



# evolve

2015—2016 ANNUAL REPORT

visit  
champaign  
county





## *From the Chairman*

**RACHEL COVENTRY, CURTIS ORCHARD :: CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2015–2016**

This past fiscal year, Visit Champaign County evolved from a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) to Destination Management. This evolution set the foundation for growth and development in the greater Champaign County area to become a memorable and extraordinary destination.

As the manager for the community, Visit Champaign County continued to push a unified brand—"Outside of Ordinary"—while also working with stakeholders on

various projects to strengthen the area such as the rebranding of Willard Airport, new museum visioning, and other facility development.

The creation of the Visit Champaign County Foundation, a 501(c)3 organization, was a strategic move to both engage the community in travel and tourism, and generate funds for bid incentives for major events that ultimately will increase economic impact. The Foundation currently has over 30 contributing Charter Partners.

The organization also formed the Champaign County Film Office in collaboration with Shatterglass Films. The Film Office developed a countywide permit application and a single-point of contact for location scouts and producers to simplify the process for filmmakers. The economic impact of film in Illinois generates over \$160 million in expenditures, so the Champaign County Film Office will look to capitalize on those expenditures to bring more film to the area.

While this year brought many challenges with state funding, Visit Champaign County prevailed with conscious budgeting that kept our brand in front of the public eye. To compensate for the closing of Regional tourism offices, Visit Champaign County formed regional partnerships with Allerton Park & Retreat Center, the City of Monticello and the Village of Arthur to tell the broader story of East Central Illinois.

The newly formed Hotel Partner program contributed to the organization's revenue stream to be reinvested in sales efforts. By utilizing a new sales system, iDSS, Visit Champaign County seamlessly communicated with 23 hotel partners on new leads, creating transparency on the efforts of the sales team to bring business to the area. The Hotel Partner program was the start of the new Hospitality Network which will regularly engage local businesses and community leaders to collectively tell the greater Champaign County area's story.

Complimenting these new initiatives, Visit Champaign County continued to tell its Outside of Ordinary story through an integrated marketing campaign that included video, online and print advertising. Attendance at industry tradeshow continues to result in strengthening existing relationships and generating new business in sports, meetings and conventions, and domestic and international group travel. 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 relied on funding from Strategic Partners. We appreciate the continued support and the recognition of the benefits of tourism in our community.

Guiding the efforts of the Visit Champaign County team was a dedicated Board of Directors along with input from the Hospitality Network, ensuring success for the community. Countless volunteers and hospitality staff also served as ambassadors for countywide events. Thank you to all those who support travel and tourism, and positively impacted the local economy and quality of life. As Board President for FY16, I was truly honored to work together with a hard-working staff, an engaged board of directors, and numerous partners to further Visit Champaign County's mission. I look forward to seeing these efforts continue to make a difference in this community!



# 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.

# vision

Champion the greater Champaign County area as a memorable, extraordinary destination.

## TOURISM INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Through the generous contributions of our partners, we are able to attract visitors to our community for business, sports, and leisure travel while also creating significant economic impact to our county.

### FOUNDING PARTNER

City of Champaign

### PLATINUM PARTNER

University of Illinois

### GOLD PARTNERS

Busey :: Champaign County :: Village of Savoy :: City of Urbana

### SILVER PARTNERS

Illinois American Water :: Village of Rantoul :: Parkland College

### BRONZE PARTNERS

Carle :: Urbana Park District :: Village of Mahomet :: Village of St. Joseph

### REGIONAL PARTNERS

Allerton Park & Retreat Center :: Monticello Chamber of Commerce  
Arthur Area Tourism Council

## HOTEL PARTNERS

To continue developing a sustainable funding model, Visit Champaign County developed a new hotel partner program. 23 partners currently participate, accessing the sales system, priority placement in the Visitors Guide, receipt of leads among other benefits.

### ORANGE PARTNERS

Best Western Monticello Gateway Inn  
Eastland Suites & Conference Center  
Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham  
Hilton Garden Inn  
Hyatt Place Champaign/Urbana  
I Hotel & Conference Center  
Illini Union Hotel  
Wyndham Garden Urbana-Champaign

Courtyard by Marriott  
Drury Inn & Suites  
Fairfield Inn & Suites  
Hampton Inn  
Holiday Inn Express  
Home2 Suites by Hilton  
Homewood Suites  
LaQuinta  
Ramada Urbana  
Residence Inn by Marriott  
Sleep Inn Urbana  
TownePlace Suites by Marriott  
Wingate by Wyndham

### BLUE PARTNERS

Candlewood Suites  
Comfort Suites

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## 2015-2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS:

Rachel Coventry, Chair, Curtis Orchard  
Mike DeLorenzo, Vice Chair, University of Illinois  
Rob Kowalski, Treasurer, City of Champaign  
Jayne DeLuca, Secretary (ex-officio), Visit Champaign County

### DIRECTORS:

Laura Bleill, University of Illinois Research Park  
Richard Helton, Village of Savoy  
Jesse Hines, Homewood Suites  
Natalie Kenny-Marquez, City of Urbana  
Shayla Maatuka, Dodd & Maatuka  
Max Mitchell, Champaign County Board  
Annie Murray, Pear Tree Estate  
Tracey Pettigrew, Champaign Urbana Mass Transit District  
Jody Quiram, Gordyville USA  
Dennis Robertson, Market Place Shopping Center  
Bryan Snodgrass, Busey  
Greg Stock, City of Champaign  
Rich Thomas, Retired, Village of Rantoul  
Dan Waldinger, Village of Mahomet



## VISIT CHAMPAIGN COUNTY TEAM

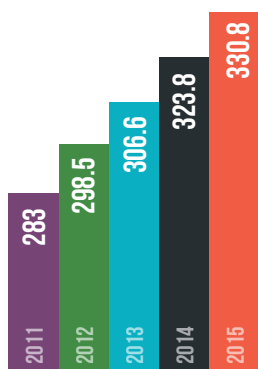
Jayne DeLuca, President & CEO  
Terri Reifsteck, Vice President of Marketing  
Leah Longueville, Director of Sales  
Ryan Reid, Sales Manager  
Cody Dees, Visitor Services Manager  
Angie Poe, Office Manager  
Leslie Lundy, Accountant

# ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TRAVEL & TOURISM IN 2015

## DIRECT SPENDING

**\$330.8**

million in visitor spending in Champaign County



**2.3%**

increase over 2014

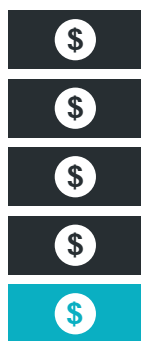
**16.9%**

increase over past five years

## LOCAL TAX RECEIPTS

**\$5.6**

million in local tax receipts reinvested in the community



**5.3%**

increase over 2014

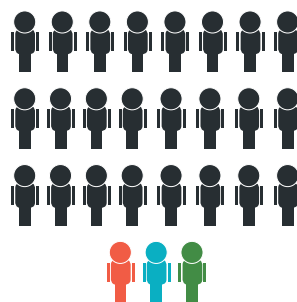
**24.8%**

increase over past five years

## JOBS

**2650**

Champaign County jobs dependent on travel & tourism



**3.3%**

increase over 2014

**7.7%**

increase over past five years

## PAYROLL

**\$70.5**

wages earned by Champaign County workers in the travel industry



**7.2%**

increase over 2014

**16.4%**

increase over past five years

Regional partners, Monticello & Arthur, added an additional **\$52.3 million** in spending and **\$1.07 million** in local tax receipts.

## IN THE UNITED STATES

travel & tourism accounts for **\$2.1 trillion** in expenditures, with **1 in 9 jobs** dependent on the industry.

## IN ILLINOIS

**\$37 billion** in visitor spending

creating **10,000** new jobs in 2015



# Markets making an **IMPACT**

Travel and tourism appears in many forms, all with varying degrees of impact. In Champaign County, we strive to bring in a diverse set of markets that utilize local facilities, showcase area attractions, fill hotel rooms and utilize local services.

**WINNER!**  
Visit Champaign County received the honor of Best CVB outside of Chicago from Illinois Meetings + Events!



## SPORTS

IHSA Wrestling Individual State Tournament contributed **\$5.5 million in economic impact**. Additional sports events generating impact included Game Day USA baseball, Archery, Disc Golf, Intramural Basketball, Illini Futbol Club and many more.



## INTERNATIONAL

As part of the AgriTours Illinois program, groups of all sizes came from across the world to experience and learn from our agriculture. Among the countries were China, Brazil, India, Sweden, France, and Switzerland. International travelers visiting **spend more** than domestic and **stay longer**.\*



## MEETINGS

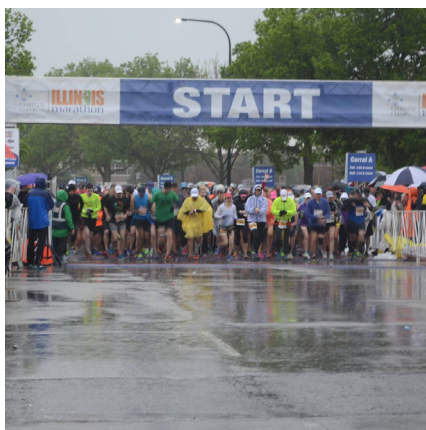
**\$4 out of every \$10 spent on business travel can be attributed to meetings.**\*

Several that took place in Champaign County in FY16 include the American Planning Association, Central Illinois Magic Association, Industrial Designers of America, and the Mt. Olive Baptist Church Conference.



## GROUP TRAVEL

The average overnight stay by a motorcoach group generates **\$7,000 in economic impact**.\*\* Among tour groups in FY16 were Jesse Owens Academy, First State Bank, SNS Travel, Triumph Community Bank and Carefree Tours.



## SPECIAL EVENTS

The Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon generated over **\$10 million in economic impact**, with Visit Champaign County organizing the Meijer 27th Mile Celebrate Victory Bash. Other impactful events in FY16 included the Air Race Classic, Hobbico eFest, CFA All Breed Cat Show, and The Color Run, among many others.



## LEISURE

The average spending per trip in the U.S. is **\$656**.\* Leisure travelers visited our community to visit various attractions, to visit family, to attend events, take part in outdoor activities and so much more.

\*Provided by the U.S. Travel Association  
\*\*Provided by the American Bus Association

# 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 Visit Champaign County can meet their needs. Due to unavailable funding in the first two quarters of the fiscal year, travel was reduced by half.



### INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Active America China  
IPW



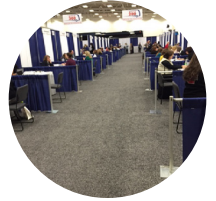
### SPORTS

National Association of Sports  
Commissions



### MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS

Fraternity Executives Association  
ISAE Annual Meeting  
Diversity Summit



### GROUP TRAVEL

American Bus Association  
African American Travel  
Conference

50

MEETINGS & SPORTS  
GROUPS BOOKED

72

MEETINGS & SPORTS  
GROUPS LEADS

24

MOTORCOACH  
GROUPS BOOKED

1,978

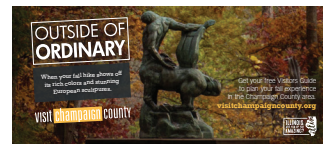
TOTAL SALES  
CONTACTS

136

GROUPS & EVENTS  
SERVICED

## MARKETING

Various marketing strategies were utilized throughout the year to ensure a comprehensive campaign promoting the greater Champaign County area as an Outside of Ordinary destination. The following were employed in FY16:



### PRINT

**LEISURE**—Midwest Living, AAA Living, Enjoy Illinois magazine, Billboards (Peoria & Champaign), Bus boards

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

**SPORTS**—Sports Events Magazine, Sports Planning Guide

**GROUP**—Leisure Group Travel

### DIGITAL

**LEISURE**—Outside of Ordinary Retargeting campaign, Facebook campaigns and live video, Georama Live Video

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

**SPORTS**—Sports Events Magazine

**GROUP**—TourOperatorLand.com

### EDITORIAL

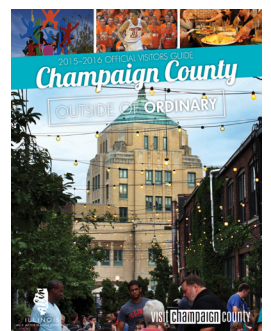
MiaOnTheGo.com—Social Influencer

We're the Russo's—YouTube vloggers

Roadside America—Travel blog

### EAT YOUR WAY THROUGH JANUARY

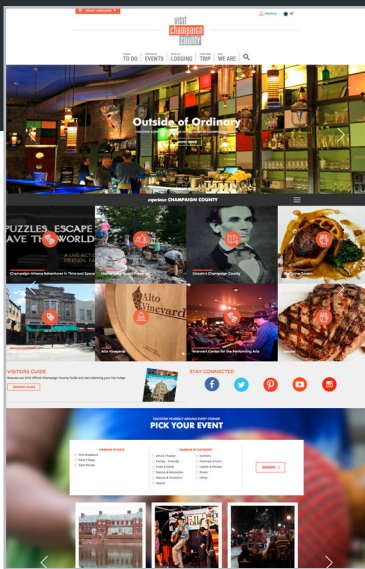
This social media  
campaign increased  
our followers on social  
channels by 15.5% with  
a reach of 23,058!



70,000

Visitors Guides





# VISITCHAMPAIGNCOUNTY.ORG

The newly developed VisitChampaignCounty.org website launched in September, utilizing eye-popping photos, integrated listings, improved calendar of events and a responsive design. Visits continued to grow through search engine marketing and additional promotions driving traffic to the site.

## WEB STATS

135,491 Visits—**38% increase over FY15**  
 349,668 Pageviews  
 65,207 Mobile Views  
 74.91% New Visits  
 2.58 pages/visit

## TOP VISITED PAGES

Event Calendar  
 Hotels  
 Food & Drink  
 Things to Do  
 Shopping  
 Recreation

## HOTEL INFORMATION

**61.06%**

OCCUPANCY  
RATE

**\$85.60**

AVERAGE DAILY  
RATE

This data is collected and reported by STR®.



## MIDWEST LIVING AWARD

The Illinois Office of Tourism awarded Visit Champaign County with \$5,000 in advertising in *Midwest Living* as a result of the broadest distribution of *Travel Illinois*, the new state travel magazine. The funds will go to a larger campaign in FY17.

## VISITOR INQUIRIES

**57,344**

TOTAL VISITORS GUIDES REQUESTED

**484**

WEB, MAIL,  
EMAIL

**1,143**

PHONE

**437**

WELCOME  
CENTER

**55,280**

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.



**3,501**

40.3% increase



**4,574**

20.2% increase



**1,873**

119% increase

**6,260**

READER RESPONSES  
TO ADVERTISING

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

**235**

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.



## From the CEO JAYNE DELUCE

### LOOKING AHEAD TO FY17

Our overall goal is to build stronger brand equity, increase visitor traffic, and grow area business. The travel industry has created jobs at a faster rate than any other industry and 1 out of every 9 jobs in the US depends on travel and tourism.

Over the last 15 months, the Visit Champaign County Board of Directors and team created Destination 2020, a strategic plan with a new mission to advance the overall destination experience for the greater Champaign County area, in collaboration with community stakeholders, to strengthen the local economy and quality of life.

Key priorities were established:

- 1) **Choreograph a strategic destination management framework.**
- 2) **Expand reputation for excellence and credibility.**
- 3) **Drive business in our target visitor markets.**
- 4) **Build a sustainable funding model.**

Destination management should be viewed as an investment in a community's economic growth and well-being, versus an expense line item for tourism promotion, especially considering at least \$7 is returned for every \$1 invested.

A destination can no longer be promoted as a simple collection of hotels, restaurants, attractions and retail to be successful in the marketplace. Today's destination brands require constant development, management and vigilance to ensure their brand essence is protected. This shift in thinking is key to our ability to remain competitive and to grow the revenues within the entire hospitality industry, as one of the top employers in the world.

Specific initiatives for FY17 include building the new Visit Champaign County Foundation to ensure sustainable local funding; convening community conversation about an innovative museum; expanding the new regional film office; focusing on the Chinese, LGBTQ and African-American group markets; and building a hospitality network to strengthen our local cohesive support among hotels, retail, restaurants, vendors and attractions.

We're excited about the future with our new vision to champion the greater Champaign County area as a memorable, extraordinary destination. Join us for this journey. Thank you.



### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dennis Robertson, Chair, Market Place Shopping Center  
Orlando Thomas, Vice Chair, Champaign School District Unit 4  
Rob Kowalski, Treasurer, City of Champaign  
Jayne DeLuce, Secretary, Visit Champaign County  
Victor Fuentes, V. Picasso/Willow Creek Farm  
Rich Thomas, Retired, Rantoul Recreation  
Dan Waldinger, Mahomet Recreation

### THANK YOU TO THE VISIT CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOUNDATION CHARTER PARTNERS

- Adams Outdoor Advertising
- Don and Suzi Armstrong
- BankChampaign
- Barefoot Lizard, Inc.
- BPC
- Carter's Furniture
- Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District
- ciLiving
- CliftonLarson Allen
- Cozad Asset Management
- Jayne & Joe DeLuce
- Marci Dodds
- The Downey Group
- Farnsworth Group
- First State Bank
- FRASCA International
- Gordyville USA
- Hickory Point Bank & Trust
- Illini Fire Service LLC
- Martin, Hood, Friese & Associates
- Martin One Source
- McDonald's
- Midland States Bank
- The News-Gazette, Inc.
- RE/MAX Realty Associates
- Robeson Family Benefit Fund
- David B. Sholem of Meyer Capel Law Offices
- University of Illinois Community Credit Union
- UpClose Marketing & Printing
- Urbana's Market at the Square
- V. Picasso/Willow Creek Farm



## CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FILM OFFICE

The Champaign County Film Office launched in FY16. After a significant amount of research, Visit Champaign County implemented a unified permitting process that will ease the process for production companies who have previously had to connect with a variety of city and county services separately. The Film Office will take the weight off the shoulders of not only the production company, but also the host communities. The goal is to make Champaign County an attractive place to shoot, not only because of our diverse landscape and affordability, but also because we make the process simple and we protect everyone involved. TV & film production brings in over \$300 million annually to the state's economy. The Champaign County Film Office looks to grow the impact locally by not only getting crews to spend dollars on public services, accommodations, catering, etc. but also by creating jobs. Since the launch in January 2016, eight productions have worked with the Film Office, including the BMW commercial featuring Paralympic gold medalist Josh George, which aired during the 2016 Olympics Opening Ceremony.