

Our Time to Shine with Our Peers



Our team is often traveling to other cities for tradeshows or educational conferences, exploring what the host city has to offer. Each time we visit another city, we ponder what we would showcase here at home and how we could surprise and delight conference attendees. We had our moment in the spotlight this September 12–14 as we hosted our peers at the Upper Midwest Convention & Visitors Bureau (UMCVB) Fall Conference.

We bid on the annual conference in 2019 with the hope of hosting in 2021. We secured the winning bid, however, the pandemic caused a shift in dates leading to the event being held in 2022, giving us ample time to plan a truly Outside of Ordinary experience for attendees of the 25th annual conference.

UMCVB represents eight Midwest states—Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The opportunity to showcase our state and our community to fellow DMOs was exciting and also a little daunting.

Caitlyn served as the liaison to the UMCVB board and Erin Bowers, the Conference Director, handling all logistics for the event held at the I Hotel & Conference Center. Monthly, weekly, and eventually daily calls took place to ensure programming both inside and outside the conference center was set for the 200 attendees.

The heart of the conference is the educational program which serves to inspire and inform attendees on trends and best practices in the industry. Compelling keynote speakers discussed the “New Imperative of Destination Leadership”, “The Fundamentals of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion” and a panel on accessible tourism featuring VCC Foundation Board member, Matt Buchi, University of Illinois Men’s Wheelchair Basketball head coach. Breakout sessions and roundtables focused on sales tactics, marketing trends, and talent attraction.

During the event, Jayne was awarded the Bruce McDaniel Individual Professionalism & Lifetime Achievement Award, recognizing her leadership at Visit Champaign County, within the State, as well as her efforts with Destinations International.

Our time to shine occurred before and after the sessions. With attendees arriving from as far as North Dakota, Terri welcomed early arrivals on Sunday night with a campus tour and dinner at Murphy’s Pub. Early risers joined Jayne on Monday morning for a public art walking tour at Meadowbrook Park and West Side Park, being the first to ride on the new Champaign Park District bus featuring a mural by artist Keenan Dailey.

To kick-off the conference and give people a feel for “game day,” we held the opening night party at the Colonnades Club in Memorial Stadium with a tailgate theme. As we brought attendees on to the field for a picture, we surprised them with a special appearance by the Marching Illini drumline that will be an unbeatable memory for our guests.

This conference prioritizes experience tours in communities allowing DMOs to take inspiration back home. Our inspiration tours focused on arts & culture, nature, and of course, beer. The art tour featured a behind-the-scenes look at Krannert Art Museum as well as watching a tea ceremony at the Japan House. The beer tour highlighted Riggs Beer Company and Triptych Brewing for brewery tours and tastes of their libations. The nature tour brought guests to Hardy’s Reindeer Ranch and offered them the chance of a lifetime—to kiss a reindeer!

Following the tours, attendees visited the historic Virginia Theatre for a pre-dine around event with a spectacular performance from New Souls, before attendees set off on their own to get dinner and explore our many bars, restaurants, and shops in downtown Champaign.

We concluded the conference with additional engaging education before sending our peers home. During the three days, our team enjoyed seeing the community through their lens, experiencing the people, places, and events that we have the privilege of enjoying every day. The reviews were glowing and we’re confident that we provided the best experience possible for UMCVB.

As we look at continuing to sell our community to meeting planners, itineraries such as the one for UMCVB will help attract events and further promote our Outside of Ordinary destination.



From Our CEO

What a first quarter! We prepared for almost two years and finally welcomed our colleagues from eight states hosting the UMCVB Conference in mid-September, and such a showcase of our community!

I'm so proud of our team, our venue and attraction owners, and our ICCVB colleagues

who really showed up and sponsored our event at the Virginia Theatre too!

We also celebrated alongside the community, including the Savoy 61874th Festival (July 1); Champaign County Freedom Celebration (July 4); Crystal Lake Art Fair (August 6); CU Days (August 12-13); Mahomet Music Festival (August 26-27); Illini Women's Summit celebrating 50 years of Title IX (September 9); West Side Arts Festival (September 17); Pygmalion (September

22-24); weekly Friday Night Live by 40 North; and monthly Toast to Taylor. The list goes on and on— summer/fall is hopping in our Outside of Ordinary community!

A shout out to Demirjian Park (with guest speaker Coach Janet Rayfield) hosting our July board meeting, to Champaign Public Library for hosting our August board meeting, and of course, to all our downtown Champaign businesses for hosting our September board meeting and FAM sensory tour.

Grateful for our board leadership, our partners and our workforce 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, the Champaign County Regional Film Office, the Chambana Welcome Crew program, plus major events this quarter including: BEEP Baseball (July 8-9) and Rank Up Football Tournament (August 12-14), among upcoming events such as IHSA State Football Championships later this fall. The VCC Foundation Board also held its first meeting of the year on August 16, welcoming six new board members (Curt Anderson, Sean Baird, Katie Miller, Susan Muirhead, Iowa Mwilambwe, and Jon Salvani) and installing officers: Lynne Barnes, Chair; Rachel Coventry, Vice Chair; Jesse Hines, Treasurer; and Jayne DeLuce, Secretary.



Toast to Tourism

We hosted our annual Toast to Tourism on July 13 at the Virginia Theatre. The event celebrated our efforts over the past year, and included a presentation by Karla Flannery, then Illinois Office of Tourism Deputy Director, on the state's efforts in promoting tourism through their Middle of Everything campaign and the Illinois Made program, including a special presentation to CBPB Popcorn Shop. Following the presentations, we honored our Tourism Impact Award winners: Kayla Brown, Fire Doll Studio; Jon L. Seydl, Krannert Art Museum; Syl Keller, Monticello Railway Museum; Michael McDonald, Wood N' Hog Barbecue; and the Riggs Family, Riggs Beer Company. We also gave a special award to Harry Buerkett with the Salt Kettle Tourism Information Center for being an Outside of Ordinary Community Ambassador.



Board FAM Tour

Visit Champaign County hosted the VCC Board and VCC Foundation Board for our annual FAM (familiarization) Tour on September 22. The theme this year was to experience the different sights, sounds, tastes, and general vibe throughout downtown Champaign. We made ten stops which included lunch and a joint board meeting at Maize, tea tasting at Walnut St. Tea Company, axe throwing at The Axe Bar, tour of Surface 51's new space, shopping at Jane Addams Book Shop, a stop at One Main to get a historical perspective from TJ Blakeman, a dessert tasting at Suzu's, shopping and updates on the new Fire Doll Studio space, and a stop outside Jos Kuhn to hear about the \$3 million Main Street grant to redo the area. We were fortunate to have a beautiful day to enjoy the impressive businesses in downtown and we received many compliments from both Boards regarding the businesses visited.

CCAAHT Update

The Champaign County African American Heritage Trail made great strides forward in our first quarter. Co-Chairs Barbara Suggs Mason and Angela Rivers, alongside the VCC team, attended CU Days at Douglass Park on August 13 to spread the word about the Heritage Trail and pass out hundreds of water bottles branded with the Trail's logo. The following month, the Champaign Park District unveiled its "moving mural"—a recommissioned MTD bus wrapped in a mural created by local African American artist Keenan Dailey reflecting the history of the Douglass Center and Park. The interior of the bus includes panels with additional information about the Center and Park's history. The Park District will partner with VCC to use the bus for field trips, tours, and community outings to visit stops along the Trail.

The Trail's website (ccafricanamericanheritage.org) underwent a major makeover in late September. Designed by Surface 51, the new website includes more history, an interactive map, points of pride, an extensive timeline, and more. The website refresh represents the culmination of many months of work, and as a living project, more content will be added over the months and years to come.

The Heritage Trail received front-page coverage in the September 25 copy of the News-Gazette, the bus unveiling was reported on by WCIA, and the Trail received a Heritage Award from the Preservation and Conservation Association of Champaign County.



Out & About

61874th of July Celebration

The Village of Savoy was featured in an Our Town segment on WCIA during the first week of July. As part of the promotion, they close the week with a celebration that is broadcast on the channel during ciLiving and the evening news. The event, the inaugural 61874th of July Celebration, was held outside of Triptych Brewing featuring kids activities, live entertainment, and various Savoy vendors, such as a donut eating contest with Industrial Donut. Jayne, Terri, and Brooke volunteered during the event, assisting with the kids activities.



International Night

In partnership with the University of Illinois International Student and Scholar Studies Program (ISSS), we hosted an International Night on August 19 during 40 North's Friday Night Live at the end of the International Welcome Week. Caitlyn and Terri worked with ISSS members to recruit students from their program to participate in a walking tour from the Alma Mater to Pour Brothers. Members of the Champaign Welcome Crew, our Board of Directors, our team, and other volunteers served as tour guides for the 1-mile walk. This was an opportunity to show the proximity of downtown to campus, but to also share opportunities outside of campus to explore. We had a welcome booth outside of Pour Brothers where we encouraged them to explore on their own or with groups the different restaurants and shops, and to listen to all the local bands performing. Nearly 200 students participated. VCC and ISSS plan to make this an annual event that will grow in the future.



Battle of the Paddle

We were honored to host the United Way of Champaign County's Battle of the Paddle on August 24 in front of the VCC office. They raised over \$45,000 toward the United Way's Early Grade Level Success initiative. We are proud to "Live United" alongside our community.





Community Tours

Showcasing our community and the many resident amenities is paramount to building future ambassadors for the area. The start of the academic year brings many opportunities to provide tours for our newcomers. As part of the Welcome Week for the University of Illinois new faculty, Terri led a community tour alongside Carly McCrory-McKay with the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation for twenty new faculty members and their partners. In collaboration with MTD, the tour was a full day of discovering community gems. Mayor Feinen and Mayor Marlin greeted the new faculty at the Sipyard during a walking tour of downtown Urbana, Savannah with the Urbana Park District highlighted programming and parks throughout the area, and fun facts were shared at stops in campustown, at Triptych Brewing, and downtown Champaign. Additionally, the Development Services Center (DSC) onboards new participants in their program regularly. As part of their initiation, DSC requested a downtown tour focusing on the businesses and events that are in the area. Terri led an engaged group through the area that made the residents feel proud to live in the area.

Finally, as the University of Illinois Wheelchair basketball team works on recruiting, they are often sharing with parents of athletes why their students should come to Champaign-Urbana. To help ease their mind, Caitlyn and Terri are providing community tours through the lens of what their students may experience and how parents can stay engaged. These have been tremendously helpful to the parents and hopefully help put U of I above other schools in the decision-making process.

Destinations International Convention

Jayne participated in the Destinations International Convention in Toronto on July 19-22, 2022 in Toronto, Ontario. Education centered around: Diversity of Language, Resignation or Reinvention, CEO Current Issues, among other topics. She was also elected to serve a three-year term on the Destinations International Foundation Board.

Supporting Black-Owned Businesses Panel

During Black Business Month, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity hosted a panel discussion on how to support businesses and how Black-owned business can leverage local resources. Terri represented Visit Champaign County on the panel serving as a community resource, speaking alongside Jordan Buckner, owner of Foodbevy.com. The hour-long discussion focused on tactics each organization utilizes as well as ideas on how businesses and community resources can better collaborate. You can check out the webinar [here](#).

New to CU Mixer

As part of our welcoming efforts for new residents, VCC & EDC held their second New to CU Mixer on July 19 at the Lake of the Woods Golf Course. Dozens of new residents attended to network with each other and to learn about the community from the Champaign Welcome Crew. Special thanks to Lorrie Pearson, Executive Director from the Champaign County Forest Preserve District, for leading the group in

a round of foot golf. Our next event will be on October 19 at the Rose Bowl Tavern.

Placemaking Banners

After numerous discussions with the City of Champaign, Visit Champaign County was contracted to create and facilitate the installation of placemaking banners in various districts through the city. The banners will enhance our placemaking efforts in welcoming visitors and giving people an understanding of where they are in the community. Terri designed banners for downtown, midtown, and campustown and worked with the University of Illinois on banners showcasing the Block I for Green Street and the surrounding area, as well as Mattis Ave. & Kirby Ave. These banners will help promote Champaign as a Big Ten town, highlighting the University and welcoming guests on main thoroughfares into the community.



SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS

Connect Marketplace

Jayne and Mike, alongside Kristin McMurray from the University of Illinois, attended Connect Marketplace in Detroit, August 8-11. Visit Champaign County joined other Illinois destinations with a State of Illinois booth highlighting the new state tourism slogan "The Middle of Everything." Mike had 41 appointments with event planners from across the country, many of which are taking shape as promising business in 2023, including the National Beard & Mustache Championships, which have an upcoming site visit for the 2023 championships. Jayne and Kristin connected with dozens of meeting planners with a focus on University facilities and our conference venues.

AJGA

For the third consecutive year, Visit Champaign County was a presenting sponsor of the American Junior Golf Association (AJGA) Urbana All-Star Tournament. The event brought 78 elite junior golfers ages 12-15 from around the country and the world to Urbana Country Club and included two local golfers from Monticello. This year's winners were Bradford Lacefield of Versailles, KY (boys) and Canadian Calirey Lin of Palos Verdes Estates, CA (girls). The 2nd Annual Urbana Junior Amateur pitted three local players with a junior player on each team. The three VCC teams included Andrea Ruedi, Reverend Willie Comer, Will Kyles, Joe DeLuca, Scott Eisenhauer, Jesse Hines, Joshua Young, Darius White, Jacob Paul, Sean Widener, Brian Metzger, and Bob Flider. Mayor Diane Marlin provided the opening remarks.



Beep Baseball

Visit Champaign County, the Village of Savoy, and the Champaign Lions Club collectively hosted the Beep Baseball tournament for the second time on July 9 at Cobert Park in Savoy. Beep Baseball is baseball for the visually impaired. The Indy Thunder, the Chicago Comets, and Gateway Archers returned for a round-robin event. This was the final tune-up before the World Championships. All three teams went 4-3 at this year's World Series in Beaumont, Texas.



Rantoul Family Sports Complex Events

Visit Champaign County sponsored a 55-team football event, Rank Up Football, at the Rantoul Family Sports Complex, August 13-14. The event attracted more than 1,300 athletes ages 6-14 from eight states and had an estimated economic impact of \$1.4 million.



The same weekend, VCC sponsored the National Senior Softball Tournament, drawing 24 teams from around the Midwest and garnering some local media coverage, including a feature on local Team Illinois stalwarts Steve Vickers, Chris Butler, and Kevin Lawrence, who played a part in making the event happen.

Occupancy Rate

Reporting July-August 2022

| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Champaign County | 66.4% |
| Bloomington | 65.1% |
| Peoria | 57.7% |
| Springfield/Decatur | 57.9% |

Average Daily Rate

Reporting March-May 2022

| | |
|---------------------|----------|
| Champaign County | \$98.49 |
| Bloomington | \$103.76 |
| Peoria | \$106.45 |
| Springfield/Decatur | \$101.12 |

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

SPORTS, EVENTS, & FILM

5

leads

2

tentative

3

definite

2,475

estimated room nights

CONFERENCES

8

leads

3

tentative

5

definite

1,155

estimated room nights

GROUP TOUR

4

leads

1

tentative

3

definite

LEAD: Potential business distributed to hotels

TENTATIVE LEAD: Potential business, no commitment yet

DEFINITE LEAD: Business secured



2022–2023 Experience Guide

The annual Champaign County Area Experience Guide is our opportunity to highlight the people, places, and events that make our community Outside of Ordinary. This year, Terri focused on a theme of 100 Things to Experience. From agriculture, local foods, arts & culture, sports, family fun, outdoor recreation, and shopping, residents and visitors alike can create their bucket lists for exploring the area. The guide also features in-depth articles on local business owners—enhanced by beautiful photos from Marcus—sharing the why behind what they do in our community. 40,000 guides are printed and distributed annually, broadly sharing our story and encouraging people to get out and explore. View the online guide [here](#).

WGN Segment

The Chicago area is our biggest audience outside of Champaign County, with nearly 20% of all web traffic to our website. Many in this market are University of Illinois alumni or parents of students. Educating this audience on the opportunities for exploration outside of campus is paramount to bringing visitors to our community time and time again. Terri worked with WGN to do a 15-minute interview with radio host John Williams, highlighting why you should visit during the summer months. Before and after the interview digital ads ran on their website, as well as radio ads promoting the segment and the area. The segment also allowed for a contest with a winner getting a weekend stay in Champaign-Urbana. The interview was widely heard and was an authentic conversation on our unique festivals, events, and attractions for an easy getaway outside of Chicago.

New Chambana Proud Tee

With the new retail space in our Welcome Center thriving, we are expanding our offerings, adding new designs. The first of the new designs came from Madelyn Witruk, OHOK Things, focusing on Pride in the community. Madelyn not only designed the colorful tee, she printed it as well in her studio. The tees came out in time for the annual CU Pride Fest, with many picking it up for the parade. Come get yours today and stay tuned for more fun items coming soon! Our total sales for this quarter were over \$2,700.



Social Media & Web Stats



Facebook

Everyday Kitchen
6,348 Reach
222 Reactions
14 Shares

10,151
Followers



Twitter

Summer Band
1,231 Views
36 Engagements

6,389
Followers



Instagram

CU Pride Shirt
6,435 Views
283 Likes
17 Shares

6,395
Followers



TikTok

Lao Sze Chuan
2,799 Views
223 Likes
37 Shares

1,448
Followers

Website Report

58,122 Visits
94,287 Page Views
48,659 New Visits
1.62 Pages/Session

Top Visited Pages

Festivals for All this Autumn
Calendar of Events
U of I School Checklist
Music & Entertainment
Food & Drink

84.7%

of website traffic is from outside the greater
Champaign County area

53.6%

is from outside of Illinois

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

Illinois Office of Tourism
City of Champaign
University of Illinois
Champaign Rotary Club

Destination Leader

Busey
Carle
City of Urbana

Destination Builder

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Ameren | OSF Healthcare |
| Champaign County | University of Illinois |
| Community Foundation of East Central Illinois | Community Credit Union |
| Hyatt Hotel | Village of Rantoul |
| | Village of Savoy |

Destination Backer

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Lynne & Dick Barnes | Village of Mahomet |
| Copper Creek Church | Janet & Doug Nelson |
| CU Public Health District | Randall & Marcia Nelson |
| D&V Farms | Parkland College |
| First State Bank | Robeson Family Benefit Fund |
| Gies College of Business | City of Tuscola |
| I Hotel & Conference Center | Urbana Park District |
| Illinois American Water | Village of St. Joseph |
| Sarah Laufenberg | |

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



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Shayla Maatuka, Matuuka Al-Heeti Emkes, LLC
Michael McDonald, Wood N' Hog Barbecue
Caleb Miller, Carle
Jacob Paul, Champaign County Board
Vanna Pianfetti, Champaign City Council
Sam Santhanam, I Hotel & Conference Center
Katie Simpson, Village of Savoy
Charles Smith, Village of Rantoul

Visit Champaign County Team

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Jayne DeLuce, President & CEO
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Caitlyn Floyd, Director of Sales & International Travel
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Marcus Flinn, Communications Manager
Tim Oravec, Community Development Manager
Brooke Mayer, Director of Administrative Services
Estella Samii, Visitor Experience Coordinator
Leslie Lundy, Finance Manager



2022-2023 Visit Champaign County Foundation Board of Directors

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Matt Buchi, Men's Wheelchair Basketball, University of Illinois

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Max Mitchell, ReMax
Katie Miller, Busey
Susan Muirhead, University of Illinois Brand Hub
Lowa Mwilambwe, University of Illinois Student Affairs
Jon Salvani, University of Illinois, College of Fine & Applied Arts
Dan Waldinger, Mahomet Recreation
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