

COVID-19: ACTION & IMPACT

This March, normal life halted, as we knew it. As COVID-19 swept the United States and Illinois, the community impact was swift. On March 11, the University of Illinois moved all courses online following spring break. All University events of 50 or more were suspended indefinitely, including Mom's Weekend, Graduation, hundreds of University meetings and conferences, and all Illini spring sports. Without the daily presence of college students and campus visitors, this was a major hit to the local economy.

In the days that followed, the Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon and Boneyard Arts Festival were postponed, and other events, including Ebertfest and the Illinois Futbol Club Spring Invite, were cancelled. Our team quickly shifted gears to work remotely, while keeping up with daily/hourly changes on cancelled events to share with the public. All spring and summer advertising campaigns were suspended as major events cancelled and attractions shuttered.

On Sunday, March 15, Governor Pritzker limited public events to less than 10 and closed bars and restaurants to dine-in customers. Our team acted quickly to support restaurants, retail, caterers, and other local businesses on providing real time information on delivery or curbside pickup, or by purchasing gift cards. When the stay-at-home order came on March 20, our website and social media were ready for residents on how to encourage staying at home and still supporting our local economy.

The Visit Champaign County website was amended to reflect our community support and direct traffic to available resources. The COVID-19 resource page contains resource information from the C-U Public Health Department, Mass Transit, and Small Business Development Center. As businesses adapt to circumstances, the list of available restaurants is updated every day. Information on shopping locally, whether for essential supplies, or buying gift cards through local boutiques also continues to shift. Resources for health & wellness, recreation, and arts & culture are also featured on this comprehensive site for the greater Champaign County area.

Throughout the month, the VCC team mobilized in additional ways to continue to serve the community:

HOTELS—Communicate daily on the impact of staffing, lost business, current occupancy rates, hospitality grant opportunities, and plans for recovery.

LOCAL BUSINESSES—Communicate to local businesses on SBA, State and Federal grant and loan programs available; making personal contact with area businesses to update online and print content as needed.

MAJOR EVENTS & CONFERENCES—Work with organizers to reschedule later in the year and continue to secure future business for later in 2020 and beyond.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT—Shift social media messaging to focus on new ways to engage in the community and create new content sharing stories on how local businesses are adapting.

PARTNERSHIPS—Create “Champaign County Rallies around Restaurants, Retail, Small Businesses” with chambanamoms.com, You're Welcome CU and Champaign County Economic Development Corporation.

FUNDING—Determine impact to state and local tourism grant funding and adapt VCC budget to reflect an anticipated reduction in hotel/motel tax revenues, among other financial support.

The negative economic impact of COVID-19 in the greater Champaign County area is significant. While we work to reschedule events in the future, some of the immediate losses to our community include:

\$10 mil

Christie Clinic
Illinois Marathon

\$2.2 mil

IFC Spring
Invite

\$482K

Big Ten Softball
Championships

\$69K

3 Disciplines
Triathlon

\$313K

Ebertfest

\$300K+

Conferences with
200+ attendees



FROM OUR CEO

From my home office, I reflect on how much has changed in our world over the last month. Watching our community adapt every day, I'm beyond proud of how everyone collectively figures out creative solutions. Community

leaders making hard decisions, area businesses trying to take care of their work force, local residents volunteering for those in need, the park districts and forest preserves trying to provide safe outdoor escapes, and neighborhoods creating safe outlets for children at play, for senior living communities, and for each other. Most important, how our community rallies around our first responders and medical teams as they put their own lives at risk to care for our loved ones. We can only hope this teaches us further grace and compassion when this extremely challenging time is hopefully behind us.

I'm so grateful for the VCC team, the way they've shifted our messaging to rally around local business, to create amazing content showcasing the people who make up our outside of ordinary community, to reach out daily to our hospitality businesses, to partner with other organizations, and to adapt to working remotely. This is a rock star solid team.

In talking with our Destination Management Organization (DMO) colleagues across Illinois and USA, we are all facing extremely challenging financial times ahead. Tough decisions are being made, yet every day, I'm encouraged by the passionate people in this industry who will lead us out of these unprecedented times into a future, stronger travel and tourism industry that supports each and every one of our communities.

Thank you to our partners and work force who support destination promotion, which benefits the well-being of every person in our community. As a public good, it is an essential community investment to develop opportunities and build quality of life for the people of our community. Everything starts from that point.

Jayne DeLuca



Takeout & a Toast

On Saturday, March 28, ChambanaMoms.com, You're Welcome CU, and Visit Champaign County hosted Takeout & A Toast for Champaign County virtually through Facebook. The event encouraged locals to get takeout

from their restaurant of choice, and participate in a virtual toast to the community. The event featured a live video between the three hosts, commenting on community collaboration and the ways local businesses have responded. Individuals engaged in the conversation through the chat, sharing stories about their favorite businesses, as well as photos of their takeout. The video reached nearly 3,000 views from engaged community members.



Community Video

In the wake of COVID-19, while businesses closed their doors and adjusted their offerings, Visit Champaign County collected video stories to showcase to the community. "When You're Ready" shares the response of our small businesses, the support of the community, and our desire to see our residents and visitors when we're healthy and ready. **To view the video, visit:** youtu.be/GgOliOx3xw

Toast to Tourism Update

The VCC Foundation Board, in conjunction with the VCC Board, has cancelled the 2020 Toast to Tourism on May 13 due to COVID-19. Instead of presenting this year's Tourism Impact Award winners, VCC will amp up the Cream of the Crop program to recognize the hospitality unsung heroes on a weekly basis. Our first Cream of the Crop winner is Matthew Coe, Operations Manager at the Courtyard by Marriott.



DESTINATION 2023 STRATEGIC PLAN

visit champaign county



Destination 2023

After nearly nine months of surveys and stakeholder meetings, Visit Champaign County unveiled Destination 2023 on February 12 at Lodgic to over 100 community stakeholders. The new strategic plan introduces a vision for the greater Champaign County area as a destination, alongside new mission and vision statements that will serve as a guide for the Visit Champaign County Board of Directors and staff.

Led by Bill Geist, Chief Instigator of DMOprouz, and 30+ year veteran in destination marketing, the strategic planning process brought together stakeholders from across the region. In May 2019, Visit Champaign County launched community and stakeholder surveys, and in-person focus groups to assess community needs. With those results, Visit Champaign County's Board of Directors and staff created Destination 2023 to chart the course of the organization for the next three years.

Highlights include:

- **Destination Vision**— The greater Champaign County area will provide energetic and innovative experiences, attracting visitors and potential residents from around the world.
- **Organizational Vision**— Visit Champaign County will be a connected and collaborative leader in promoting the region as an extraordinary destination to visit, work, and live.
- **Organizational Mission**— We promote a welcoming destination experience for visitors to strengthen economic opportunity and enhance the lives of residents.

The goals include: 1) Enhance the community as a destination; 2) Strengthen visitor and resident experiences; 3) Elevate Visit Champaign County to be embraced as a community-shared value. To view the complete plan, [visit **visitchampaigncounty.org/about-us/reports**](https://www.visitchampaigncounty.org/about-us/reports).

Lobby Day

On February 26, Jayne traveled to Springfield for the statewide Day at the Capitol sponsored by ICCVB (IL Council of CVB's) and IHLA (IL Hotel Lodging Association.) Joined by Dan Rust, GM of the Fairfield Inn & Suites, Champaign, they listened to speakers, advocated for hotel/tourism related topics with each of our area legislators, followed by the legislative reception. Advocacy remains a core value of VCC activities.

40 North Update: Untitled 2020

40 North held their annual fundraiser, Untitled, on February 28 at the Orpheum. With a fairytale theme, attendees and art supporters donned their costumes to raise money for the arts council. This year's event had the highest attendance in its history, with guests enjoying an immersive escape room, silent auction, art wall, whiskey wall and much more.

Connecting with Visitors

Tracking our direct communication with visitors through Welcome Center walk-ins, calls, email, leading to Experience Guides distributed.

42

walk-ins

29

emails

307

calls

3,655

Experience Guides distributed

SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS



IHSA Basketball Site Visit

On February 3, the IHSA State Basketball Bid planning committee hosted IHSA staff at the State Farm Center for a site visit. Highlights included: impressive post-renovation capabilities of the facility; a demonstration of the lighting and video board; and discussion on operations to create a successful tournament environment. Following the tour, community members joined the bid committee for a welcome reception, which also included demonstrations from the University of Illinois TechHub, as well as a presentation from Admissions on a college fair that would be held in conjunction with the tournament. Conversations are ongoing regarding the bid, however, IHSA will likely delay the decision until their board of directors can meet in person.



IHSA Wrestling Wrap-Up

The Illinois High School Association conducted its 53rd Individual State Wrestling Championships at the State Farm Center. From February 21--23, 42 champions were crowned in three classes. A total of 16,460 tickets were sold and 33,945 individuals went through the turnstiles to watch 672 wrestlers from 258 schools from around the state. During the championships, VCC Board Chair Laura Bleill presented a \$10,000 check to the IHSA. VCC also hosted a welcome booth offering community information, and the popular state pinboard, with fans pinning their hometown. On Friday, VCC hosted a reception for the Illinois Wrestling Coaches and Officials Hall of Fame induction class alongside our community partners. The three-day IHSA Wrestling event meant an estimated \$4.9 million in economic impact and \$191,000 in local taxes for the area.

Occupancy Rate

Reporting December 2019–February 2020

Champaign 46.5%

Bloomington 42.3%

Peoria 44.2%

Springfield/Decatur 43.8%

Average Daily Rate

Reporting December 2019–February 2020

Champaign \$79.73

Bloomington \$80.06

Peoria \$99.54

Springfield/Decatur \$86.14

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

SPORTS & EVENTS

4

leads

0

tentative

4

definite

3,150

estimated room nights

CONFERENCES

6

leads

2

tentative

4

definite

1,898

estimated room nights

GROUP TOUR

0

leads

0

tentative

0

definite

LEAD: Potential business distributed to hotels

TENTATIVE LEAD: Potential business, no commitment yet

DEFINITE LEAD: Business secured



Connect Travel

Terri attended Connect Travel Marketplace, February 19–21, in Kissimmee, Florida. One of four Connect conferences held during this time, the Travel Marketplace brought together international tour operators with DMOs from around the country. Terri had 40 appointments during the event, with interest in Amish Country tours, University of Illinois student and parent tours, AgriTours Illinois, and several groups interested in motorhome travel to Middle Fork River Forest Preserve for the Dark Sky designation.

Restaurant Week Wrap-Up

The 4th annual Champaign County Area Restaurant Week was the biggest event yet, with 32 participating restaurants. From January 24–February 1, these restaurants offered special menus for breakfast, lunch and dinner, starting at \$9 for breakfast/lunch, and \$19, \$29 or \$39 for dinner. We had several new restaurants participate this year, including Industrial Donut, Stango Cuisine, Destihl Brew Works, Hank's Table, and Ko Fusion. In the month of January, the Restaurant Week page saw nearly 44,000 visits, and nearly 10,000 on the first day of the event. Diners shared their food photos with us using #ccrestaurantweek, with one winner drawn for a \$100 gift card to a participating restaurant of their choice. Restaurant Week will be back, January 29–February 6, 2021.



ADS PLACED IN Q3

LEISURE

Restaurant Week Ads
Midwest Living (2) | AAA Living
Champaign Park District

MEETINGS

Illinois Meetings + Events

SPORTS

SportsEvents Magazine

GROUP

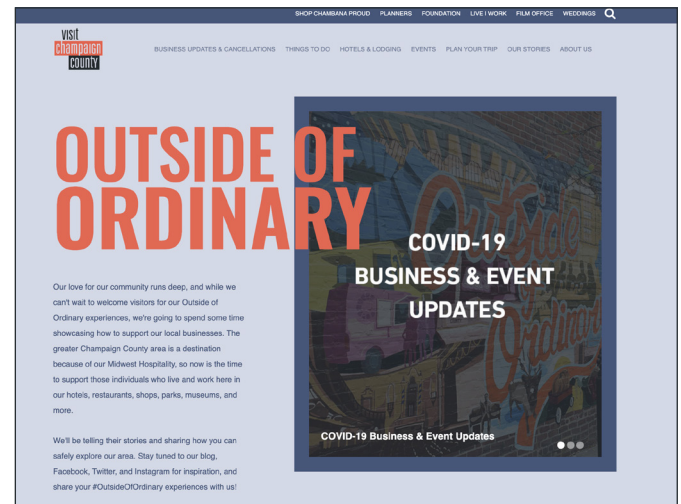
Tour Illinois Planning Guide
Essentially America China



6 press releases resulting
in 82 media placements.

413

reader responses



Website Report

111,794 Visits
166,864 Page Views
38,297 New Visits
1.45 Pages/Session
02:03 Avg. Length of Visit

Top Visited Pages

Restaurant Week
Calendar of Events
COVID-19 Updates
Food & Drink
Big Grove Tavern Restaurant Week

48.07%

of website traffic is from outside the greater Champaign County area

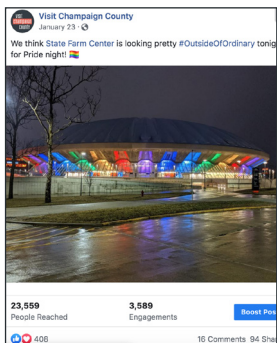
19.43%

is from outside of Illinois

79

events submitted on our website

TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Facebook

Pride Night at State Farm Center
407 Likes
94 Shares
23,559 Reach



7,405

Followers



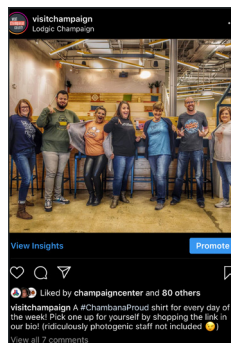
Twitter

IHSA Wrestling Kickoff
5 Retweets
21 likes
10,315 impressions



6,095

Followers



Instagram

ChambanaProud Shirts of Staff
81 likes
1,993 impressions



5,077

Followers

Our Mission

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

VISIT CHAMPAIGN COUNTY PARTNERS

Founding Partners

City of Champaign

Platinum Partners

University of Illinois

Gold Partners

Busey :: Carle :: Champaign County

City of Urbana :: Village of Savoy

Village of Rantoul

Silver Partners

Illinois American Water :: Parkland College

Bronze Partners

Village of Mahomet :: Village of St. Joseph

Urbana Park District

Regional Partners

Allerton Park & Retreat Center :: Arthur Area Tourism

Council :: City of Tuscola :: Monticello Chamber of

Commerce

Hotel Partners

ORANGE PARTNERS: Eastland Suites & Conference

Center :: Hilton Garden Inn :: Holiday Inn :: Hyatt Place

I Hotel & Conference Center :: Illini Union Hotel

BLUE PARTNERS: Candlewood Suites :: Comfort Suites
Country Inn & Suites :: Courtyard by Marriott :: Drury Inn
& Suites :: Fairfield Inn & Suites :: Hampton Inn Urbana
Hampton Inn Champaign Southwest :: Holiday Inn Express
Holiday Inn Express Rantoul :: Home2 Suites by Hilton
Homewood Suites :: LaQuinta :: Residence Inn by Marriott
TownePlace Suites by Marriott :: Wingate by Wyndham

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

visitchampaigncounty.org/partners



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Visit Champaign County Team

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*2016 Charter Partner