

IMPACTED BUSINESSES

25 O'Clock Brewing Company
Asian Taste
Baxters American Grille
Bentley's Pub
Betsy's Bistro of Hendrick House
Billy Barooz
Blind Pig Brewery
Bluestem Hall
Boomerangs Bar and Grill
Caffe Paradiso
Candlewood Suites
Collective Pour
Comfort Suites
Country Inn & Suites
CU Adventures
Drury Inn & Suites
Esquire Lounge
Fairfield Inn & Suites
Fieldhouse 219
Hamilton Walker's
Hampton Inn Champaign SW
Hampton Inn Urbana
Hilton Garden Inn
Holiday Inn Express Rantoul
Home 2 Suites
Homewood Suites
Huber's West End Store
Hyatt Place
I Hotel & Conference Center
Industrial Donut
Iron Post
LaQuinta Inn
Le Peep
Manor Motel
Neil St Blues
Papa Del's Pizza Factory
Po' Boys Restaurant
Quality Inn & Suites
Red Herring Restaurant
Red Roof Inn
Refinery Events Center
Residence Inn
Rodeway Inn
Rose Bowl Tavern
Sakanaya
Seven Saints
Sticky Rice
Tely Organics
TownePlace Suites
Triptych Brewing
Tumble Inn
Watson's Shack & Rail
Ye Olde Donut Shoppe

RELIEF FOR THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Nationwide, the pandemic has wreaked havoc on the hospitality industry. Locally, the story is the same, with restaurants closed to indoor dining due to mitigation efforts, attractions seeing fewer visitors, retail experiencing declining sales, venues shuttered, and hotels experiencing historic lows in occupancy.

With such significant challenges facing the industry, the 3,270 jobs supported by travel and tourism in the greater Champaign County area are in jeopardy, with many of them lost.

In April 2020, the VCC Foundation reallocated event expenses for the canceled 2020 Toast to Tourism celebration to create a Hospitality Relief Fund to provide direct financial support for former hotel employees in the greater Champaign County area as housekeepers, caterers, cooks, front desk staff or anywhere in our hotel partner operations.



Over \$12,000 was initially raised thanks to matching funds from the Champaign-Urbana Hotel Lodging Association (CUHLA) to provide financial assistance to 42 displaced employees at each of our current hotel partners.

In November 2020, the Hospitality Relief Fund was relaunched and expanded in response to strict mitigation efforts that continued to severely impact the hospitality industry. Nominations were sought from business owners or general managers within food & beverage, lodging, event venues, and attractions for employees facing financial difficulties due to loss of job or significantly reduced hours.

Funding has been provided through private businesses or individual donations to the Visit Champaign County Foundation lead by efforts from the VCCF and VCC Board members themselves. Significant donations were received from the United Way of Champaign County and the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Additionally, over 100 individuals have shown their generosity and support with donations to the fund to further the impact.

Since April 2020, the Hospitality Relief Fund has raised \$33,365, and been distributed to 136 hospitality heroes across 53 businesses. Jobs ranged from baristas, servers, cooks, maintenance, housekeeping, and more.

While the fund can't solve the challenges of the pandemic, the VCC Foundation is proud to offer our Hospitality Relief Fund to provide some assistance to our community's hospitality heroes that have shown tremendous resolve.

The fund will remain open to nominations as long as donations continue. Individuals and organizations looking to donate can do so on the [Hospitality Relief Fund site](#), where business owners and general managers can also submit nominations.





FROM OUR CEO

Stakeholder engagement has never been more critical during a time of significant change in our organizational mission, as we continue to meet community needs and focus on economic recovery in the near future.

We work with the best Board of Directors and Foundation Board of Directors and enjoyed our virtual holiday joint board meeting celebration on December 2, complete with provided desserts from Hopscotch Bakery, Suzu's Bakery, and Tasty Tart that were picked up by each board member prior to the Zoom meeting. Thank you to VCC Board Chair, Laura Bleill, and VCC Foundation Board Chair, Dennis Robertson, for guiding our direction.

As part of our advocacy efforts, one of my favorite activities is giving an annual presentation to our public strategic partners. Presentations were made to Champaign County Board (September 15,) Urbana City Council (September 21, October 5, October 12,) Rantoul Village Board (October 6,) Mahomet Village Board (October 20,) Savoy Village Board (October 21,) St. Joseph Village Board (November 10,) and Champaign City Council (November 17.)

I also participated in the virtual Destinations International Advocacy Summit on October 15 and November 12. Our goal was to engage with

industry experts and each other about our changing industry at a crossroads. Great discussion about the opportunities ahead!!

Statewide, the IL Council of CVB's (ICCVB) hosted a hybrid fall conference in the Quad Cities on October 5-6, which showed the value of business travel when done safely and the importance of human connection for education and engagement.

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 focused the majority of the 2nd quarter implementing the Hospitality Relief Fund (see cover article.) They will continue to address FY21 goals:

- Expand project scope to include destination development projects, including African-American Heritage Trail and black history murals.
- Support upcoming sport tournaments, including: IHSA Boys State Basketball; AJGA All-Star Tournament; Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon, Hot Rod Power Tour, etc.
- Review and revise board membership structure to reflect diversity of our community.
- Create Foundation investment levels, benefits and recognition.
- Kick off partner recruitment campaign this spring 2021. [Watch our video](#) that is key piece to campaign.



Virtual Parade of Lights

Like many community events, the annual Parade of Lights presented by the Champaign Center Partnership went virtual for 2020. This fun and engaging shoebox parade held on the Saturday after Thanksgiving allowed community businesses and organizations to submit a float, made out of a shoebox. VCC couldn't wait to be a part, with Brooke, Caitlyn and Jen creating an Outside of Ordinary look at some of our area's top attractions. Congrats to the CCP for a delightful and heartwarming event to kick-start the holiday season.

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY AREA

RESTAURANT

WEEK 2021

TAKEOUT EDITION

JANUARY 29–FEBRUARY 6, 2021
CCRESTAURANTWEEK.ORG

Champaign County Area Restaurant Week Preview

The 5th Annual Champaign County Area Restaurant Week returns! Keeping in mind customer and staff safety, the event will be a Takeout Edition featuring meals for one, meals for two, and family packs. From January 29–February 6, you can take advantage of special menus from 26 participating restaurants around the community! Check out the menus and start planning at ccrestaurantweek.org.

SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS

Meetings & Conferences Update

The meetings and events industry continues to be impacted harshly during the pandemic with group gatherings still banned in Illinois and much of the country. Despite that, there is much hope for the future as VCC and its partners look at the long-term possibilities for solid recovery in 2022 and beyond. In a study conducted by PlanSponsor and NewsDash on December 7, 2020, more than one-third of responders said they did not feel it would be safe to attend in-person conferences again until sometime in 2022. September 2021 was selected by 12.2% of respondents as being safe to attend in-person conferences again, assuming safety precautions are taken. March, April and May were each selected by 4.9% of readers. And nearly one-in-10 each (9.8%) selected June, July, August and October. The majority of respondents who chose to leave comments about attending in-person conferences in 2021 said it will depend on the effectiveness of vaccines and vaccine distribution. With the general public on deck to start receiving vaccines mid-2021, there is great optimism for moving forward. VCC continues to keep a pulse on our partners, planners, and community's comfort level and readiness to welcome groups back to our area.



Champaign County Safe

Visit Champaign County continued to play a continual role in distributing pertinent information to businesses and residents during the pandemic. ChampaignCountySafe.org is continually updated to inform the public of timely information through a new blog section added in October, including details on testing, vaccinations, and important information regarding mitigation efforts.

Meet, Stay & Play Videos

Caitlyn and Terri worked together to provide our Event Venues and Hotel Partners with COVID-related, property-specific videos. The goal of each video was to showcase how they are responding to the pandemic and implementing new safety

measures and guidelines to keep employees, guests, and attendees safe while visiting their properties. This was provided free of cost to any of our partners who wished to utilize this service. Five videos have been shared across multiple platforms from YouTube, Facebook and LinkedIn, to email and hotel specific websites, featuring the Hyatt Place, Hilton Garden Inn, I Hotel & Conference Center, Best Western Plus, and Allerton Park & Retreat Center. Check them out on our [Meeting Planner page](#)!

Venue CU Tour

The VCC Staff toured the new Venue CU space in downtown Champaign, a new event and wedding venue. The space honors the history of the building including original flooring from Vriner's. The event space features suites for brides and grooms, as well as ample space for ceremonies, receptions, and community events and meetings. Congrats to the Venue CU team for a stunning transformation.



During the holiday season, Terri worked with individuals from various organizations to create content focused on safely enjoying the season. Through Champaign County Safe, and various social media outlets, we shared blogs and recipes from

area individuals including Julie Pryde, Dr. Pam Lau, Chancellor Robert J. Jones, Don Elmore, and student Steph Petrov. We also created a fun, [light-hearted video](#) demonstrating a game of pick-up football during a pandemic, as well as holiday drink recipes from Punch! Bar & Lounge. Riggs Beer Company & Art Mart shared their beer and wine pairing recommendations, and we shared a virtual backdrop of Santa for all of those annual Santa pictures.

In 2020, the site had nearly 29,000 visits, over 8,700 from residents to view Pledged Businesses.



SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS



Sports & Events Overview

Although events have largely been halted due to the pandemic, VCC is actively pursuing and bidding on future business. Highlights of those efforts over the last quarter include:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) Fly-in 2022

—VCC and Willard previously submitted a bid in 2018. Begun in 2014, the AOPA Fly-ins bring aviators from hundreds of miles to enjoy a weekend exploring the airport and surrounding community. The two-day event typically draws between 3,000 and 7,000 people and more than 500 aircraft.

Air Race E—Along with the Village of Rantoul and the Rantoul National Aviation Center (RNAC), VCC submitted a bid to host and Air Race E World Cup race in 2023 and beyond. The three-day international event would bring an estimated 40,000 spectators. The Formula One race would be powered by electric aircraft with speeds topping at more than 250 MPH around an oval-shaped air circuit.

With VCC's support, the **Rantoul Family Sports Complex** has secured two new events. T2 Sporting will give the area its third major youth soccer event, hosting a tournament during the second week of June. United States Youth Soccer plans to host two tournaments each year, which will fill 1,800 room nights each, beginning in the fall of 2021.

IHSA Hotel Visit—On November 12, Kurt Gibson from the IHSA joined Mike on a tour of the five hotels which will host IHSA Boys Basketball teams (Holiday Inn, Home2 Suites, Comfort Suites, Hampton Inn Urbana, and the Hyatt Place) starting in 2022 as well as the I Hotel which will house officials and staff.

Disc Golf—VCC is helping to facilitate the construction of a temporary 18-hole disc golf course at Allerton Park. The goal is to turn the course into a permanent course and attract the Professional Disc Golf Association (PDGA) 2022 Women's International Championship to Allerton and two other area courses.

You're Out Visit—The Chicago filmmakers interested in shooting a baseball movie titled, "You're Out" toured several potential sites in the Champaign County area in October. The film is currently slated for production in June or July of 2021.

Occupancy Rate

Reporting September–November 2020

Champaign 44.1%

Bloomington 42.1%

Peoria 32.2%

Springfield/Decatur 32.0%

Down
18.8% from
Q2 FY20

Average Daily Rate

Reporting September–November 2020

Champaign \$64.60

Bloomington \$65.57

Peoria \$78.74

Springfield/Decatur \$72.22

Down
\$32.37 from
Q2 FY20

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

SPORTS, EVENTS, & FILM

6

leads

2

tentative

4

definite

7,610

estimated room nights

CONFERENCES

3

leads

3

tentative

0

definite

512

estimated room nights

GROUP TOUR

0

leads

0

tentative

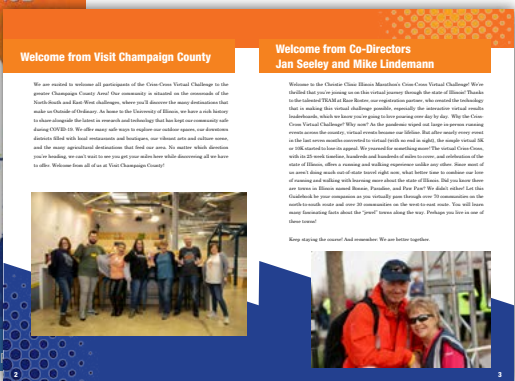
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definite

LEAD: Potential business distributed to hotels

TENTATIVE LEAD: Potential business, no commitment yet

DEFINITE LEAD: Business secured

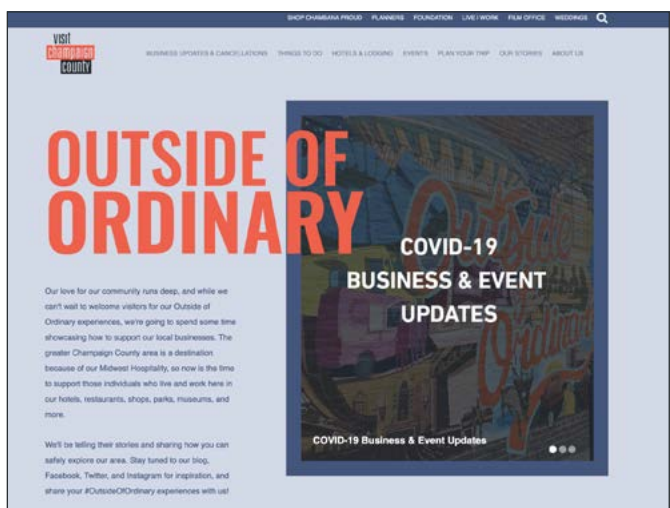


Criss-Cross Challenge

The Illinois Marathon's Criss-Cross Virtual Challenge celebrates the state of Illinois. This 25-week virtual event takes participants across the entirety of the state and encourages runners and walkers to learn about the towns, villages, and cities through which they pass on a North-South and East-West route. To help collect information about the 659-mile journey, Taylor assisted event organizers in researching the various destinations featured. With assistance from travel partners all across the state, over 100 stops on the Criss-Cross Virtual Challenge routes are featured with fun facts, historical information, and profiles to help participants learn more about the state.

Shop Local Guide

In an unprecedented year of challenges for local retailers, Visit Champaign County's annual Shop Local Guide was more critical than ever. Released the week before Thanksgiving, the guide highlights local retailers, restaurants, and more to encourage holiday shoppers to spend their money at small businesses as opposed to big-box chains stores. Taylor cultivates the list each year, and 2020's Shop Local guide was the largest profile of local shops yet. Follow-up posts focused on specific types of gifts helped provide additional marketing and exposure to local businesses all throughout the months of November and December. With momentum surrounding local support thanks to our community, the Shop Local Guide and accompanying blogs performed well on the VCC website and social media.



Website Report

29,639 Visits
48,788 Page Views
23,986 New Visits
1.65 Pages/Session
01:08 Avg. Length of Visit

Top Visited Pages

COVID-19 Updates
Events
Food & Drink
Thanksgiving Dinner Blog
Shop Local Guide

52.8%

of website traffic is from outside the greater Champaign County area

25.4%

is from outside of Illinois

29

events submitted on our website

TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Facebook
Mack Glass Tree
912 reactions
121 Shares
16.9K Reach



Twitter
CU #27
Livability Ranking
3,492 impressions
26 engagements



Instagram
Mack Glass Tree
507 likes
4,039 impressions



8,229
Followers



6,252
Followers



5,592
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

Amish Country of Illinois :: 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: Best Western Plus :: 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

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

visitchampaigncounty.org/partners



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Bryan Snodgrass, Vice Chair, Busey

Rob Kowalski, Treasurer, City of Champaign

Jayne DeLuce, Secretary (ex-officio), Visit Champaign County

Lynne Barnes, Carle

Angie Brix, Champaign City Council

Bridget Broihahn, City of Urbana

Annie Easterday, Pear Tree Estate

Nathan Escue, Hamilton Walker's

Bob Flider, University of Illinois

John Hammond, Candlewood Suites

Shayla Maatuka, Matuuka Al-Heeti Emkes, LLC

Dennis Robertson, Market Place Shopping Center

Dee Shonkwiler, Village of Savoy

Charles Smith, Village of Rantoul

Visit Champaign County Team

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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

Taylor Bauer, Communications Manager

Jen Peddycoart, Office Manager

Brooke Mayer, Visitor Experience Coordinator

Leslie Lundy, Finance Manager

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Rich Thomas, Retired, Rantoul Recreation :: **Dan Waldinger**, Mahomet Recreation :: **Rachel Coventry**, Curtis Orchard & Pumpkin Patch :: **Natalie Kenny-**

Marquez, Grow Marketing & Communications LLC :: **Max Mitchell**, ReMax :: **Jody Quiram**, Gordyville USA :: **Jesse Hines**, Courtyard by Marriott

Visit Champaign County Foundation Charter Partners

Adams Outdoor Advertising :: Don & Suzi Armstrong of Northwestern Mutual* :: BankChampaign* :: BPC :: Carter's Furniture* :: Champaign Park
District :: Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District* :: ciLiving from WCIA* :: Clifton Larson Allen* :: Cozad Asset Management* :: Jayne & Joe DeLuce*
:: Farnsworth Group* :: First State Bank* :: FRASCA International* :: Gordyville USA* :: Grow Marketing & Communications :: Hickory Point Bank &
Trust* :: Rob & Jennifer Kowalski :: Market Place Shopping Center :: Martin Hood LLC* :: Martin One Source* :: Midland States Bank* :: The News-
Gazette, Inc.* :: Pear Tree Estate :: RE/MAX Realty Associates* :: Dennis Robertson :: Robeson Family Benefit Fund* :: David B. Sholem of Meyer Capel
Law Offices* :: University of Illinois Community Credit Union* :: UpClose Marketing & Printing* :: Willow Creek Farm*

*2016 Charter Partner