

PHASE 5: RETURN TO EVENTS & TRAVEL

Following months in Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois plan, and fifteen months facing strict mitigation efforts to combat COVID-19, the State moved to the Bridge Phase on May 14 and Phase 5 on June 11.

These welcome updates brought many changes to how our local businesses, venues, and events operate, allowing for greater capacity and less restrictions. When reaching Phase 5 on June 11, all restrictions were lifted, allowing all to operate at pre-pandemic levels.

Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control updated their mask mandate on May 14, allowing vaccinated individuals to remove their masks for most indoor settings.

Suddenly, we were back in business.

These rapid changes to mitigations and restrictions were not without their challenges. While restaurants returned to full capacity with both indoor and outdoor dining, many struggled to hire staff. Restaurants chose to forgo dinner service or shorten hours to combat the staffing shortages. Event venues rapidly re-hired staff to accommodate weddings, meetings, and fundraisers. Our local events determined what was possible to showcase in 2021 and deciding what to postpone until 2022 due to lack of time for planning.

With all these challenges in mind, Visit Champaign County began to cautiously promote our community again to visitors outside of our area. Our sales team once again started planning for sports tournaments, as well as meetings and conferences. The opening of the Rantoul Family Sports Complex aided in kickstarting our local economy, bringing athletes, families, and fans every weekend to stay in our hotels, dine in our restaurants, and visit our attractions. With the expansion of the I Hotel & Conference Center and our additional meeting venues back online, we're beginning to host conferences once again, making a large economic impact with multi-day hotel

stays, and various local services that re-invest back into our community.

Our paid marketing efforts directed at leisure travel began, highlighting outdoor opportunities and local foods leading to a jump in website traffic and requests for Experience Guides. We hosted travel writers to help us authentically share our story and the safety of our community, and we launched a TikTok channel to visually showcase our destination and behind-the-scenes looks at many of our favorite stops.

Looking forward to events, plans surged ahead for major events and festivals to return in 2021 and 2022. Among the many events coming this summer and fall: AJGA Junior All-Star Gold Tournament (July 19–22), Hot Rod Power Tour (August 27), Half Century of Progress (August 26–29), Ebertfest (September 8–11), Pygmalion (September 23–25), and CU Pride Fest (September 24–26). Additionally, the return to 100% capacity for Fighting Illini events will bring full crowds back to Memorial Stadium, Huff Hall, and other facilities, filling our hotels once again for game days, Homecoming, and Dad's Weekend.

While we are "back", we continue to be mindful of safety efforts, recognizing those 12 and under that are not yet vaccinated and understanding the dangerous variants that continue to drive cases and deaths among our population. We continue to urge caution among residents and visitors to be respectful of the rules in place in our local businesses and our events, and to be patient as staffing and supply chains catch up with the sudden rush to normalcy.

We are thankful to our public health officials, our local leaders, and the quick action at the University of Illinois that guided our community through the pandemic, keeping Champaign County Safe.

BRIDGE PHASE

STARTING MAY 14, 2021

Bridge Phase allows for eased restrictions across most industries:

DINING Seated areas: Patrons ≤ 6 feet apart; parties ≤ 10 Standing areas: 50% capacity indoors; 50% capacity outdoors RETAIL & COUNTER SERVICE 60% capacity HEALTH & FITNESS 60% capacity Group fitness classes of 50 or fewer indoors or 100 or fewer outdoors FESTIVALS & GENERAL OUTDOOR EVENTS 30 people per 1,000 sq. ft. SOCIAL EVENTS Indoor: 250 people Outdoor: 500 people SPECTATOR EVENTS 60% capacity	THEATRES & PERFORMING ARTS 60% capacity PERSONAL CARE 60% capacity MUSEUMS 60% capacity RECREATION Indoor: Lesser of 100 people or 50% capacity Outdoor: Maximum groups of 100; multiple groups permissible AMUSEMENT PARKS 60% capacity MEETINGS & CONFERENCES Lesser of 1,000 people or 60% capacity OFFICES 60% capacity
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To protect yourself and others, follow these recommendations:



CHAMPAIGNCOUNTYSAFE.ORG

WE'RE OPEN

WHILE ILLINOIS RETURNS TO BEING FULLY OPEN, PLEASE CONTINUE TO FOLLOW ALL SAFETY GUIDELINES.



CHAMPAIGNCOUNTYSAFE.ORG

VAX UP. GO OUT.

- 1 When you are fully-vaccinated*, you no longer count towards capacity limits at bars, restaurants, and events.
- 2 Show your vaccination card upon entry to help local businesses and staff keep an accurate count for capacity.
- 3 Continue to mask and social distance to protect others in our community.



All Champaign County residents aged 16+ are eligible for a vaccine. Find upcoming clinics and appointments at [HeresTheSpotGetYourShot.com](https://www.heresTheSpotGetYourShot.com)

*You are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19 ≥2 weeks after you have received the second dose in a 2-dose series (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna), or ≥2 weeks after you have received a single-dose vaccine (Johnson and Johnson).

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FROM OUR CEO

The most significant part of the 4th quarter of FY21 was Phase 5 full re-opening of area restaurants, attractions, sport tournaments, and all hospitality businesses. While this resulted in many positive aspects, the challenges of staffing and supply shortages

continue to be a reality as we embrace the return of the visitor economy. Along these lines, our team returned back to the office on June 1, ready to welcome visitors to our space once again.

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 and long-term future. Look forward to rolling this out in early FY22.



Advocacy and outreach also continued. The Illinois Council of Convention & Visitor Bureaus (ICCVB) successfully advocated for federal funds to provide funding at FY20 levels for 37 Convention & Visitor Bureaus. I also participated with Champaign County First to advocate virtually for community infrastructure projects with both state and federal legislators.

In planning for the future on a state level, I had the honor of participating in the Illinois Tourism Roadmap through Recovery to Long-Term Success, alongside state tourism and industry leaders, facilitated by Corragio Group.

Congrats to the Rantoul Family Sports Complex on their successful grand opening on May 29. So great to see this complex serve as a Midwest premier sports destination.

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 4th Quarter planning the Toast to Tourism and three exciting events, including the National Beep Baseball Tournament and return of the American Junior Golf Association (AJGA) event in July, followed by the Hot Rod Power Tour event in August.

They continued 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 includes a partner recruitment campaign to kick off this summer 2021.



Time for Me To Drive Campaign

On May 12, Governor Pritzker announced the return to promoting travel and tourism to Illinois through the new "Time for Me to Drive" campaign. Promoting road trips throughout Illinois, the campaign highlights CVB-curated itineraries to the backdrop of REO Speedwagon's "Time for Me to Fly" song. As Chair of ICCVB, Jayne spoke at the press conference, sharing the impact that travel has in communities across the state, and the excitement to once again welcome visitors back to Illinois.

National Travel & Tourism Week

From May 2-8, we celebrated U.S. Travel Association's National Travel & Tourism Week under the theme: The Power of Travel. Throughout the week, we highlighted the benefits of travel and tourism to our community, and celebrated our hospitality heroes who continue to show perseverance through the pandemic. We concluded the week with a video highlighting various local businesses and attractions ready to welcome residents and visitors back. [Check it out here!](#)

Toast to Tourism Preview

Visit Champaign County will host our annual Toast to Tourism on Wednesday, July 28 at the Venue CU. From 5:00-7:00 p.m., guests will hear from Karla Flannery, Deputy Director of the Illinois Office of Tourism, and will celebrate our Tourism Impact Award winners and the hospitality industry. RSVP to [Jen Peddycoart](#) by July 22.



UMCVB Virtual Meeting

The VCC team attended the Upper Midwest Convention & Visitor Bureaus (UMCVB) Virtual Spring Summit on April 8. This half-day summit offered an insightful presentation on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion from Rockford's Director of Advancement, Martesha Brown. Additionally, Destinations International's Jack Johnson provided advocacy updates, and we learned about using TikTok as a marketing tool.

ICCVB Spring Meeting

Jayne, Terri, Mike, and Caitlyn attended their first in-person meeting post-pandemic during the Illinois Council of Convention & Visitors Bureaus (ICCVB) Spring Meeting in Rockford, May 18–19. Visit Champaign County's COVID-19 response efforts were featured during the presentations and Jayne concluded her term as Chair of ICCVB during the conference. Sessions also highlighted advocacy, destination development, sports tourism, federal aid programs, and an update from the Illinois Office of Tourism.



SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS

African American Cultural & Heritage Trail Update

Work towards establishing the Champaign County African American Cultural Heritage Trail continues to move forward. Jayne, Terri, and Taylor are among the organizing committee, chaired by Angela Rivers and Barbara Suggs-Mason, with over 25 residents and advocates working toward establishing the trail to share the stories of people who helped shape our community. The committee established a mission statement that will guide further progress, and five working committees have been established to take the next steps for launching the project's kickoff and public introduction this fall.

Sullivan FAM Tour

To help the VCC team better represent our regional partners, the team participated in a familiarization tour in Sullivan. Lorrie and Timmy, with the Sullivan Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development, led our tours to the Little Theatre on the Square, the downtown business district, and the Sullivan Marina/Lake Shelbyville area. Understanding the assets and sights of Sullivan will help our team better market and sell the area to potential residents and visitors.



Chambana Welcome Crew

In a collaboration with Carly McCrory-McKay at the Champaign County EDC, Terri is working to launch the Chambana Welcome Crew, a community ambassador program that will match ambassadors from all walks of life to new residents and potential residents to answer questions, share experiences, and ensure a smooth transition into our area. We are currently securing potential ambassadors for a launch in mid-August on YoureWelcomeCU.com. The Chambana Welcome Crew is part of a larger campaign to market Champaign County as a community to live and work. For more information on this program or to become an ambassador, [contact Terri](#).



Meet Safe Campaign

Caitlyn and Terri collaborated to develop a brochure and webpage directed toward meeting planners looking to come to our area. The [Meet Safe](#) campaign showcases what groups and individuals can expect when traveling to our community post-pandemic. The information will be updated as necessary

and will serve as the general guidelines and servicing hub for how Champaign County is keeping groups and our community safe.

Meetings & Tour Update

Meetings are making a comeback in Champaign County! We are seeing a resurgence of meetings to our area. Most recently, the I Hotel & Conference Center held a successful event with the Illinois Association of Fire Protection District with over 200 attendees—the largest conference to date since the shutdown. Several noteworthy meetings are on the horizon including: Illinois Rural Health Association Annual Education conference in August, Midwest First Year Conference in September, and in October, the 70th Annual Illinois Transportation Engineering & Safety Conference that has been held at our University since its conception. The announcement of the SAVMA Symposium bid awarded to the University of Illinois Vet Med will bring thousands of Veterinary students and scholars to our area for a multi-day event in 2023.

CHAMBANA WELCOME CREW 



Sports & Events Overview

Rantoul Family Sports Complex—The new Rantoul Family Sports Complex opened on Friday, April 16. The 60-plus acre facility includes eight baseball/softball fields, eight multi-use fields, and two challenger/little league fields that are 100 percent synthetic turf. Rantoul is hosting at least one tournament each weekend through October 17.

Sports Council Convenes—Mike hosted the revived Visit Champaign County Sports Council Executive Committee on May 10. Among the goals of the Sports Council will be to further brand Champaign County as a sports destination, create a network of area sports stakeholders, share ideas and best practices, pool resources to bid on future events, and keep a database of volunteers. The Council will include a core group of decision makers and an expanded collection of stakeholders for larger events.

The Executive Committee consists of Mike Koon, chair; Cassie Arner, Associate Director for Marketing, Fan Development & Strategic Communication for the DIA; Corky Emberson, Superintendent of Recreation for the Urbana Park District; Tori Exum, Founder and Director of Illinois Truth Basketball; Luke Humphrey, Director of Recreation for the Village of Rantoul; Marcus Jackson, Director of Campus Recreation at the University of Illinois; John Marquardt, Interim Director for State Farm Center; Brendan McHale, Director of Athletics, Parkland College; Adrian Melendez, Director of Operations, University of Illinois Track & Field and Cross Country; Justice Miller, Sports Manager, Champaign Park District; Scott Szymoniak, General Manager of Urbana Country Club; Paula Vonlanken, Director of Sales for the Holiday Inn; Dan Waldinger, Director of Parks and Recreation, Village of Mahomet; and Lenny Willis, Associate Athletic Director for Facilities for the DIA.

First Tee—One of the by-products of the Sports Council is an effort to bring First Tee to Champaign-Urbana. First Tee will be a community-wide event involving schools, golf clubs, and other youth organizations to introduce the game of golf to area kids, with a special effort made to bring in underrepresented youth. First Tee provides active learning experiences for youth that build their inner strength, self-confidence, and resilience and impacts more than 3.6 million kids and teens each year, helping to build their strength of character through the game of golf.

Group Tour Update

While group tours are still lagging in terms of bookings, there is a solid interest for group travel in RV and family leisure. We've assisted several individuals who are coming to the area and staying at our local RV and camping sights, many traveling with 4–8 people participating in tours and group friendly options.

Occupancy Rate

Reporting March–May 2021

Champaign 50.9%

Bloomington 58.4%

Peoria 40.5%

Springfield/Decatur 47.3%

Average Daily Rate

Reporting March–May 2021

Champaign \$76.19

Bloomington \$76.65

Peoria \$83.61

Springfield/Decatur \$76.56

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

SPORTS, EVENTS, & FILM

3
leads

1
tentative

2
definite

330

estimated room nights

CONFERENCES

8
leads

3
tentative

5
definite

1,610

estimated room nights

GROUP TOUR

4
leads

0
tentative

4
definite

LEAD: Potential business distributed to hotels

TENTATIVE LEAD: Potential business, no commitment yet

DEFINITE LEAD: Business secured

Travel Writer Visits

To help in promoting leisure travel and roadtrips, we hosted three travel writers this past quarter. Two bloggers from Wherever I May Roam and Travel with Sara visited May 12–13 and visited the historic Monticello Square, Allerton Park & Retreat Center, Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery, and Hardy's Reindeer Ranch, along with a downtown Champaign Walking Tour. Traveling Adventures with a Farm Girl visited on June 3 and also visited Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery and a walking tour in the Arboretum and Japan House Gardens. These bloggers help authentically share our story through their experiences.



TikTok Launch

Visit Champaign County launched a Tik Tok channel in April to broaden its ability to showcase our Outside of Ordinary area. Highlighting unique aspects of our community to residents and visitors alike, the channel's videos are being shared on other social media platforms as well. From behind-the-scenes looks at local businesses to the promotion of events and attractions, the channel is already proving to be a great way to expand our marketing efforts.

“On behalf of the Jettie Rhodes Neighborhood Day Committee, we want to say, “THANK YOU “ so much for your generous donations, support, and time commitment to support this community initiative in such a HUGE way!!! Each and every aspect of whatever part you played has truly been embedded in the hearts of every committee member, our partners, and more importantly, OUR COMMUNITY!! Our community felt loved, supported, and felt like they were our utmost priority and we simply could not have done this without each and everyone of you.”

— Lashaunda Cunningham, Vice President
MLK Jettie Rhodes Neighborhood Day

TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Facebook

Friday Night Live
78 reactions
275 impressions
3,324 Reach



8,708

Followers



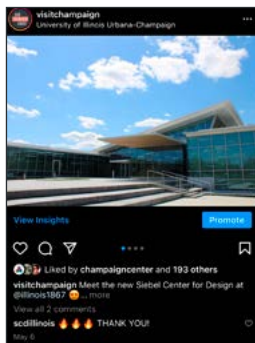
Twitter

Parkland Volleyball
& Women's
Basketball
5,039 impressions
427 engagements



6,270

Followers



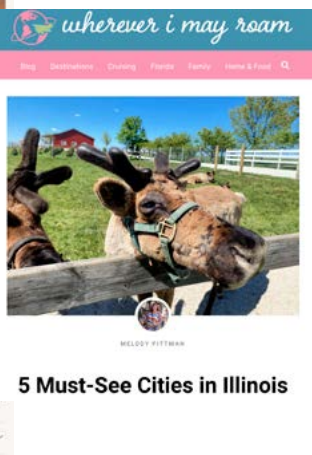
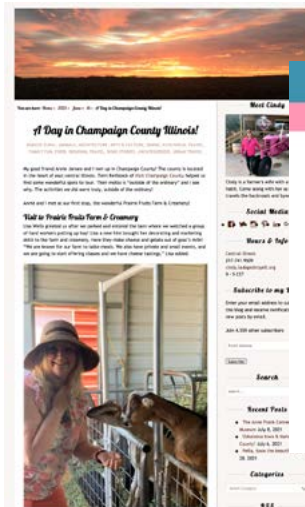
Instagram

Siebel Center for
Design
2,096 impressions
216 engagements

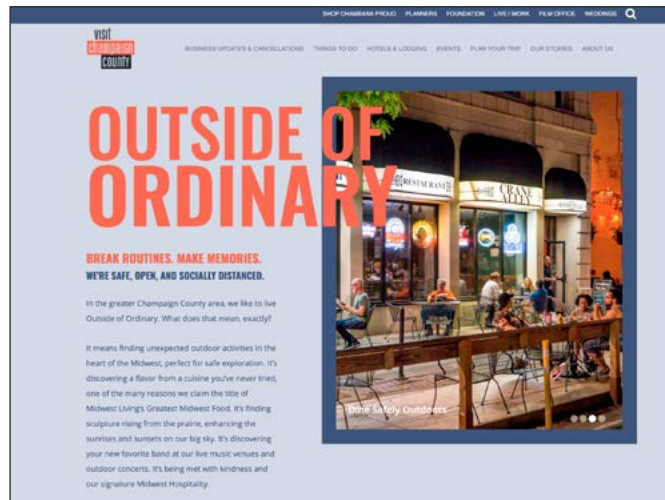


5,817

Followers



5 Must-See Cities in Illinois



Website Report

51,088 Visits
82,086 Page Views
41,670 New Visits
1.61 Pages/Session
01:01 Avg. Length of Visit

Top Visited Pages

Calendar of Events
Business Updates & Cancellations
Must-Visit Gardens Blog
The Great Outdoors Blog
Celebrate Local Foods Blog

67.8%

of website traffic is from outside the greater
Champaign County area

35.1%

is from outside of Illinois

47

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

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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Visit Champaign County Team

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Caitlyn Floyd, Director of Sales & International Travel

Mike Koon, Director of Sports, Special Events & Film

Taylor Bauer, Communications Manager

Jen Peddycoart, Office Manager

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Natalie Kenny-Marquez, Grow Marketing &
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Max Mitchell, ReMax

Jody Quiram, Gordyville USA

Rich Thomas, Retired, Rantoul Recreation

Dan Waldinger, Mahomet Recreation