

# DESTINATION 2023

As we near the completion of Destination 2020, our VCC Board is working on the Destination 2023 Strategic Plan. Non-profit Boards operate very differently than those of corporate America. The DMO Board's Strategic Plan is an action plan for board members and identifies Board goals and objectives to propel the organization and destination forward.

The DMO Business Plan, including the sales and marketing plans, is the action plan for staff that identifies those goals and day-to-day tactics to guide operations.

After researching several companies, the VCC Board approved an agreement with Bill Geist, DMOpvoz, based out of Madison, WI. For DMOpvoz, the key to developing highly effective strategic plans is through deep and interactive community engagement. They encourage clients to include staging conversations and discussions with key community influencers, governmental leaders and industry stakeholders and partners along with the leadership of the DMO.

From these assignments, destinations have moved successfully to pursue destination-defining projects as well as connect the dots on infrastructure upgrades and make their communities more attractive for residents and visitors alike.

**June 3, 2019**— Surveys were sent to community influencers, including strategic partners, Foundation partners, elected officials, hotel partners, regional partners, and various business stakeholders.

**June 25-26, 2019**— A total of 10 strategizing sessions were hosted by Bill Geist with key community influencers at Lodgic.

**June 27, 2019**— The strategic planning board retreat was facilitated by Bill at Salt Fork Center at Homer Lake, narrowing down top ideas to move forward around issues such as funding, advocacy, industry partnerships and more.

Following these planning sessions, a three-year strategic plan will be drafted that identifies the goals, objectives and suggested tactics of the top ideas developed by the Board. The drafts will be discussed with the VCC Board, team, and any additional stakeholder input. The final document(s) will include a synopsis of discussions and concepts



aired during the planning session, as well as the stakeholder interviews/focus groups and the surveys.

Finally, Bill Geist will return to present the Plan to the Board and stakeholders to convey that their voices were heard and incorporated into VCC's Strategic Plan. This is a great way to engage as many people as possible for support and engagement at every level.

In the end, supporting destination promotion benefits the well-being of every person in our community. As a public good, it is an essential community investment to develop opportunities and build quality of life for the people of our Outside of Ordinary community. Everything starts from that point.



## International Dark Sky Park Designation

On June 1, the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve unveiled their new designation as an International Dark Sky Park. As the only one in the state, Middle Fork is officially the best location in Illinois to get a view of the night sky. Visit Champaign County was present at the celebration and shared how important this recognition is in drawing visitors to the area. Congratulations to the Champaign County Forest Preserve District and the C-U Astronomical Society for their efforts to make this happen.



## FROM OUR CEO

Advocacy is one of our core values in educating stakeholders and residents our role within the community to strengthen economic growth and truly improve the quality of life living here.

The 4th quarter presented advocacy outreach efforts, including travel to DC with Champaign County First from June 10-13 to lobby for infrastructure projects; hosting the Toast to Tourism and recognizing Tourism Impact Award winners; welcoming runners from all over the world for the Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon, along with hosting the Sports Illinois Huddle.

I also had the opportunity to serve on the search committee to hire Tim Bannon as the new Director of the UI Willard Airport, and he will be a great leader for our community. We also welcomed Tom Wellborn as our first-ever full-time summer intern from the University of Illinois Recreation, Sports & Tourism Dept.

This quarter, we celebrated outgoing board members: Jesse Hines (Courtyard by Marriott), Derek Peterson (Allerton Park & Retreat Center), and Rachel Storm (City of Urbana.) Each of them has truly brought a terrific perspective and ongoing support, and we know they will continue as brand ambassadors to carry on our mission.

At the same time, we welcomed new board members: Bridget Broihahn (City of Urbana,) Nathan Escue (Hamilton Walker's,) and John Hammond (Candlewood Suites,) and we look forward to their journey as board members.

We also celebrated a year of wonderful leadership from Rob Kowalski as FY19 Board Chair and appreciated his guidance and support. We welcomed Laura Bleill as the new FY20 Board Chair and look forward to her guiding our efforts toward Destination 2023. This is going to be another great year!

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

## Connecting with Visitors

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

47

walk-ins

99

emails

375

calls

14,058

Visitors Guides distributed



### Champaign County First DC Trip

Jayne traveled with Champaign County First to Washington DC on June 10-13 to advocate for economic development infrastructure projects, including Amtrak service, high speed rail, the I-57/74 interchange, Curtis Road underpass, Mahomet Aquifer mapping, Kickapoo Rail Trail expansion, Illinois Autonomous & Connected Track, Royal Wastewater system, and The Yards project. They met with Illinois elected delegates, US DOT, Amtrak, Destinations International, the National Resources Conservation Service, and the University of Illinois/State of Illinois DC Office. Overall, a very successful advocacy outreach trip!



### Welcome Tom!

VCC welcomes a full-time summer intern, Tom Wellborn. Tom is a recent graduate of the Recreation, Sports, and Tourism program at the University of Illinois. Tom's internship requires him to plan a major tourism event, distribute materials to area visitor centers, and how to sell the greater Champaign County area as a destination. Tom is also working with the sales team on the VCC 2020 Sales Plan, and is also assisting the marketing department with website content.



### IHSA Golf Outing

Visit Champaign County representatives Jesse Hines, Tom Wellborn, Mike Ingram, and Pastor Willie G. Comer Jr. hit the links at the annual IHSA Foundation Golf Outing on June 11 in Bloomington. They did not let the sand traps or water hazards get in the way of having a great time networking with various members of the IHSA Foundation and representing the greater Champaign County area.





## 40 North Update—Boneyard Arts Festival

The annual Boneyard Arts Festival, held April 4–7, was one of the largest yet with over 100 venues and artists participating in this unique event. From Thursday–Sunday, venues across campus, Champaign, Urbana, and countywide were taken over with local art. Showcasing visual art and performances, thousands explored our community, taking part in demonstrations, discovering new venues, and purchasing local art. The festival returns in 2020 over Mom's Weekend, April 2–5.

# OUT & ABOUT

## Toast to Tourism

The Visit Champaign County Foundation celebrated local people, events, businesses, stakeholders, and partners at the 7th Annual Toast to Tourism, May 15 from 4:00–6:00 p.m. at the I Hotel & Conference Center under the theme Travel Matters. The program featured special guest speakers including Wes Jarrell, Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery; Mary Ellen Wuellner, CCFPD; Sam Santhanam, I Hotel & Conference Center; and Laura Bleill, ChambanaMoms.com. Additionally, the annual Tourism Impact Awards were given to five deserving individuals and organizations. This year's winners include: Champaign County History Museum; Sam Issa, Sam's Café; Cindy Reynolds, William M. Staerkel Planetarium & Parkland Theatre; Mike Ross, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts; and Paty Stipes, American Airlines.



## Meijer 27th Mile & Wooden Nickel

Visit Champaign County hosted the Meijer 27th Mile Celebrate Victory Bash following the Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon, which invited runners and their supporters to the area for food, music, vendors, and of course beer! Riggs Beer Company brewed a special beer for marathon runners to enjoy after finishing their race. VCC received positive feedback from many vendors and will continue to tweak the 27th Mile to engage more visitors and locals.

Additionally, the popular Wooden Nickel Program encouraged visitors and locals alike to get out and enjoy the community by providing discounts at local restaurants, attractions, and businesses. At the Health & Fitness Expo, we distributed the Wooden Nickels and talked about the community to visitors.

## ICCVB Spring Meeting

Jayne, Caitlyn, and Ryan attended the ICCVB Spring Meeting, May 1–2, in Mt. Vernon.

The two-day meeting discussed new ideas that partner DMO's are incorporating, niche committee meetings, a presentation by the Owensboro, Kentucky DMO detailing how they made their mark on the Bourbon Trail and increased tourism to their area, overview of "Travel Matters" campaign for National Travel and Tourism Week. Additionally, at the conference Jayne was welcomed as the new ICCVB Chair.

## U of I Orientation

For the second year, VCC worked with University of Illinois Admissions to welcome new students and parents during orientation. Caitlyn attended a student guide training and educated the guides on our community's highlights. Each new student received a copy of the Visitors Guide in their welcome bag at orientation, and VCC had a daily presence at the Illini Union for the first six weeks of summer. At the booth, we educated parents and students on the community, and encouraged parents to make hotel reservations for upcoming major events.

# SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS



## Sports Huddle Illinois

Visit Champaign County hosted the annual Sports Illinois Huddle, April 16–18. Sixteen Illinois DMOs and 15 sports planners and tournament directors descended on Champaign County for education, networking, and one-on-one meetings. During the conference, Illinois Athletics played an integral role with a keynote by Josh Whitman, and by offering tours that were both exciting and educational. The tour included a behind-the-scenes look at Memorial Stadium, the Demirjian Golf Practice Facility including a talk with Coach Mike Small, along with touring the US Paralympic Training Site and the ARC. Over three days, we utilized multiple venues and caterers, and showcased area attractions. The conference began with an Illini Baseball game and tailgate with J.T. Walker's and C&C Kitchen and concluded with business meetings held at the 77 Club. Ryan met with several planners who are excited to bring events to the area.

## Circle Wisconsin

Caitlyn attended Circle Wisconsin in Galena, April 7–9. Tour Illinois sponsored a dinner and gave away two Illinois-inspired gift baskets to two lucky travel planners. The two-day tradeshow allowed Caitlyn to meet with 27 tour operators for one-on-one appointments to discuss and highlight the unique attractions and group friendly activities throughout our region.



## National Association of Sports Commissions

NASC, held April 6–9 in Knoxville, Tennessee, and the Sports Illinois Pay-to-Play (P2P) provided a great business-building opportunity for VCC. Ryan met with 22 planners and networked with an additional 15 individuals interested in bringing sports tourism in Illinois. The P2P was hosted at Neyland Stadium and featured a private tour, dinner in the private suites, and a spirited keynote from legendary Vols coach, Johnny Majors. Business took place on an open trade-show floor with appointments that ran for 9 minutes at a time. Many planners were interested in the potential development of The Yards and the Rantoul Sports Complex. Additionally, several planners including the Great Inflatable Race, USA Softball, and the Ali Krieger Football Camp, are all excited about current opportunities here.

## Occupancy Rate

Reporting March–May 2019

Champaign **59.5%**

Bloomington **53.8%**

Peoria **57.8%**

Springfield/Decatur **60.5%**

## Average Daily Rate

Reporting March–May 2019

Champaign **\$93.80**

Bloomington **\$78.98**

Peoria **\$103.26**

Springfield/Decatur **\$88.28**

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

## SPORTS & EVENTS

7  
leads

5  
tentative

2  
definite

**4,000**

estimated room nights

## CONFERENCES

14  
leads

10  
tentative

4  
definite

**1,125**

estimated room nights

## GROUP TOUR

5  
leads

1  
tentative

4  
definite

**LEAD:** Potential business distributed to hotels

**TENTATIVE LEAD:** Potential business, no commitment yet

**DEFINITE LEAD:** Business secured





## Tourism Academy

Caitlyn and Ryan attended the iDSS Tourism Academy, May 20–23 in Pittsburgh, PA, for hands-on training and breakout sessions geared toward DMO's and clients using their products. The trainings were hugely beneficial to the sales team as iDSS is the lead system used to distribute all communications to our hotel partners. The team learned new best practices as well as getting refreshers on several useful tools within the database. Caitlyn and Ryan will be bringing these trainings to their hotel partners directly by doing one-on-one trainings and refreshers with each property independently starting in August.

## CMO Summit

Terri attended Destinations International CMO Summit, April 28–30, in Houston for education and networking. This intimate conference is for CMOs and upper-level marketing staff from destinations around the world, providing numerous opportunities for discussion on what each DMO is doing to improve their marketing efforts. The keynote sessions provided valuable takeaways, and the roundtable discussions were invaluable in generating new ideas and confirming that Visit Champaign County is on the same path as the large DMOs with large marketing departments.

## Hotel Partner Meeting

Caitlyn hosted the June Hotel Partner Meeting on June 28 at Willard Airport. The meeting focused around the new incentive roll outs, marketing updates from Terri, Champaign County AirBnB data, and general hotel, special event, and VCC updates.

## Recruiting Roundtable & Tour

On May 6, Terri participated in a Recruiters Roundtable in collaboration with the Champaign County EDC and the University of Illinois Dual Career Program. Recruiters from top employers such as Carle, Christie Clinic, OSF, Busey, Wolfram, and Urbana and Champaign School Districts attended to learn about VCCs recruiting services and to discuss challenges faced in recruitment efforts. Following up on the roundtable, our organizations partnered with MTD to host a community tour on June 19. The two-hour tour took recruiters to various attractions around Champaign-Urbana as well as a stop at Willard Airport with Terri serving as the tour guide. The tour is instrumental in educating and training those on the front-line of recruitment about the talking points for our community.

## Catalyze

Terri attended the Catalyze Networking event at Research Park on May 21. This event is a professional networking event for tech companies and those looking to grow their career. VCC had a table to showcase the recruiting services available to tech companies, as well as educate those searching for careers on our Outside of Ordinary community. Many conversations were had with graduate students, who have since emailed the adventures they've had in the community.

*"Thank you very much for the city tour today! It was very informative and living here for actually 40 years - I learned a lot!!! I feel new residents will thoroughly enjoy this ride around both cities learning of the various places to go and do."*

—Mary Racioppi, Carle



## Maker Videos

Two more maker videos were released, highlighting Outside of Ordinary individuals in our community. On April 9, a video featuring Jim Downey, owner and artist at Prairie Fire Glass in Monticello was released on Facebook and YouTube. The video had 196 shares and 15,000 views—our most viewed maker video! In June, a video featuring Kaya DeFehr, owner and baker with Hopscotch Bakery, launched to showcase the beautiful space and artistic creations. The video was viewed over 6,000 times. Additional maker videos will continue to be released, showcasing those businesses and individuals who make our area a destination.

**Hopscotch Bakery:** [youtu.be/qyRt4YzAWLY](https://youtu.be/qyRt4YzAWLY)  
**Prairie Fire Glass:** [youtu.be/NNJEKFhfO5k](https://youtu.be/NNJEKFhfO5k)

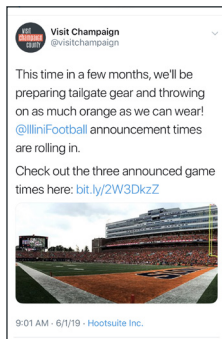
## TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



**Facebook**  
 Middle Fork River  
 189 Likes  
 21 Shares  
 5,315 Reach



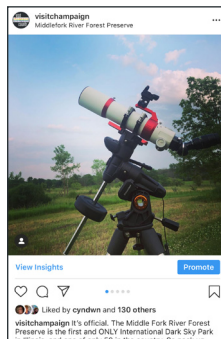
**6,125**  
 Followers



**Twitter**  
 Football Schedule  
 7 Retweets  
 44 likes  
 16.2K impressions



**5,952**  
 Followers



**Instagram**  
 Middle Fork  
 131 likes  
 1,872 impressions



**4,383**  
 Followers



## Ads Placed in Q4 LEISURE

Travel Illinois | NWBA Program Ad  
 Marathon Program | AAA Living |  
 Midwest Living

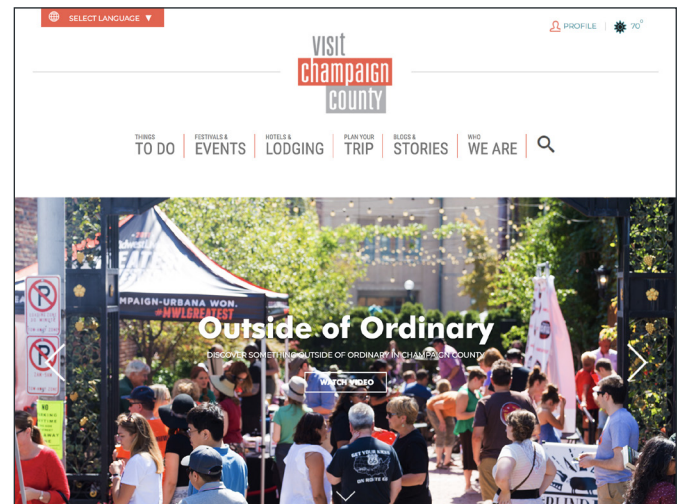
## MEETINGS

Illinois Meetings + Events

**636**

reader responses

**2** press releases resulting in **41** media placements.



## Website Report

51,738 Visits  
 108,034 Page Views  
 38,132 New Visits  
 2.09 Pages/Session  
 01:46 Avg. Length of Visit

## Top Visited Pages

Calendar of Events  
 Girlfriend Getaways  
 Things to Do  
 Must Stop Foodie Spots  
 Arthur Freedom Celebration

**54.03%**

of website traffic is from outside the greater  
 Champaign County area

**30.32%**

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 :: Hilton Garden Inn :: Holiday 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](http://visitchampaigncounty.org/partners)



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**Laura Bleill**, Vice Chair, University of Illinois Research Park

**Bryan Snodgrass**, Treasurer, Busey

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

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**Bob Flider**, University of Illinois

**Richard Helton**, Village of Savoy

**Jesse Hines**, Courtyard by Marriott

**Mike Ingram**, Champaign County Board

**Shayla Maatuka**, Matuuka AI-Heeti Emkes, LLC

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**Derek Peterson**, Allerton Park & Retreat Center

**Dennis Robertson**, Market Place Shopping Center

**Rachel Storm**, City of Urbana

### Visit Champaign County Team

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**Jayne DeLuce**, President & CEO

**Terri Reifsteck**, Vice President of Marketing

**Caitlyn Floyd**, Director of Sales

**Ryan Reid**, Director of Sports & Special Events

**Taylor Bauer**, Communications Manager

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**Leslie Lundy**, Finance Manager

**Brooke Mayer**, Visitor Experience Coordinator

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Farm :: 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

### 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\* :: V. Picasso/Willow Creek Farm\*

\*2016 Charter Partner