

Living Outside of Ordinary

As we enter autumn and all that season brings to the greater Champaign County area, we reflect back on summer days. When you ask the average person how many days they can remember from this past summer, you'll often get strong recollections from a handful of days. The saying, "where did the time go?" is often heard at the passing of a month or a season.

The days people remember are the ones where something different occurred, helping it to solidify a place in people's memory.

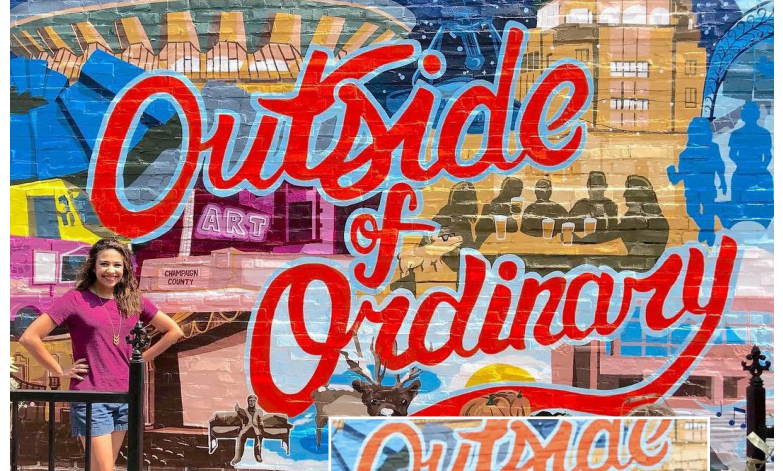
In the spirit of helping residents and visitors make more memories, Visit Champaign County launched their "Living Outside of Ordinary" campaign in early September. The year-long campaign is designed to get people to discover new places throughout the greater Champaign County area that they may not have experienced by featuring seven ideas each week, from large to small, to inspire individuals to discover something new.

While VCC regularly promotes ideas on events to attend and attractions to visit, this campaign will focus more on everyday activities to break routines and make memories. Over the course of the next year, VCC will collectively brainstorm a range of ideas, such as trying a new cuisine, shopping at a local boutique, taking in an art gallery, or simply finding a new trail for an evening walk.

We are looking to engage with the community and visitors as they take on this challenge to live Outside of Ordinary. Social media users are encouraged to share photos of new experiences using

#OutsideOfOrdinary, which will be shared on social channels and the website to help inspire others. Users of the hashtag will also be entered in a monthly drawing to win an Outside of Ordinary t-shirt.

"It's really a grass-roots effort to create local brand ambassadors. There is no destination branding without residents. If they have these new experiences, they will share it with friends and family, often outside of the area," states Jayne DeLuce, president and CEO. "If our community believes in our Outside of Ordinary destination, visitors will too, which aids in bringing tax revenue to our area, providing more opportunities



for workers, and a better quality of life for our residents."

The "Outside of Ordinary" tagline was developed by VCC in 2016 to capture the visitor experience, which could range from a slow-food dinner on a farm to delighting in a show at Krannert Center, or hiking amongst art at Allerton Park & Retreat Center. It is utilized in all marketing campaigns across print, digital, TV and radio to promote the greater Champaign County area. Most recently, Visit Champaign County worked with illustrator, David Michael Moore, and painter, Madelyn Witruk, to create a mural showcasing the Outside of Ordinary tagline alongside mainstay attractions on the Champaign County Welcome Center exterior wall, adjacent to the Blind Pig Brewery.

Residents should stay tuned to Visit Champaign County's social media channels for weekly inspiration through blog posts, video and user-generated content. Terri Reifsteck says, "We're really excited to launch this campaign and engage further with our community. If we can inspire people to create a few more memories each month, we'll consider it a success."



FROM OUR CEO



Illinois Homecoming is a long-standing tradition, so I'm excited to celebrate this week with many festive orange and blue activities!

Looking back, the first quarter of FY19 presented key events promoting the greater Champaign County area as a destination, including the Illinois Triathlon Championships at Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, Airsoft Republic Sleeping Giant at the Rantoul Aviation Center, and the Illinois Bicentennial Celebration at the Champaign County History Museum.

Equally important were our advocacy and community relations efforts, with hosting the Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours at our downtown location, and taking our show on the road to host the IHSA Appreciation Tailgate at their headquarters.

Long-term, I'm most excited about what's next in developing our destination with projects such as expansion of the Kickapoo Rail Trail into Urbana as part of an overall long-term master trails plan for the whole area, creating The Yards in downtown Champaign, evaluating the downtown Champaign Plaza, and advocating for increased air service and expanded rail service.

And Illinois passed a state budget, so we are truly appreciative of FY19 tourism grants through the Illinois Office of Tourism, which makes up over 50% of our operating budget.

To complement the state funding, we continued to actively advocate for local funding with our strategic, regional and hotel partners, and build our local private and media support through the Visit Champaign County Foundation for community initiatives, such as the regional film office (housed through VCC), event bid incentives, destination development projects, and more.

To round out the busy first quarter, a major shout out to Mac Condill and Christy Miller, our Arthur regional partners, for coordinating a fantastic Board FAM Tour to the Arthur area as part of our September board meeting—it was great!!

Thank you to our destination management partners and hospitality industry job force who support VCC efforts and we look forward to your continued involvement. It takes a unified effort to invest in a destination's economic growth and community well-being. We are making good progress!

Jayne DeLuce



Board FAM Tour

Each September, the Visit Champaign County Board of Directors embarks on a familiarization tour to learn first-hand about attractions and business in our community. This year's tour took place in Arthur on September 27. Guides from the area joined us to educate our board and team on Arthur's Amish culture. Stops included the Das Holz Haus to learn about their woodworking craft, downtown Arthur and the Arthur General Store featuring local artisans, the Great Pumpkin Patch with cider slushies and pumpkin bread, a tour through Aikman Wildlife Adventure, quick shopping at Beachy's, and finally a delicious lunch at Yoder's Kitchen.

Our board and team left filled with an Outside of Ordinary experience, ready to share with visitors!



40 North Update Friday Night Live

The streets of downtown Champaign came alive on Fridays this summer as 40 North presented their popular Friday Night Live series. This year, four locations throughout the downtown district featured local bands for thirteen weeks. Each week also featured a kids

activity, including the Kids Sidewalk Chalk contest on August 3. These lively nights filled the seats at local restaurants, brought shoppers into the local boutiques and shops, and generated significant impact for the community, while also providing opportunities for new and establish local artists to perform.

Connecting with Visitors

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

75
walk-ins

198
emails

368
calls

18,292

Visitors Guides distributed

OUT & ABOUT

Chamber After Hours

Visit Champaign County hosted the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce's After Hours on August 16 at the Welcome Center. The evening showcased various aspects of our community to over 80 Chamber members, where they enjoyed gelato from Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery, pizza from Pizzeria Antica, and brews from the Blind Pig while they networked. Guests were also encouraged to take their photos with our recently unveiled mural!

U of I Admissions Tour

Caitlyn took a group of 20 regional representatives from the University of Illinois Undergraduate Admissions office on an area tour to help better serve them when presenting the University as a possibility to potential students. Regional representatives included Texas, California, and New York. Highlights included showcasing the local arts scene, both Urbana and Champaign's downtown, Prairie Fruits Farm, Curtis Orchard, the Virginia Theatre as well as an overview on local festivals, area shopping, and ease of transportation.

Illinois Made Fall Market

Enjoy Illinois hosted a pop-up Market in Pioneer Court, off Michigan Ave. in Chicago on September 26. Two Champaign County area makers participated in the half-day event—Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery and the Great Pumpkin Patch. Mac created a stunning display which served as a backdrop for many photos, while Leslie served various styles of their goat cheese with many learning about their farm. Terri attended and assisted Leslie with samples, and also talked about the community with the hundreds of patrons that descended on the square.



Bicentennial Celebration

Champaign County was one of seven locations across the state of Illinois to participate in a Bicentennial Cake Cutting on August 26. Our hosts at the Champaign County History Museum provided complimentary books to guests and showcased an educational presentation on the formation of the counties within the state. 200 slices of free cheesecake, provided by Illinois Maker Eli's Cheesecake, were handed out to guests throughout the afternoon. It was a tasty celebration of Illinois' Bicentennial!

CCAR Expo

Terri and Caitlyn attended the Champaign County Association of Realtors Conference on September 18 to engage with our community's many real estate agents. They shared the resources Visit Champaign County has to offer, including Visitors Guides, maps, postcards and more. As realtors are often the first contact, it is important to share our story to engage residents from the moment they first arrive in the greater Champaign County area.

Destinations International Convention & CDME

Jayne participated in two Certification Destination Management Executive (CDME) classes on July 7–10: "Strategic Issues in Destination Management" and "Destination Brand Development" followed by participating in the Destinations International (DI) Convention on July 10–13 in Anaheim, CA. She also participated in the DI Advocacy Committee meeting while there.

UMCVB

The Visit Champaign County team traveled to Lake Geneva, Wisconsin for the annual Upper Midwest Convention and Visitors Bureau Conference, September 9–11. The conference was filled with keynote speakers and breakout sessions that focused on sales, marketing and customer service. Jayne, who serves on the UMCVB Board, played an integral role in the planning of the conference and the agenda. The team was able to meet with vendors and network with our peers from around the Midwest.



IHSA Tailgate

Our efforts to keep a positive relationship with IHSA continued with our popular IHSA Tailgate, held September 7! Members of our sports community, local hotels and VCC Board and staff headed to Bloomington to network with IHSA staff during a great luncheon, with amazing food provided by C&C Kitchen. There was much conversation about hosting basketball and single A tennis. We're very excited to continue football and wrestling and look forward to adding more sports in the future.

Illinois Triathlon Championships

The first triathlon competition, hosted by 3 Disciplines at Lake of the Woods, September 23, was a true success with 230 competitors from 12 states, including Hawaii. After cultivating a relationship with the planners, VCC worked with the Champaign County Forest Preserve staff to bring the triathlon to fruition, with tremendous help from volunteers from the Forest Preserve, along with VCC staff and other volunteers. We greatly appreciate the support from Carle Hospital and both the County Sheriff's Department and Mahomet Police Department.

Airsoft Republic

The Airsoft Republic's first ever event, "Sleeping Giant", held September 8--9 at Grissom Hall at the Rantoul Aviation Center, was a massive success! Despite rainy weather, over 160 competitors travelled to Rantoul to compete, arriving from several Midwest states, and as far away as Las Vegas. We are in talks to bring back this competition soon.

Occupancy Rate

Reporting July & August 2018

Champaign **63.5%**

Bloomington **57.1%**

Peoria **58.8%**

Springfield/Decatur **60.8%**

Average Daily Rate

Reporting July & August 2018

Champaign **\$78.82**

Bloomington **\$80.37**

Peoria **\$97.14**

Springfield/Decatur **\$91.79**

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS

Springfield Sales Mission

Caitlyn conducted a successful sales mission in Springfield on July 23 with a number of our hotel partners, targeting associations based in that area. Two teams made 37 stops to meeting planners with interest in conference and event space in our area. As a follow up, a city-wide FAM tour will be conducted with many of the same associations and planners the teams had meetings.



ISAE Summer Session

Caitlyn attended ISAE Summer Session in Peoria, July 25-27, which offered opportunities to engage with 32 association planners from across the state. The purpose of the conference is to meet with Illinois association executives in a networking environment to grow relationships and promote the greater Champaign County area as the place to host their

conferences, meetings, and events. One highlight was getting planners to wear Outside of Ordinary shirts for a morning group activity!

SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS

Connect Marketplace

The VCC Sales team travelled to Salt Lake City, UT for Connect 2018, August 23-25. Caitlyn and Ryan met with over 60 event planners and rights holders in various markets during their meetings. The team is excited to come back with new business for the area along with maintaining relationships with planners that utilize our facilities for their conferences and events. Many organizations were interested in The Yards as a potential new facility for sports and conference space.

Small Market Meetings

Caitlyn attended Small Market Meetings Conference in Ontario, California, September 23-25, which is specifically geared for small to medium sized groups looking to book in tier 2 and 3 cities. Caitlyn met with 33 planners from across the country and came home with five RFP requests and one confirmed site visit.

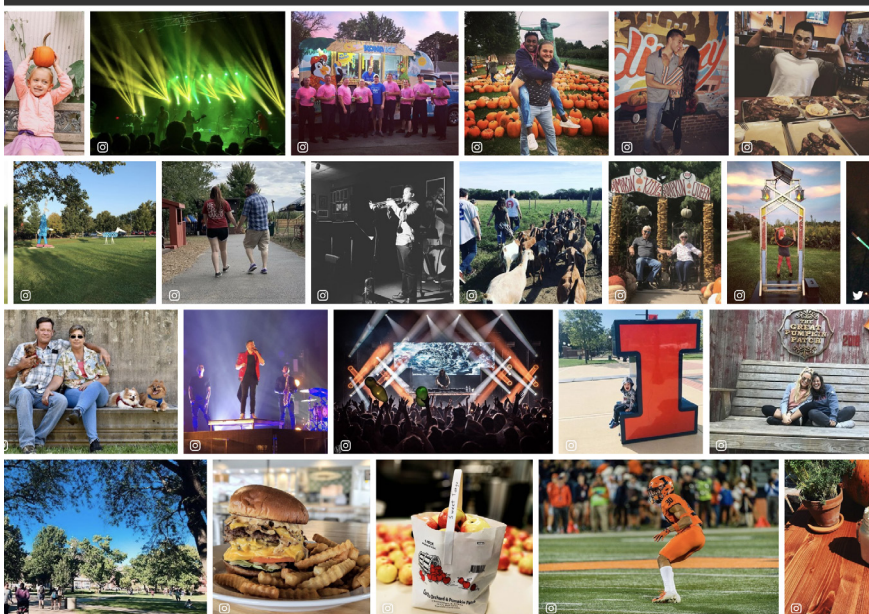
ESTO

Terri attended U.S. Travel Association's ESTO conference in Phoenix, AZ, August 11-14, for educational marketing sessions. This is one of the industry's largest, and most informative continuing education conferences, with both state tourism offices and local DMO's in attendance to hear from keynote speakers and breakout sessions. Terri brought back many ideas from a full four days of learning.

CrowdRiff

As part of a statewide co-op program, VCC is utilizing CrowdRiff to aggregate user generated content (UGC). Using location tags and hashtags, we are able to track and view content created on Instagram and Twitter that feature our destination. UGC is growing as a marketing tool, showcasing real people out and about at our area attractions. It also makes it easier for VCC to comment, like and share content that highlights our community. A gallery featuring posts from our area can now be found on VisitChampaignCounty.org and will be utilized in additional marketing materials moving forward.

Living #OUTSIDEORDINARY



SPORTS & EVENTS

15 leads	3 tentative	6 definite
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1,500
estimated room nights

CONFERENCES

17 leads	5 tentative	12 definite
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3,090
estimated room nights

GROUP TOUR

2 leads	1 tentative	1 definite
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30
estimated room nights

LEAD: Potential business distributed to hotels
TENTATIVE LEAD: Potential business, no commitment yet
DEFINITE LEAD: Business secured



2018-2019 Visitors Guide

The annual Champaign County Area Visitors Guide was released in early August, coinciding with the new academic year. The guide continues to showcase stories on what makes our area Outside of Ordinary, with articles featuring local flavors, top ways to experience arts & culture, where and when to enjoy live music, family adventures, trails to try, local gifts, and much more. Continuing to showcase local makers and artisans, this year's publication features Gretchen Walker, Central Illinois Bakehouse; Ann & Devon Flesor, Flesor's Candy Kitchen; Michael & Okema, Wood N' Hog BBQ; Cammie Meerdink, Piper Pottery; and Megan Dietrich, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. This year, the City of Tuscola was added to the guide, featuring many of the local businesses and attractions. 70,000 copies of the guides were printed, with over 15,000 distributed in the first few weeks to local businesses, hotels and many departments at the University of Illinois. An electronic version is also available on the VCC website.

TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Facebook
Mural
199 Likes
34 Shares
15.8K Reach



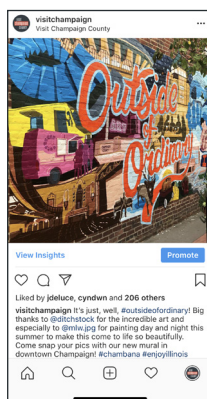
5,624
Followers



Twitter
Top College Town
15 Retweets
39 likes
6.2K impressions



5,659
Followers



Instagram
Mural
208 likes
1800 impressions



3,302
Followers



Ads Placed in Q1

LEISURE

AAA Living | Midwest Living

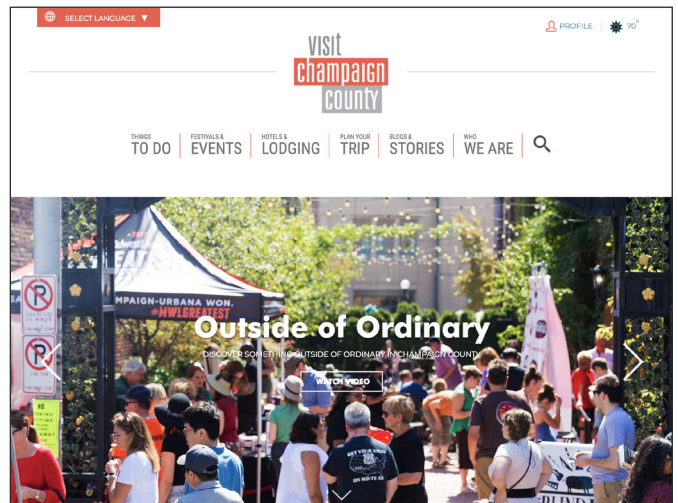
GROUP

Leisure Group Travel
Group Tour Media Online Itinerary

247

reader responses

5 press releases resulting
in **55** media placements.



Website Report

54,736 Visits
144,305 Page Views
50,287 New Visits
2.02 Pages/Session
01:40 Avg. Length of Visit

Top Visited Pages

Calendar of Events
Champaign County Fair
Urbana Sweetcorn Festival

Things to Do
CU Pride Festival

65.18%

of website traffic is from outside the greater
Champaign County area

23.29%

is from Chicago

Our Mission

Advance the overall visitor destination experience for the greater Champaign County area, in collaboration with community stakeholders, to strengthen the local economy and quality of life.

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

Silver Partners

Illinois American Water :: Parkland College

Village of Rantoul

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 :: Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham :: Hilton Garden 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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Annie Murray Easterday, Pear Tree Estate

Derek Peterson, Allerton Park & Retreat Center

Dennis Robertson, Market Place Shopping Center

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Visit Champaign County Team

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Ryan Reid, Director of Sports & Special Events

Taylor Bauer, Communications Manager

Jen Peddycoart, Office Manager

Leslie Lundy, Finance Manager

Brooke Mayer, Customer Service Assistant

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