



2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT



planting
new seeds

visit **champaign** county



A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Rich Thomas
Retired, Village of Rantoul
Chair, Board of Directors
2014-2015

Visit Champaign County began fiscal year 2015 with a strong focus on planting seeds in new markets—African American heritage, LGBT, ecotourism and sustainable travel, cultural tourism and Chinese travelers. These growth markets guided the staff in a successful year of generating significant increases in economic impact with a variety of new groups and events making Champaign County their destination.

A revitalized Visitors Guide was created, better telling Champaign County's story, from our agricultural adventures to our diverse arts & culture scene. The Sister Singer's Network National Women's Choral Festival took over Krannert Center as hundreds of lesbian and feminist performers from around the country attended workshops and performed for their peers. The MVP Illinois Lacrosse Tournament made its debut in the Midwest, drawing the nation's top lacrosse players and college recruiters, showcasing the country's fastest growing sport. Our sales team attended tradeshow such as Diversity Summit, Active America China, the African American Travel Conference and IPW, talking to planners and tour operators within our growth markets, paving the way for new business to make its way to your community.

All sales and marketing efforts fell in line with Visit Champaign County's mission to market Champaign County and a diverse set of events, in collaboration with community stakeholders, to attract and serve visitors, and to positively impact the local economy and quality of life.

In order to carry out its mission and vision, Visit Champaign County relies on its Tourism Development Fund for recruiting and retaining county-wide events. We appreciate the following Tourism Partners: City of Champaign, University of Illinois, Champaign County, Village of Savoy, Parkland College, Illinois American Water, Allerton Park & Retreat Center, Village of Rantoul, Busey, The News-Gazette, Carle, City of Urbana, McDonald's, Robeson Family Benefit Fund, Urbana Park District, Village of Mahomet and Village of St. Joseph. We appreciate all in the area that recognize the benefits of tourism in our community and invest in its future.

These investments in tourism ultimately make their way back to the Champaign County community, putting tax dollars back into residents' pockets. Events such as the Hot Rod Power Tour—with over 3,700 hot rodders on display at Parkland College—and the IHSA State Football Championships generated millions in economic impact with significant visitor spending in our local businesses.

Guiding the efforts of the Visit Champaign County team is a dedicated Board of Directors along with input from the community teams, ensuring success for the community. Countless volunteers and hospitality staff also serve as ambassadors for countywide events. Thank you to all that support travel and tourism, and positively impact the local economy and quality of life.

As Board President for FY15, I was truly honored to work together with a diligent staff, engaged board of directors, and numerous funding partners to further Visit Champaign County's mission. I look forward to seeing these efforts continue to make a difference in this community!



Mission

To market Champaign County and a diverse set of events, in collaboration with community stakeholders, to attract and serve visitors, and to positively impact the local economy and quality of life.

Vision

To establish and promote Champaign County as a premier destination.

TOURISM PARTNERS 2014-2015

Visit Champaign County would like to thank our Tourism Partners through June 30, 2015. Through their generous contributions, we are able to attract visitors to our community for business, sports and leisure travel while also bringing significant economic impact to our county. For information on our Tourism Partner Program and how you can support our mission visit www.visitchampaigncounty.org/partners.

FOUNDING PARTNERS



PLATINUM PARTNERS



GOLD PARTNERS



Champaign County



SILVER PARTNERS



myrantoul
RANTOUL, ILLINOIS



The News-Gazette



ILLINOIS
AMERICAN WATER



ALLERTON
PARK & RETREAT CENTER



BRONZE PARTNERS

Carle

McDonald's

Urbana Park District

Village of St. Joseph

City of Urbana

Robeson Family Benefit Fund

Village of Mahomet

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015

OFFICERS:

Rich Thomas, Chair, Village of Rantoul

Rachel Coventry, Vice Chair, Curtis Orchard & Pumpkin Patch

Rob Kowalski, Treasurer, City of Champaign

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

DIRECTORS:

Mike DeLorenzo, University of Illinois

Marci Dodds, Champaign City Council

Victor Fuentes, El Toro Restaurants

Richard Helton, Village of Savoy

Greg Knott, Parkland College

Dave Krchak, Thomas, Mamer & Haughey, LLP

Max Mitchell, Champaign County Board

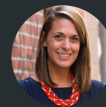
Victor Patterson, Hyatt Place Champaign

Jody Quiram, Gordyville USA

Dennis Robertson, Market Place Shopping Center

Dan Waldinger, Village of Mahomet

Sarah Zehr, University of Illinois



STAFF DIRECTORY

Jayne DeLuce, President & CEO

Terri Reifsteck, Vice President of Marketing

Leah Longueville, Director of Sales

Angie Poe, Office Manager

Leslie Lundy, Finance Manager

tourism is an economic driver

IN 2014

5.5%
increase

visitors spent
\$323.5
million

5.1%
increase

generating
\$5.3
million in local
tax receipts

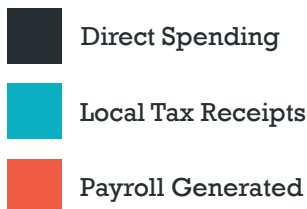
1.9%
increase

providing
2,570
jobs

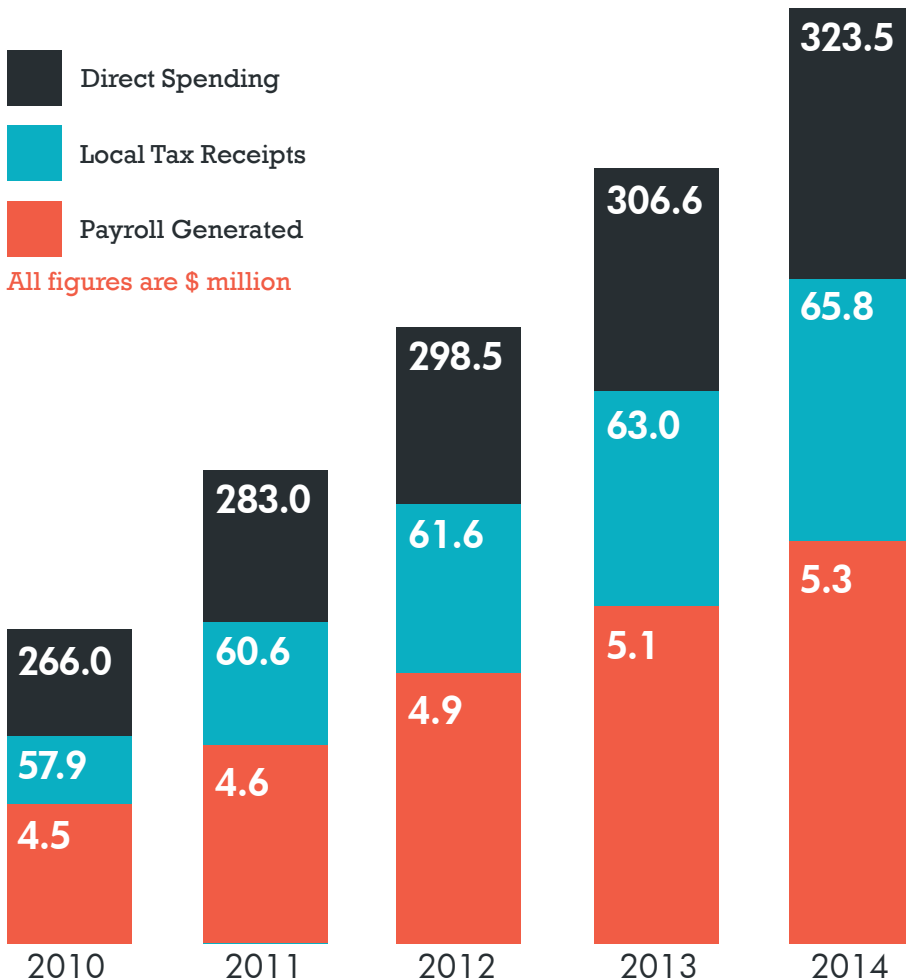
4.3%
increase

generating
\$65.8
million in payroll

5 YEAR GROWTH OF ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TRAVEL & TOURISM IN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY



All figures are \$ million



*STATISTICS PROVIDED BY THE U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

In Illinois

visitors spent
\$36.3 BILLION
generating more than
\$2.7 BILLION
in local & state tax receipts

with more than
109.4 MILLION
visitors
supporting
306,040 JOBS

saving the average
Illinois household
\$1300
in taxes each year

Major Events

Events play a major role in creating economic impact. Visit Champaign County works with planners to bring their event to the community, ensuring visitor spending through overnight stays, dining, shopping and enjoying our attractions.



THE PYGMALION FESTIVAL

Assisted with securing a \$75,000 Tourism Private Sector Grant allowing for larger headliners to participate.



IHSA STATE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Returned to Memorial Stadium with a revitalized Tent City in a new location, providing a better visitor experience.



IHSA STATE WRESTLING TOURNAMENT

Over 37,000 wrestlers and fans traveled to the State Farm Center creating \$5.5 million in economic impact.



CHRISTIE CLINIC ILLINOIS MARATHON

With 20,000 runners from around the country and the world participating, this event creates \$10 million in economic impact. New 27th Mile sponsor, Meijer, elevated the post race party with a variety of new activities.



HOT ROD POWER TOUR

3,700+ hot rodders and tens of thousands of car enthusiasts participated in the Hot Rod Power Tour at Parkland College. Local businesses benefited through the Power Tour Pint Night organized by Visit Champaign County.



MVP ILLINOIS LACROSSE TOURNAMENT

Twelve teams played for over 20 college recruiters in the first of these tournaments in the Midwest.



FOLLOW THE FARMSTEAD

Visit Champaign County implemented Follow the Farmstead, a new event in conjunction with the Champaign County Farm Bureau, featuring six Champaign County farms to visitors and residents. The event showcased corn and soybean processes, high-technology, organic farming, cattle and energy crops. Positive experiences were had by all participants.

sales & marketing strategies

Tradeshows

Visit Champaign County's presence at industry tradeshows is pertinent to recruiting and retaining business. The following shows provided our sales team the opportunity to meet with new and existing clients to discuss how Champaign County can meet their needs.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

RTO Summit West
Active America China
Farm Progress Show
Ontario Motorcoach
Association
IPWV

SPORTS

US Olympic Sportslink
TEAMS
NASC
Sports Huddle

MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS

Connect Marketplace
Small Market Meetings
ISAE Annual Meeting
Diversity Summit
ISAE Summer Session

GROUP TRAVEL

American Bus Association
Heartland Travel Showcase
African American Travel
Conference

24

MEETINGS & SPORTS
GROUPS BOOKED

39

MEETINGS & SPORTS
GROUPS LEADS

23

MOTORCOACH
GROUPS BOOKED

10,037

TOTAL SALES
CONTACTS

144

GROUPS & EVENTS
SERVICED

Marketing

A variety of marketing strategies are utilized throughout the year to ensure a comprehensive campaign promoting Champaign County as a destination. The following were employed in FY15:



PRINT

LEISURE—Midwest Living, AAA Living, Illinois Travel Guide, Illinois Spring/Summer Getaway Guide

MEETINGS—Small Market Meetings, Midwest Meetings, Illinois Meetings + Events

SPORTS—Sports Events Magazine, Sports Planning Guide

GROUP—Canadian Traveler, Leisure Group Travel

DIGITAL

LEISURE—DreamPlanGo.com

MEETINGS—Small Market Meetings, Illinois Meetings + Events

SPORTS—Sports Events Magazine

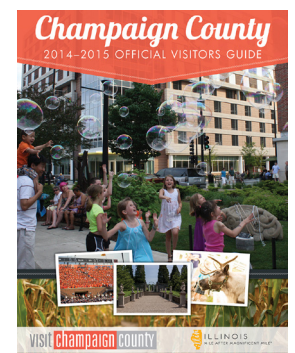
GROUP—TourOperator.com

EDITORIAL

IndyWithKids.com | OffbeatTravel.com | Passport & A Tootbrush

A Nerd at Large | Minitime.com | TravelExcursion.com

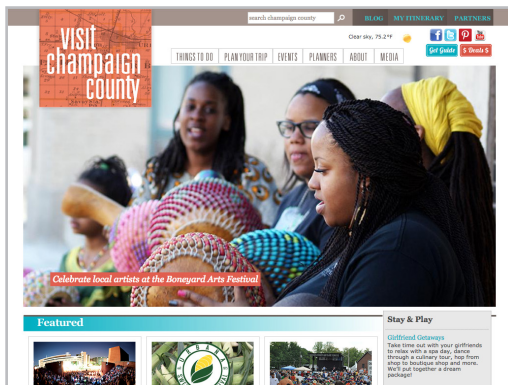
FamilyRambling.com | Family Travel Forum



70,000

VISITORS GUIDES
PRINTED & DISTRIBUTED





WEB STATS

97,596 Visits—**17.2% increase over FY14**
 586,361 Pageviews—**5.3% increase**
 88,622 Mobile Views—**85.9% increase**
 74.50% New Visits
 2.97 pages/visit

TOP VISITED PAGES

Event Calendar
 Things to Do
 Accommodations
 Dining
 Attractions
 Reception Venues



FACEBOOK

2,495 LIKES—14.1% increase

TWITTER

3,804 FOLLOWERS—39.7% increase

INSTAGRAM

855 FOLLOWERS

10,465

READER RESPONSES TO ADVERTISING

Visit Champaign County advertises to thousands regionally, where requests for Visitors Guides are received in response to the ads.

263

STORIES COVERED

Stories ran about Visit Champaign County in regards to tourism efforts. Media includes newspaper, radio, TV and online, both in and out of Champaign County.

Promotional Videos



AGRITOURS ILLINOIS

Created two-minute video highlighting stops on the AgriTours Illinois itinerary, held in conjunction with Quad Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau. The video is utilized at industry tradeshows and through AgriToursIllinois.com.



OUTSIDE OF ORDINARY

Released a two-minute promotional video highlighting events and attractions that showcase Champaign County as "Outside of Ordinary". The video will be incorporated into the newly designed website (launching in September 2015) and at industry tradeshows.

Visitor Inquiries

70,535

TOTAL VISITORS GUIDES REQUESTED

453
WEB, MAIL,
EMAIL

2,346
PHONE

1,085
WELCOME
CENTER

66,651
TICS & LOCAL
BUSINESSES

*TICs (Illinois Interstates, Market Place Mall, Willard Airport, Illinois Terminal) are off-site locations where we distribute Visitors Guides. This number reflects the combined amount of Visitors Guides distributed.

HOTEL/MOTEL INFORMATION

58.23%

OCCUPANCY
RATE

\$81.22

AVERAGE DAILY
RATE

This data is collected and reported by STR®.



A LETTER FROM THE CEO

Jayne DeLuce

Tourism drives economic growth, fostering our area to become more attractive for travelers, as well as to increase our competitiveness as a location to live, visit, work and invest.

In the last five years, we focused on these work plan themes—FY11: educate and engage; FY12: tell our story; FY13: a new business model; FY14: refine and outshine; FY15: plant new seeds. This past year was focused on new tourism growth markets, improving our business systems and outshining our competitors.

In writing our FY16 work plan, a theme emerged as “evolve”. Strategic tourism planning aims to bring stakeholders together to work collaboratively to transform a set of attractions, activities and services into a cohesive and compelling travel experience or destination.

The key to the success and sustainability for evolving our Destination Management Organization (DMO) is to develop the most critical functions—Branding and Marketing; Sales and Customer Service; Experience Development; Customer Relationship Management; and Financial Sustainability.

Specific initiatives include shifting toward a locally-funded business model; further developing the Fly Champaign-Urbana brand; convening community conversation about an innovative museum; creating a regional film office; and building a hospitality network to strengthen our local cohesive support among hotels, retail, restaurants, vendors and attractions.

We will actively develop our tangible and intangible assets as a means of developing comparative advantages in an increasingly strong competitive tourism marketplace and to create local distinction in the face of globalization.

These efforts take additional resources, so please join us on this journey. We are appreciative of our Tourism Partners that support our efforts in making an impact. The visitor economy is vibrant in our area and throughout Illinois, and continues to produce value and improve the quality of life for everyone but it takes a unified community effort. We are making good progress. Thank you!



TOURISM IMPACT AWARD WINNERS

Visit Champaign County annually presents the Tourism Impact Awards, designed to honor those who have greatly contributed to travel and tourism in Champaign County. The 2015 Tourism Impact award winners include: Leslie Cooperband and Wes Jarrell, Prairie Fruits Farm; Josh Laskowski, Stevie Jay Broadcasting; Lynne Srull, Jefferson Middle School Archery; Peter T. Tomaras; Retired; and Jamarr Turner, Aroma Café.

Thank you to our winners and to all in the community that make an impact on our visitors!



INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AWARDS

AgriTours Illinois, on behalf of Visit Champaign County, received the International Humanitarian Award for Hospitality from the cities of Champaign and Urbana. We were humbled by this honor and by our fellow awardees.