



## AN INTERNATIONAL WELCOME



The University of Illinois boasts the second-largest international population in the United States among public universities, with more than 11,000 students and scholars from 110 countries. This influx of students from around the world enhances the culture of our community, bringing new flavors, customs and events that are celebrated on and off campus. Welcoming these students and faculty to our community upon arrival is pertinent to fostering an environment not only exploration during their time at the University, but also as a consideration of a community to live and work.

Visit Champaign County has long partnered with U of I International Student & Scholar Services to provide information to these temporary residents. This summer, Caitlyn Floyd worked with ISSS to develop the first International Night in downtown Champaign to encourage this group to explore our dynamic downtown in a comfortable, un-intimidating, atmosphere to find interest in continuing to explore our area and community on their own. Held during 40 North's Friday Night Live on August 2, students, faculty and their families were shuttled to downtown to VCC's sponsored tent on Park Street, where Hamilton Walker's provided food. Kids were invited to participate in the kids sidewalk chalk contest, and tours were available to attendees in order to get to know our community.

To help showcase the experiences available in our community, Caitlyn and Terri Reifsteck worked with the Global Education & Training Program at the University to recruit two female Chinese professionals to take part in a video shoot. For two days, we followed April and Maggie to stops around our community including Flesor's Candy Kitchen, The Vault, Curtis Orchard, Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery, downtown Champaign, Lake of the Woods and the University of Illinois campus. The unscripted video captured their experiences and reactions as they made many memories around the community. Beautifully shot and edited by Five Foot Productions, the video was promoted through YouTube and Facebook, and will also be utilized at tradeshow with international & group tour operators.

As new students came to campus, VCC participated in ISSS and the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics inaugural Welcome Night at Memorial Stadium on August 19. This new event brought thousands of new international students through Grange Grove, where Taylor Bauer passed out community information and giveaways. Students were then welcomed in the Colonnades Club and introduced to American sports, with a special welcome from Athletic Director, Josh Whitman.



As a final step to the welcome of new students, we hosted a food truck rally as part of the new International Student Orientation on August 22. Six trucks from acai bowls to BBQ introduced students to some of our popular food stops before they went into Krannert Center. Terri and Caitlyn were on hand to offer up materials and information for many students and their families.

Beyond welcoming students and faculty, it's important to work with this population to attract talent to live and work in this community. On September 13, the New American Welcome Center at the University of Illinois YMCA hosted a summit on Welcoming Economies. Terri participated in this roundtable event with both on- and off-campus organizations to discuss the importance of immigration to the community and how we can work collaboratively to create opportunities and encourage our international students and scholars to stay in Champaign County. According to a 2016 survey, immigrant residents contributed \$1.4 billion to the area's GDP, with \$57.2 million going to state and local taxes. With over 11,000 international students currently living in our community, there is tremendous opportunity to showcase our Outside of Ordinary area as not only a place to visit, but a place to call home.





## FROM OUR CEO

In the last few months, our neighborhood front view has drastically changed with the removal of PNC Bank to make way for the new Ko Fusion, the addition of Farren's to the east, Hank's Table, Christopher's Jewelry, and Punch! to the west, and potentially soon-to-be reopened Cowboy Monkey.

Sometimes it takes a different view to be reminded of all we are grateful for in this community. The landscape is changing, both physically with new destination development projects on the horizon (The Yards, Champaign Plaza, Rantoul Sports Complex, Kickapoo Rail Trail, Aloft Hotel, Allerton Park master plan, etc.) and demographically with an increasingly fantastic, culturally diverse community.

We are truly appreciative of receiving FY20 tourism grants through the Illinois Office of Tourism, which make up over 50% of our operating budget, to help us promote this area as an outside of ordinary destination to visit, work and live.

To complement the state funding, we continue 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.

I also appreciate the Woman of Distinction recognition at the recent Girl Scouts of Central Illinois Diamonds, Desserts & Distinction event. Truly grateful for the VCC Board and team members who shared this tasty evening about building girls of courage, confidence and character to make the world a better place.

Thank you to our partners and work force who support destination promotion, which 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 community. Everything starts from that point.

Jayne DeLuce



### 40 North Update—Friday Night Live

Another summer of live music and entertainment delighted thousands at 40 North's Friday Night Live. For 13 weeks, 40 North worked with local musicians to bring music to four locations in downtown Champaign. This year, the location on Market Street in between Pour Brothers and Seven Saints, was a popular new addition. In addition to the music, each week featured a children's activity from hula hooping to bubbles to the well-attended kid's sidewalk chalk contest. 40 North compensates all performers as part of their mission in cultivating creativity in Champaign County.

### Board FAM Tour

Each year, the VCC Board and staff visits an area of our community in order to gain a better understanding of the offerings. On September 26, our board familiarization tours took us to Fighting Illini Athletic facilities. Cassie Arner from the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics provided extensive information as she guided us through numerous facilities including: Ubben Practice Facility; Atkins Tennis Center & Khan Outdoor Complex, Illinois Field, the Demirjian Golf Practice Facility, Memorial Stadium, the Paralympic Track & Field Training Facility at DRES, and State Farm Center. Thank you to Cassie, Maureen Gilbert (DRES), Adam Bleakney (Paralympic Track & Field Coach) and Brad Swanson (State Farm Center) for educating our board and staff. Go Illini!



## Connecting with Visitors

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

69  
walk-ins

99  
emails

386  
calls

19,290

Experience Guides distributed

# OUT & ABOUT



## Destinations International

Jayne traveled to St. Louis on July 23-26 to participate in the Destinations International Convention, including an opportunity to co-present on “Living the Lexicon” with DI team members, Jack Johnson and Andreas Weissenborn, along with Visit Phoenix team member Megan Trummel.

## STAR Longest Table

The City of Champaign hosted its inaugural STAR Longest Table event on August 12, at CityView. Despite the move

indoors, the event was tremendously successful in attracting the community to come together to converse on the ways to make Champaign a better place to live. Terri and Caitlyn attended and spoke with different groups on the topics presented by the City. Each table had a lively discussion and both Terri and Caitlyn came back to VCC with new ideas to incorporate into our sales and marketing efforts based on the discussions.

## Resource Fairs

With the beginning of each academic year comes a variety of resource fairs on the University of Illinois campus. Brooke and Taylor attended the annual new Faculty & Staff Resource Fair on August 22, a highly successful event for VCC to aid new residents in acclimating to the community. Later in the day, Terri spoke at the inaugural Dual Career Partner Orientation for the trailing partners of the new faculty, sharing information on events, things to do, and places to shop. Finally, on August 26, Terri and Jen attended the Graduate Student Welcome Reception for the first time. It was very well attended and received by students looking for information on things to do off campus.

## CCAR Tradeshow

Realtors are on the frontline for welcoming new residents to the area. As we continue to train area teams on our story, Terri and Brooke attended the annual Champaign County Association of Realtors Tradeshow on September 24 to showcase the various resources available. This is the second year we have participated and it has been very successful in educating our area realtors on how VCC can help them welcome their clients.

## Brand USA Partner Meeting

Brand USA, the tourism arm for the United States was traveling Illinois in September to learn about partner communities. VCC participates in Brand USA marketing efforts, specifically to the Chinese market through our International Grant available through the state of Illinois. On September 12, two representatives from Brand USA visited Champaign between visits in Chicago and Springfield to learn more about our area. We were joined by the Effingham CVB and discussed the highlights of Central Illinois. Brand USA is looking to expand opportunities for all regions to showcase their offerings.

## Half Century of Progress

Taylor and Caitlyn attended the opening day of Half Century of Progress, a farm expo highlighting working vintage farm equipment that took place August 22-25. The expo, billed the largest vintage farming event of its kind, takes place biennially at the Rantoul National Aviation Center just prior to the Farm Progress Show in Decatur. They met with local vendors, farm history experts, and recorded a Facebook Live with enthusiasts eager to show off their collections. They also connected with the Punkin Chunkin organizers, who will host their National Championships the first weekend in November at the same venue.

## 3 Disciplines Triathlon

Dozens of athletes completed at Lake of the Woods in Mahomet at the 2nd Annual Illinois Triathlon Championships, held September 28. Three competitions took places—an Olympic Triathlon, Sprint Triathlon, and Aqua Bike. VCC and the Champaign County Forest Preserve District staff solicited 60 volunteers for the event to help on the course and during tear-down. JT Walker's provided food and beverages for competitors and those who helped volunteer. There is one remaining competition in the 3-year contract with 3 Discipline's and discussions about moving the triathlon to the spring to encourage sign-ups and community involvement are in process.

## CU Pride Fest

The VCC team was excited to walk in the annual CU Pride Fest on September 27 in downtown Champaign. We joined 40 North's colorful entry sporting tutus made by our own Brooke Mayer!





# SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS



## Connect Marketplace

Ryan and Caitlyn participated in Connect Marketplace on August 26–28 in Louisville, attending separate tracks to attract meeting and sports planners. Ryan met with 40 event planners, many with interest in current facilities and proposed sports complexes coming to Champaign and Rantoul. The Black Softball Circuit and Gay & Lesbian Tennis Association are two strong leads, along with additional softball tournaments. Other great meetings included several niche and running sports. Caitlyn was on the Association Market track and had appointments with 42 association planners from across the country. The most notable meetings were with Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, Amputee Coalition of America, Independent Electrical Contractors, and the National Farmers Association.

## Small Market Meetings

Caitlyn attended Small Market Meetings Conference in Green Bay, September 24–26, and was joined by Teresa Brown from Lodgic as a community partner who also received appointments at the show. Caitlyn met with 28 quality organizations and came back with four RFPs from planners interested in Champaign County to host their future conferences.

## UMCVB

Terri, Ryan, and Caitlyn attended the Upper Midwest CVB Conference in Fargo, September 9–11, meeting with our colleagues across the region. The program, divided into tracks for sales, marketing and CEOs was insightful, with sessions on Crisis Management, the new Tourism Lexicon, which highlighted Champaign County, eSports and much more. Terri served on a panel for Restaurant Weeks & Brewery Trails during the event. The final presentation from Nebraska State Tourism Director on their campaign, "Honestly, Its Not for Everyone," was very insightful!

## ESTO

Terri attended the U.S. Travel Association's ESTO (Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations), August 17–20 in Austin. This conference offers a dense program with many valuable tracks with panels from DMOs across the country to keynote speakers providing insight and inspiration. Terri left the conference with many new ideas, and Visit Champaign County was also highlighted as a finalist for their Destiny Awards, a national competition on innovative marketing promotions. The Living Outside of Ordinary campaign was one of three finalists chosen in our budget category.



## Occupancy Rate

Reporting July & August 2019

Champaign **68.9%**

Bloomington **62.5%**

Peoria **58.4%**

Springfield/Decatur **62.9%**

## Average Daily Rate

Reporting July & August 2019

Champaign **\$86.81**

Bloomington **\$81.47**

Peoria **\$101.41**

Springfield/Decatur **\$95.18**

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

## SPORTS & EVENTS

10 leads | 6 tentative | 4 definite

**8,000**

estimated room nights

## CONFERENCES

12 leads | 5 tentative | 7 definite

**2,280**

estimated room nights

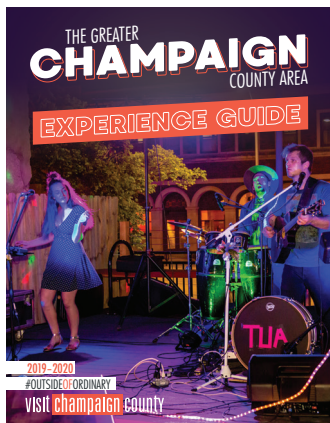
## GROUP TOUR

5 leads | 3 tentative | 2 definite

**LEAD:** Potential business distributed to hotels

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

**DEFINITE LEAD:** Business secured



**Activities by Season**  
 Something happening in Champaign County every month. Find out what's new and exciting for all 12 months of the year.

**The Great Pumpkin Patch**  
 The Great Pumpkin Patch is a seasonal event that takes place in the heart of Champaign County. It's a place where you can find everything you need for your Halloween celebration. From pumpkins to costumes, there's something for everyone.

**Champaign County Fair**  
 The Champaign County Fair is a celebration of the county's rich history and culture. It's a place where you can find everything you need for your fall celebration. From pumpkins to costumes, there's something for everyone.

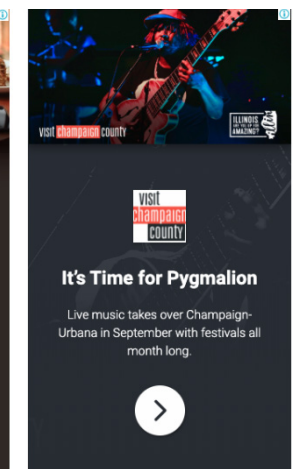
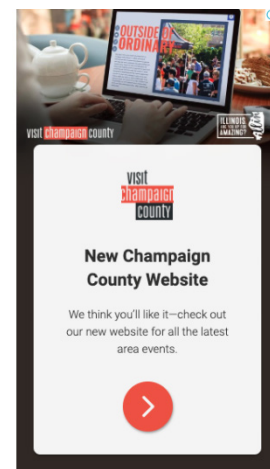
**Champaign County Fair**  
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**WINTER**  
 Champaign County Area  
 The winter season in Champaign County is a time of year when the weather is just what you need. It's a time when you can enjoy the beauty of the outdoors without the heat of the summer. It's a time when you can enjoy the beauty of the outdoors without the heat of the summer.

**Spring**  
 The spring season in Champaign County is a time of year when the weather is just what you need. It's a time when you can enjoy the beauty of the outdoors without the heat of the summer. It's a time when you can enjoy the beauty of the outdoors without the heat of the summer.

**Summer**  
 The summer season in Champaign County is a time of year when the weather is just what you need. It's a time when you can enjoy the beauty of the outdoors without the heat of the summer. It's a time when you can enjoy the beauty of the outdoors without the heat of the summer.



## Experience Guide

VCC is committed to sharing our Outside of Ordinary story to visitors and residents alike. With this mindset, the annual Visitors Guide was rebranded to the Experience Guide. This August, a new edition, with 72 pages of engaging content, was released with 70,000 copies printed. In the first three weeks of printing, over 15,000 guides were distributed across the community. The guide also shifted content, moving directory listings to the back of the guide, and focusing on editorial for the majority of the guide. This year, Terri focused on nightlife and entertainment as we explored areas of interest to new, potential residents. She also created a section focusing on must-do activities by season, helping our residents and visitors see the vast amount of opportunities available throughout the year. We're thankful to all those that helped make this year's publication a success! If you'd like copies for your business, contact us at 217-351-4133 or [marketing@visitchampaigncounty.org](mailto:marketing@visitchampaigncounty.org).



## Website Relaunch

Visit Champaign County launched a new website on September 4, with many new features and additional content. A driving factor in updating the site was to utilize one content management system for all business listings. Our new site seamlessly links to IDSS, our backend system, which reduces staff time in updating content. Additionally, the new site allows VCC staff to make immediate changes to all pages on the site, allowing us to stay relevant as new opportunities are available in the community. The site also features a more dynamic homepage, putting a focus on our stories which allows us to showcase more information on all there is to see and do in the greater Champaign County area. Finally, it also features a new Live/Work section, and easier access to our niche markets—sports, group and meetings. Thanks to McDaniel's Marketing in Pekin for helping us create an Outside of Ordinary new site!

## Google + YouTube Campaigns

With the launch of the new website, VCC launched a comprehensive Google Display campaign to direct traffic to [visitchampaigncounty.org](http://visitchampaigncounty.org). Four campaigns launched on September 4—Top 10 Must-Attend Festivals; The Sounds of C-U; Game Day; and an ad promoting our new site. In the month of September, the campaign saw 1.2 million impressions and nearly 9,000 clicks. Additionally, we launched a 3-month YouTube campaign to highlight our maker videos and the newly-released Chinese tourism video. Seven total videos were highlighted and accumulated over 41,000 views. The Prairie Fire Glass maker video had the highest views, at 13,434 views. The Display campaigns will rotate each quarter and we will look to further promote our videos as new ones are released.

*We have finally settled down after the Big 10 Retirees Conference August 2-4. Based on the reactions from the attendees (and ourselves!), the conference was a great success.*

*I wanted to thank you both and the rest of your colleagues for the vital role you played in making it go so well. This included not only the goodie bags and your contents but also the signage which was very useful particularly as they registered on Friday afternoon. There are people who now know that Champaign County is "Outside of Ordinary" from State College, PA to Lincoln, Nebraska!"*  
 —Bill Williamson, Organizing Committee





## ELLNORA Collaboration

Taylor worked with the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts to promote ELLNORA | The Guitar Festival, September 5-7. He recruited over 30 local businesses and attractions to host artist-decorated guitars and ELLNORA coasters allowing the entire community to come together to promote the festival and unite in our Outside of Ordinary passion for arts and culture. For the weeks leading up to the festival, businesses displayed the guitars on walls, in windows, and for all to see across Champaign-Urbana. ELLNORA takes place every other year as a world class guitar festival and celebration.

## TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



### Facebook

Farren's New Spot  
245 Likes  
32 Shares  
7,748 Reach



**6,305**  
Followers

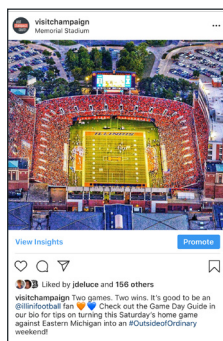


### Twitter

NCAA Basketball  
Recruit Promo  
5 Retweets  
43 likes  
17.1K impressions



**6,005**  
Followers

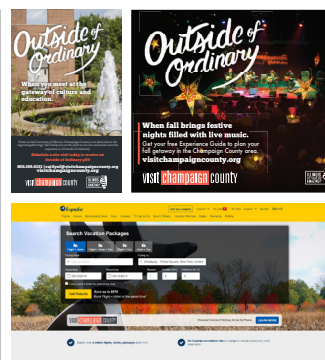


### Instagram

Illini vs. EMU Game  
Day Guide  
157 likes  
2,164 impressions



**4,671**  
Followers



## Ads Placed in Q1

### LEISURE

Food & Travel | Midwest Living  
AAA Living | Expedia  
Facebook | Fighting Illini

### MEETINGS

Illinois Meetings + Events

### SPORTS

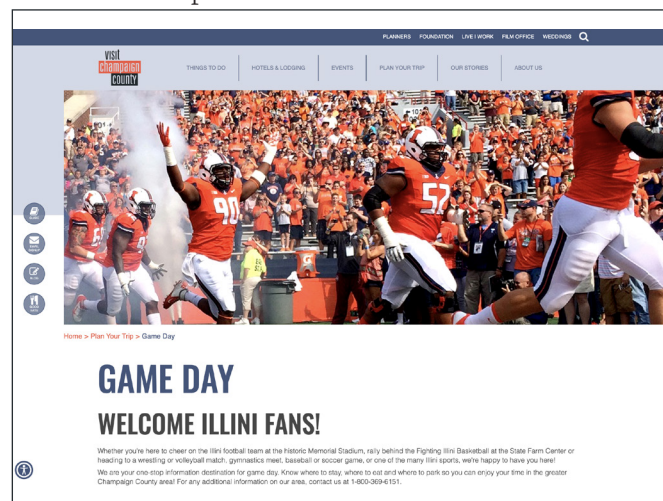
Sports Destination Website

### GROUP

Leisure Group Travel

**3** press releases resulting  
in **43** media placements.

**295**  
reader responses



## Website Report

68,670 Visits  
130,133 Page Views  
51,433 New Visits  
1.90 Pages/Session  
01:25 Avg. Length of Visit

## Top Visited Pages

Calendar of Events  
Game Day  
Must-Attend Festivals  
Sounds of C-U  
Champaign County Fair

**71.10%**  
of website traffic is from outside the greater  
Champaign County area

**35.85%**  
is from Chicago

**26**  
events submitted on our website

## 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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**Lynne Barnes**, Carle

**Angie Brix**, Champaign City Council

**Bridget Broihahn**, City of Urbana

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**Annie Easterday**, Pear Tree Estate

**Nathan Escue**, Hamilton Walker's

**Bob Flider**, University of Illinois

**John Hammond**, Candlewood Suites

**Richard Helton**, Village of Savoy

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**Dennis Robertson**, Market Place Shopping Center

### Visit Champaign County Team

217.351.4133 | 17 E. Taylor St., Champaign, IL 61820



**Jayne DeLuce**, President & CEO

**Terri Reifsteck**, Vice President of Marketing & Community Engagement

**Caitlyn Floyd**, Director of Sales & International Travel

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

**Taylor Bauer**, Communications Manager

**Jen Peddycoart**, Office Manager

**Brooke Mayer**, Visitor Experience Coordinator

**Leslie Lundy**, Finance Manager

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**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 :: **Jesse Hines**, Courtyard by Marriott

### 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