandemic. VCC launched the 'Bring It Home' campaign in early March 2022 aimed at the meetings & events market. The campaign calls on local champions to think about events they either host or attend outside of this area and the possibility to bring those "home." The idea asks the champions to bring potential leads from either associations, sporting events, corporate meetings, seminars, tradeshows or workshops for our office to contact and discuss the possibilities of hosting those events in our area. Incentives are available for those that convert to bookings. Have an event that should be considered? Contact Caitlyn to share the details!



## Campus Instructional Facility Tour

The VCC team toured the new Campus Instructional Facility (CIF) in the hopes of learning more about what the space has to offer to groups outside of the University of Illinois to use as meeting and event space. The building is an impressive 124,000 sq. ft. space spanning 5 levels. CIF boasts over 2,400 student seats in 23 general assignment classrooms. We look forward to partnering with the University to fill this space with outside groups and meetings.



## Leveraging Events Panel

The Champaign Center Partnership held a panel discussion on Leveraging Events in Champaign Center on March 26 at the Champaign Public Library. Terri sat on the panel alongside Chelsea Norton, Champaign Park District, Kelly White, 40 North, Alex Suñé, University of Illinois, and Jodie Harmon, Developmental Services Center to discuss how businesses can partner with events to attract more foot traffic. Terri highlighted programs like the Wooden Nickel during Illinois Race Weekend, Restaurant Week, and generally being responsive on social media to promote a welcoming environment. The event is available on the Champaign Public Library's YouTube channel to stream.

## Occupancy Rate

Reporting December 2021–February 2022

Champaign County	44.9%
Bloomington	58.1%
Peoria	39.0%
Springfield/Decatur	42.6%

## Average Daily Rate

Reporting December 2021–February 2022

Champaign County	\$86.33
Bloomington	\$93.84
Peoria	\$93.92
Springfield/Decatur	\$86.33

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

## SPORTS, EVENTS, & FILM

4 leads	0 tentative	3 definite
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630

estimated room nights

## CONFERENCES

8 leads	3 tentative	5 definite
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1,860

estimated room nights

## GROUP TOUR

2 leads	1 tentative	1 definite
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**LEAD:** Potential business distributed to hotels

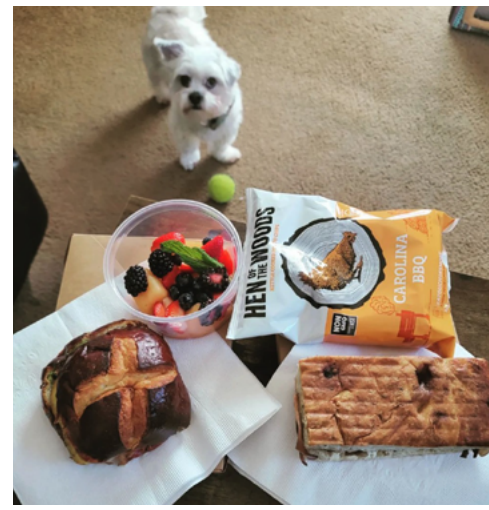
**TENTATIVE LEAD:** Potential business, no commitment yet

**DEFINITE LEAD:** Business secured



## Restaurant Week Wrap-Up

The 6th Annual Restaurant Week, held January 28–February 5, was a big success despite a debilitating snowstorm that forced closures for our restaurants for two days. 39 restaurants participated in 2022 and was the highest participation rate in the event's history. Engagement on social media was high, with many positive comments from the public as well as participating restaurants. Among the feedback for the event from restaurants is to raise the menu prices in 2023 given the inflation and supply issues, so we will look to make this change to meet the changing needs of our local restaurants. Save the date for the 2023 event—January 27–February 4.



## Champaign-Urbana Viral TikTok

As VCC continues to expand their use of TikTok to highlight the greater Champaign County area, we looked for common questions about our area to answer them on the platform. One of the most popular questions is where the border is between Champaign and Urbana. Taylor and Terri, with the assistance of Brooke, filmed a short, tongue-in-cheek, video highlighting the border at Wright & Green St. Unexpectedly, the video went viral quickly and has over 213,000 views to-date, over 18,000 likes, and 728 shares. Total play time is 1008 hours, 39 minutes. Be sure to follow @visitchampaign on TikTok as we look for more opportunities to creatively showcase our community.



## TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



### Facebook

Ribeye Restaurant  
Week  
16 shares  
10,572 impressions  
2,394 Link Clicks



**9,574**

Followers



### Twitter

IHSA Basketball  
10,170 impressions  
48 engagements



**6,359**

Followers



### Instagram

Chambana Border  
Reel  
3,880 views  
45 shares



**6,171**

Followers

## Website Report

60,420 Visits  
133,572 Page Views  
47,553 New Visits  
2.21 Pages/Session  
01:35 Avg. Length of Visit

## Top Visited Pages

Restaurant Week  
Calendar of Events  
Food & Drink  
U of I School Year Guide  
Hotels & Motels

**68.2%**

of website traffic is from outside the greater Champaign County area

**33.8%**

is from outside of Illinois

**71**

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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**Annie Easterday**, Vice Chair, Pear Tree Estate  
**Rob Kowalski**, Treasurer, City of Champaign  
**Jayne DeLuce**, Secretary (ex-officio), Visit Champaign County  
**Laura Bleill**, Past Chair, University of Illinois Research Park  
**Bridget Broihahn**, City of Urbana  
**Nathan Escue**, Hamilton Walker's  
**Bob Flider**, University of Illinois  
**Shayla Maatuka**, Matuuka Al-Heeti Emkes, LLC  
**Caleb Miller**, Carle  
**Jacob Paul**, Champaign County Board  
**Vanna Pianfetti**, Champaign City Council  
**Dennis Robertson**, Market Place Shopping Center  
**Sam Santhanam**, I Hotel & Conference Center  
**Dee Shonkwiler**, Village of Savoy  
**Katie Simpson**, Village of Savoy  
**Charles Smith**, Village of Rantoul

### Visit Champaign County Team

217.351.4133 | 17 E. Taylor St., Champaign, IL 61820



**Jayne DeLuce**, President & CEO  
**Terri Reifsteck**, Vice President of Marketing & Community Engagement  
**Caitlyn Floyd**, Director of Sales & International Travel  
**Mike Koon**, Director of Sports, Special Events & Film  
**Marcus Flinn**, Communications Manager  
**Jen Peddycoart**, Office Manager  
**Brooke Mayer**, Visitor Experience Coordinator  
**Leslie Lundy**, Finance Manager



### Visit Champaign County Foundation Board of Directors

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**Jayne DeLuce**, Secretary, Visit Champaign County  
**Lynne Barnes**, Carle  
**Matt Buchi**, Men's Wheelchair Basketball, University of Illinois

**Rachel Coventry**, Curtis Orchard & Pumpkin Patch  
**Victor Fuentes**, Willow Creek Farm  
**John Hammond**  
**Jesse Hines**, Courtyard by Marriott  
**Natalie Kenny-Marquez**, Grow Marketing & Communications LLC  
**Max Mitchell**, ReMax  
**Jody Quiram**, Gordyville USA  
**Dan Waldinger**, Mahomet Recreation