



CURRENT LEGISLATION INITIATED BY ICCVB

Senate Bill 2324: Create Tourism Recovery Improvement Districts

Senate Bill 2327/House Bill 3565: Extend match funding for state tourism grant.

SAMPLE LEGISLATIVE BILLS MONITORED BY ICCVB

Senate Bill 317: Allows park districts to have access to tourism grant funds.

House Bill 399: Creates a high-speed rail commission.

House Bill 1945: Provide free days at forest preserves, zoos, etc.

ADVOCACY & LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Advocacy has become an increasingly important task for destination organizations, one that requires considerable strategic planning. Advocacy planning involves identifying critical issues to advocate for, creating a message to address those issues, identifying actions to deliver that message, and coordinating partners to engage in advocacy actions. However, there is much to learn about best practices in advocacy planning.

Our advocacy efforts occur on a local, state and national level. Locally, we give an annual presentation to our governmental partners, as well as communicate on a regular basis with elected officials via quarterly reports, ongoing emails, and general updates.

The VCC Advocacy & Community Relations Committee has also established the following goals:

GOAL 1: Communicate relevancy of VCC organization during pandemic and economic recovery process.

GOAL 2: Communicate with legislators the significance of the budget shortfall and request to restore funding at 100% level.

GOAL 3: Enhance diversity, equity and inclusion efforts within the VCC organization and facilitate related projects in the community.

Statewide, VCC is a member of Illinois Council of Convention & Visitor Bureaus (ICCVB) made up of 38 CVB's around Illinois. As the current Board Chair, Jayne DeLuce spends a considerable amount of time advocating with state elected officials alongside the ICCVB Legislative Committee and recently hired Turing Strategies, their lobbying firm.

With many new legislative officials in Springfield, the ICCVB legislative advocacy efforts have included testifying to both the new Senate Tourism and Hospitality

Committee (chaired by Senator Sara Feigenholtz) and the new House Tourism Committee (chaired by Representative Lamont Robinson.) They've also hosted a

"Tourism 101" presentation for members of the House Republican Caucus (chaired by Representative Jim Durkin) and plan to do this presentation for other groups as well.

The current focus in recent months has been centered around restored tourism funding; expanded capacities in Phase 4; allocated federal funding relief; and alternate sources of funding.

Nationally, Jayne participates in the Destinations International (DI) Advocacy Committee, which works with the DI Foundation to create a hub of resources for destination organizations. They also plan the DI Advocacy Summit, which occurred this past October and November as two different virtual opportunities.

CONGRESS CAN #SAVETRAVEL BY:

- ▶ Extending the PPP deadline and providing a third draw loan for hardest-hit industries
- ▶ Advancing the **Hospitality and Commerce Job Recovery Act** that includes necessary stimulus measures to safely restart travel.
- ▶ Reopening the borders for international travel and ensuring **Brand USA funding can help drive international inbound recovery** when it can safely resume.
- ▶ Creating a new definition for "Professional Meetings and Events" that is separate from social or mass gatherings

Also, Jayne participated on March 16–19 in virtual Destination Capitol Hill, hosted by the U.S. Travel Association. Together, hundreds of travel colleagues advocated to:

- Provide relief for travel industry businesses
- Advance stimulus measures to drive travel demand
- Position the U.S. to welcome back international travel
- Safely restore business travel, meetings and events

In an era of declining public support and increased need for transparency, it is more essential than ever for destination organizations to make an emotional and value-based appeal, supporting our message of return on investment with the case that we support the people of our community with new opportunities for work, economic development and public services.

Illinois
Your District
IL-13

Spending
\$2 Billion
Employment
19,416
Payroll
\$681.7 Million





FROM OUR CEO

Here we are heading into Quarter 4 of FY21 with a dim light at the end of a very long pandemic tunnel. We are so ready for the "next normal" although we continue to navigate best safety practices for reopening our community to the visitor economy.

We haven't skipped a beat in providing services. As a community-shared value, we focus on residents as our primary customers. This will be critical as we continue to develop a community benefit funding model as the only way for our organizational sustainability and economic recovery in the near future.

Moving forward, we want to thank John Hammond, who served on our VCC Board representing the hotel industry in his role with Candlewood Suites. Excited that he has since been elected to serve on the VCC Foundation Board.

We also welcome Sam Santhanam, iHotel & Conference Center, and Jacob Paul, Champaign County Board, who have both joined the VCC Board this past quarter. They will both add a wonderful perspective in our work as a board.

Virtual outreach continues. I spoke January 26 to the Texas Association of CVB's Winter Conference with Mike Gamble, Searchwide Global, and Bill Geist, DMOProz, on "Developing an Engaged Board." Also spoke February 23 to Urbana Rotary Club on "Community Updates", followed by speaking March 9 with Cory Jobe, Great Rivers & Routes, and Jan Seeley, Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon, during a Criss-Cross Challenge Webinar on "Hidden Gems in our Prairie State."

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 Board focused the 3rd Quarter wrapping up the Hospitality Relief Fund and announcing two exciting events, including the return of the American Junior Golf Association (AJGA) event in July and the Hot Rod Power Tour event in August. They began the process to re-imagine the board membership structure to reflect the diversity of our community and to expand the role of the foundation in creating a community benefit funding model for Visit Champaign County. This would include a partner recruitment campaign to kick off this summer 2021.

Hospitality Relief Fund Video

To celebrate and thank the many donors to the Hospitality Relief Fund, we created a video highlighting the 136 hospitality workers at 53 local businesses who were awarded funds. Winners were selected via a lottery system and represent restaurants, shops, hotels, venues, and attractions. We're thankful for all in our community who donated, and for our hospitality heroes for all their work during the pandemic. Watch the [video here](#).



Hot Rod Power Tour Announcement

The HOT ROD Power Tour Driven by Continental Tire returns to Champaign County for the fourth time since 2012. The event, originally scheduled for June of 2020 and postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will now be held on the grounds of the State Farm Center on Friday, August 27. The Champaign stop is the fifth and final leg of the 2021 tour, which kicks off on August 23 at the Summit Motorsports Park in Norwalk, Ohio.

More than just a traveling car show, the HOT ROD Power Tour is widely considered to be the finest high-end hot rod-based automotive tour in the world, bringing together more than 5,000 vehicles. Classic cars and hot rods travel city to city while performance car lovers and HOT ROD editors and photographers follow alongside the tour, all cruising through small town America like one big family reunion road trip.

The HRPT stop is free for spectators, but they must register online at hotrod.com and present a mobile ticket at the gates. The event will be conducted in alignment with local state, county, and city safety guidelines.

50% of cases
locally are the B.1.1.7. variant.
These cases often present as asymptomatic, and cause more severe symptoms in younger people.
TEST FREQUENTLY.
champaigncountysafe.org

Cases in the 65+ population **decreased by 91%** since vaccinations began.
GET VACCINATED WHEN ELIGIBLE.
#theresapotgetyourshot
champaigncountysafe.org

25% of cases locally are linked to visits to bars & restaurants.
WEAR A MASK AT ALL TIMES.
#wearitdontshameit
champaigncountysafe.org

Champaign County Safe Updates

Following the holidays, vaccinations and continued testing became priority topics for Champaign County Safe. Working in conjunction with CUPHD, we created table tents and business cards to go into area restaurants and other businesses, encouraging residents to continue getting tested. Additionally, we created several documents relating to what's possible once vaccinated, Bridge Phase guidelines, and the importance of continuing to mask after vaccination. Several social graphics were also created highlighting the decrease in cases among those vaccinated, the % of cases of the B117 variant, and top source of cases locally. These graphics were widely distributed and yielded over 1000 views on the blog post on the day it was posted.

Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor

Organization: 501(c)3 non-profit organization
Funding: National Park Services/federal funding
Stops/Accessibility: the entire corridor includes a trail, museum, numerous monuments, and other sites along driveable trail

THE GULLAH GEECHEE PEOPLE
The Gullah-Geechee people are descendants of Africans who were enslaved on the rice, indigo and Sea Island cotton plantations of the lower Atlantic coast. Many came from the rice-growing region of West Africa. The nature of their enslavement on isolated island and coastal plantations created a unique culture with deep African retentions that are clearly visible in the Gullah-Geechee people's distinctive arts, crafts, foodways, music, and language.



SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS

African American Cultural & Heritage Trail Update

The AACHT Committee met virtually for the second time on March 24 to discuss next steps in beginning the work in this encompassing project. Taylor presented eight examples of heritage trails across the country, with detailed information on who manages the trail, how it's funded, and the number of stops. Following the presentation, discussion centered around accessibility, and ensuring the project is Black-led and supports the Black community. The group will be assigned to small groups to focus on specific topics such as gathering history, fundraising, and creating the user experience.



Chambana Proud Updates

This winter, we had the opportunity to sell our Chambana Proud tees and totes at the Champaign-Urbana Winter Farmer's Market, held at Lincoln Square. VCC applied for a sales tax ID that now allows us to sell these products on our own through events like the Farmers Markets and in our Welcome Center when it re-opens. During two markets, over 30 items were sold, with many others planning to head online to order from the different options available. Items are also available through the Illini Union Bookstore for immediate purchase. We hope to generate additional walk-in traffic to the Welcome Center with retail and promote pride in the greater Champaign County area!

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee Update

Terri and Taylor hosted our second Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Marketing Council meeting with several new members including representatives from La Casa, Disability Resources, Illini Hillel, and Uniting Pride. We had a great discussion on upcoming events and topics to include in spring and summer. Additional discussion centered on being a better resource for these communities with specific outreach in these communities. VCC will work on the recommendations both for our spring and summer promotions and identify strategies to further connect with diverse communities.



Restaurant Week Wrap-Up

The 5th Annual Champaign County Area Restaurant Week looked different in 2021 as a Takeout Edition but was as successful as the previous four years. 26 restaurants participated in the nine-day celebration, offering take-home meals for one, two, and family-packs. Of the 26 participants, 11 restaurants took part for the first time, with all of them looking forward to continuing to be a part of the event. The Restaurant Week site saw nearly 30,000 views, while the Facebook event was active with comments and pictures throughout the nine days. While we missed seeing each other in person and the experience of dine-in, we're thankful to our restaurants and our residents for supporting this event. *"I just wanted to thank you for putting Restaurant Week on, even in these hard times. I feel like Restaurant Week is helping our visibility. So thank you!!!!"* — Linda Lehovec, Dancing Dog Eatery & Juicery.

SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS

Meetings Update

With the allowance of group gathering numbers increasing in Champaign County as well as across our state, VCC is starting to see a return of interest in meetings for our area. With this in mind, Caitlyn and Terri are working on a new campaign—Meet Safe Champaign County—to make meeting planners aware on the happenings and precautions in our industry and in order to ensure everyone's safety. The initiative will include videos, hyperlinks, and PDF materials that will highlight vital resources for meeting planners, attendees, and visitors to the greater Champaign County area.

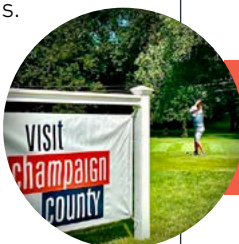


Group Tour Update

After being parked for much of the pandemic, buses are beginning to roll again, with confirmed bookings at Hardy's Reindeer Ranch. Circle Wisconsin, a motorcoach tradeshow, will take place April 16–17 with Illinois as a sponsor, including VCC. While we will not be attending in person, our State motorcoach brochure will be highlighted during the event and we will receive all the attendee information for follow up and FAM invites.

Sports & Events Overview

AJGA is Back—The American Junior Golf Association is back for 2021 at Urbana Country Club held July 18–22 with Visit Champaign County as a supporting sponsor. The 100-player qualifier will be held on Sunday, July 18, the Visit Champaign County Junior Am slated for Monday, July 19, and the 54-hole event for 96 players July 20–22. The organizers are working on securing a title sponsor this year.



Senior Softball—The National Softball Association (NSA) is bringing a major Senior Tournament to the Rantoul Family Sports Complex on August 14–15. Propelled by Team Illinois, the NSA Senior National Champion from 2019, the event will include a number of Senior Divisions from 40+ to 75+.

The Coroner—A Chicago independent filmmaker has chosen Champaign County for its next film, The Coroner, which is planned to film this spring. The plot takes place in an alternate timeline/speculative fiction dystopia in which gig-workers called "coroners" make house calls to pick up the recently deceased. The film follows one of those coroners.

More from Rantoul—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.

Occupancy Rate

Reporting December 2020–February 2021

Champaign 33.6%

Bloomington 40.4%

Peoria 26.3%

Springfield/Decatur 27.4%

Down
12.9% from
Q3 FY20

Average Daily Rate

Reporting December 2020–February 2021

Champaign \$62.20

Bloomington \$66.56

Peoria \$76.37

Springfield/Decatur \$68.35

Down
\$17.53 from
Q3 FY20

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

SPORTS, EVENTS, & FILM

4
leads

2
tentative

2
definite

2,224
estimated room nights

CONFERENCES

5
leads

3
tentative

2
definite

275
estimated room nights

GROUP TOUR

1
leads

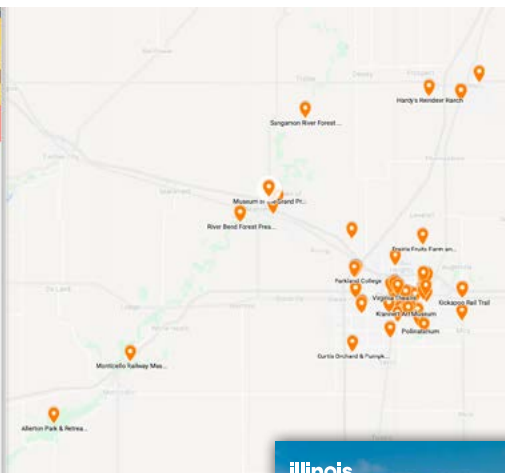
0
tentative

1
definite

LEAD: Potential business distributed to hotels

TENTATIVE LEAD: Potential business, no commitment yet

DEFINITE LEAD: Business secured



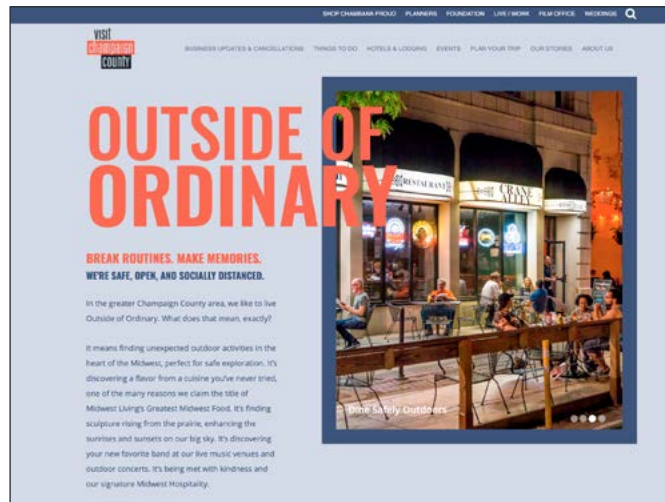
State Road Trips on EnjoyIllinois.com

To continue supporting safe travel, Enjoy Illinois is [promoting road trips](#) created by DMOs that residents and visitors can take throughout the spring and summer. These trips will be one of the first ways many consider imagining travel in their lives again. As we saw in the heart of the pandemic last year, road trips continue to be where many families feel safest. Keeping this in mind, we've provided four unique itineraries to the state tourism office to help invite visitors back to the greater Champaign County area under their themes: trips for families, couples, girls weekend, and guys weekend. With incredible outdoor adventures awaiting and plenty to do and see safely, we're confident that we can provide a welcoming and comforting return to travel for our visitors and residents as they take to the road this spring and summer.



Virtual Map

Providing digital resources has proven more important throughout the pandemic. During the past year, the maps that VCC provides in collaboration with the Champaign Center Partnership have quickly gone out of date with businesses closing. However, it's remained an important piece in showcasing all the greater Champaign County area has to offer. Using Google Maps, we created a [virtual tour](#) of the community, highlighting 76 attractions, parks, and districts with photos, descriptions and links for more information.



TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Facebook
Dining Etiquette in Phase 4
197 Reactions
1,218 impressions
25.7K Reach



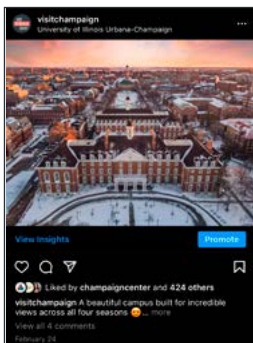
8,587
Followers



Twitter
Hot Rod Power Tour Returns
5,466 impressions
166 engagements
19 likes



6,277
Followers



Instagram
Campus Drone Shot
4,850 impressions
425 likes



5,743
Followers

Website Report

52,326 Visits
121,362 Page Views
39,751 New Visits
2.32 Pages/Session
01:31 Avg. Length of Visit

Top Visited Pages

Restaurant Week
Food & Drink
COVID-19 Updates
Calendar of Events
Farren's Pub-Restaurant Week

67.9%

of website traffic is from outside the greater Champaign County area

24.4%

is from outside of Illinois

55

events submitted on our website

The highest since the pandemic!

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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Shayla Maatuka, Matuuka Al-Heeti Emkes, LLC

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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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Jody Quiram, Gordyville USA

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Dan Waldinger, Mahomet Recreation