

THIRD QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS

This quarter, things began to heat up in January with the 10th Annual Champaign-Urbana Area Restaurant Week. More revenue streamed in with IHSA Wrestling and Basketball Championships, while our sales team continued to generate new leads. The ECU team was out and about engaging with our brilliant community throughout the quarter.

JANUARY

- The **10th Annual Champaign-Urbana Area Restaurant Week** featured **60 restaurants** offering tantalizing special menus.
- Governor Pritzker** visited **Flyover Film Studios** to recognize the impact they made in 2025—**\$12.3 million**—and to celebrate the recent enhancements to the Illinois Film Production Tax Credit, making it more attractive to film in Central Illinois.
- The local Champaign Rotary club presented Jayne with their **2026 Community Vocational Service Award** which recognizes those who showcase exceptional professionalism and unwavering commitment to “Service Above Self.”

FEBRUARY

- Gina attended the **Religious Conference Management Association’s EMERGE** conference in Lexington, KY, meeting a variety of multifaith leaders responsible for planning meetings.
- 672 wrestlers competed in the **IHSA Wrestling Championships** at State Farm Center, generating **\$5.5 million in economic impact**.
- Jayne participated in the **Illinois Destinations Association Lobby Day and Spring Meeting** in Springfield and celebrated **Destination Professionals Day** with Governor Pritzker’s proclamation presented by State Tourism Director, Catie Sheehan.
- The winter **New to CU Mixer**, sponsored by the Village of Savoy, was held at Triptych Brewing with over 50 new residents attending.
- Terri and Cristy attended the **Destinations International MarCom Summit** in Cleveland, where they learned about new trends and technology in destination marketing.
- Jayne participated in a successful campus/community effort to **sell out the Illini Women’s Basketball game** at State Farm Center in coordination with National Girls & Women Sports Day.

MARCH

- The **US Quadball National Qualifier** took place at the Rantoul Sports Complex—an event the ECU sales team recruited to the region.
- Terri tabled at the annual **Champaign County Association of Realtors Business Partner Expo**, sharing the various resources available to help them improve their interactions with their clients.
- Gina attended the **Heartland Travel Showcase** in Owensboro, KY, meeting one-on-one with motorcoach owners in order to add our region into their travel itineraries.
- The **IHSA State Basketball Championships** returned to State Farm Center with 16 teams competing across three days. **Wheelchair Basketball and Special Olympics Unified Basketball** competed at the ARC. The weekend generated **\$6.4 million in economic impact**.
- The ECU team went to **Tuscola and Arcola** to tour new businesses to gain familiarity in order to better promote the area.



*Congrats to **Sue Grey** on her well-deserved retirement from the United Way of Champaign County!*

LODGING + VISITOR DATA

Reporting January–March 2026 | Data provided by Zartico
Based on **113,626** credit cards and **60,582** mobile devices observed.

HOTELS SHORT TERM VACATION RENTALS

	TOTAL REVENUE (IN MILLIONS)	AVERAGE OCCUPANCY	AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY (in days)	DEMAND (in thousands)
Champaign	\$2.3 \$11.4	33% 60%	3.1 1.8	12.8 95.1
Rockford	\$1.7 \$12.1	45% 67%	6.1 2.1	11.1 95.7
Peoria	\$1.5 \$8.5	43% 45%	3.5 2.0	10.2 62.9
Bloomington Normal	\$1.0 \$14.6	43% 62%	4.6 1.8	5.9 111.1

VISITOR % OF TOTAL

16%

of all people observed were visitors

VISITOR SPEND OF TOTAL

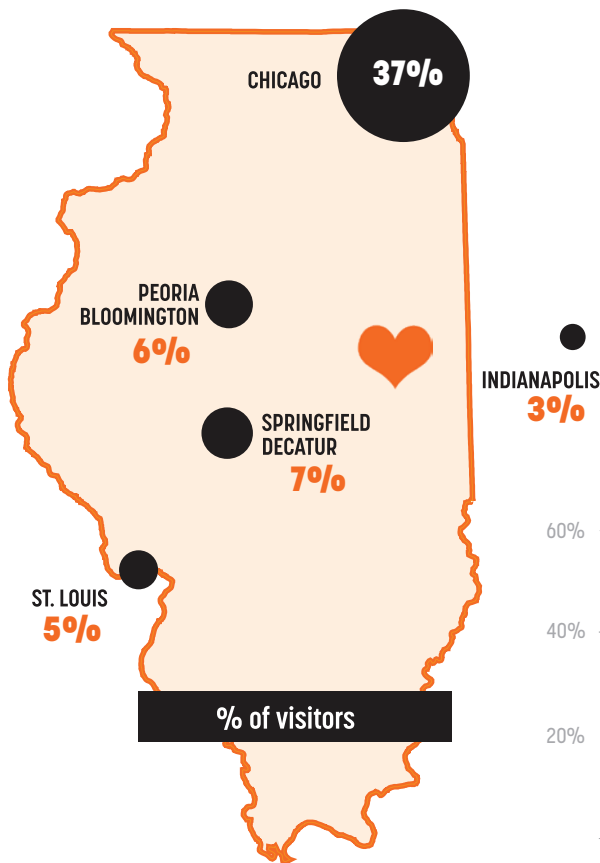
18%

of all spend came from visitors

% OF VISITOR SPEND toward local businesses

26%

45% of visitors were from out-of-state.



VISITOR IMPACT



33%

visitor spend of total

\$30

avg. daily visitor spend



16%

visitor spend of total

\$42

avg. daily visitor spend



25%

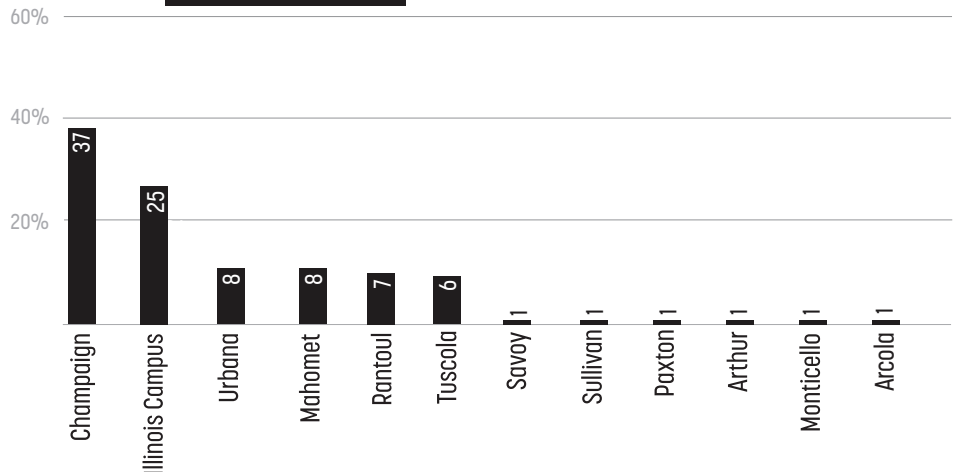
visitor spend of total

\$28

avg. daily visitor spend

VISITATION BY CITY

% of total visitation



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Thank you to our IHSA Basketball Sponsors, including:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| City of Champaign | Gies College of Business |
| City of Urbana | City of Tuscola |
| Carle Health | Village of St. Joseph |
| Busey | Champaign Unit 4 Schools |
| Village of Rantoul | I Hotel & Illinois Conference Center |
| Village of Savoy | |



City of Tuscola
Village of St. Joseph
Champaign Unit 4 School District

SPOTTED ON LOCATION

Each month, the ECU Board of Directors meets at a different location, allowing them to learn more about area amenities. We are grateful to hear from each location on their specific offerings available for residents and visitors.

“Everything went well. Mike (**Yellow & Company**) was super to work with, and the event was great. Awesome pizza from **Briks** as well! Appreciate your assistance and knowledge! Hope to be back.”
—Kay Collins, KBC Tour Company



JANUARY
I Hotel & Illinois Conference Center



FEBRUARY
Applied Pavement Technology



MARCH
Willow Creek Farm

FUNDING STUDY WRAP-UP

We hosted Tiffany Gallagher, Civitas, on February 16-17 to present “**Driving Visitor Growth: A Community Funding Framework**” to community stakeholders as an important conversation about strengthening our shared tourism economy.



HUDDLE UP GROUP SPORTS TOURISM STRATEGIC PLANNING

Experience Champaign-Urbana enlisted the **Huddle Up Group**, a nationally recognized sports tourism consulting firm, to assist with our local **Sports Tourism Strategic Planning** process. This initiative is designed to strengthen our region’s position as a premier destination for sports, recreation, and events. The assessment process started with **stakeholder interviews and surveys** as well as an **in-person regional facility audit**. They will evaluate our facilities’ potential for future opportunities, focusing on maximizing the positive economic and community impact of sports tourism in the Champaign-Urbana region.



WHAT'S NEW IN FILM

Film CU, the official film office for the Champaign County area, continues to support efforts to bring production to the region. Over the third quarter:

- ECU attended the Flyover Filmworkers’ Expo to market our film office services.
- Locally-filmed *Moses the Black* premiered nationally in January, and was screened at Savoy 16. It was followed by discussion with filmmakers, crew, and Mark.
- An episode of *House Hunters* filmed in Savoy with b-roll filmed across the area.



HEARD ON CHAMBANA PROUD

Maureen & Evelyn, Krannert Art Museum

Marten & Joel, Lazy Daisy Diner & Café

Katherine, Parkland College for Kids

Emily, 217Flea and Resistance Threads

Tune in at chambanaproud.com or wherever you podcast every Thursday!



MARKETING MATTERS

CHAMPAIGN-URBANA AREA RESTAURANT WEEK JANUARY 30–FEBRUARY 7, 2026

Presented by the University of Illinois Community Credit Union



Champaign-Urbana Area Restaurant Week is one of our largest marketing campaigns of the year, and generates a significant impact to the region. The marketing and advertising efforts are focused both **locally and to regional drive markets**, which has proven successful in driving foot traffic into area restaurants, increasing spend, and filling hotels. Here's a look at some of the campaigns and the results.

AD PLACEMENTS

- Google Display Ads (regional)
- Smile Politely
- WCIA (local & regional)
- CTV ads (regional)
- Facebook
- Instagram
- News-Gazette co-op
- Radio with ESPN
- Midwest Foodies (regional)

Website Analytics

January 1–February 7

37,823 page views
6,655 unique users
5.68 page views per visitor

Google Display Ads

17,397 clicks
4.16% click-through rate

CTV Results

106,471 impressions
Highest streaming through Roku
Top network—Paramount

Midwest & Illinois Foodies

Campaign reach: 367,000 people
Link clicks: 7,800

Social Media Stats

January 1–February 7

433.3K views—148.5% increase
205,420 from organic content

Table Tent QR codes—741 scans

Chicago	19.59%
Hickory Hills	14.05%
Champaign	9.05%
El Paso	8.38%
Cicero	2.43%
Oak Park	2.16%
Lincolnwood	2.03%
Springfield	1.62%
Northfield	1.62%
Ashburn	1.35%



HERITAGE TRAIL HAPPENINGS

This quarter, CCAHT's work was mainly centered on four areas:

Touring and Public Engagement: growing visibility and participation through community tours, public programming, and collaborative partner experiences. This included **four community tours**, programming with the **Urbana Free Library**, and community presentations.

Educational Expansion: creating more opportunities for engagement with schools, universities, and youth-focused learning, including connections with Unit 4, the University of Illinois, and app-based educational ideas.

Interpretive and Cultural Development: strengthening how the Trail tells its story through presentations, public history efforts, and arts and culture-based programming.

Project Advancement: continuing to move priority projects forward, including a **Tuskegee Airmen mural project** which received grant support through the Illinois Arts Council.

36%

increase in overall visitor spending

32%

increase in restaurant spending

38%

increase in retail spending

18%

increase in overall visitation



I just wanted to send a sincere thank you for all the work you and your team put into this event. We had an amazing turn out and are so grateful to be able to participate! From what I heard, it was not just a resounding success for us at Punch!, but for everyone in the downtown area. Thank you again, and keep doing what you're doing!! You all are the best over there." —Michael Lovejoy, Punch! Bar & Lounge



13,781

followers

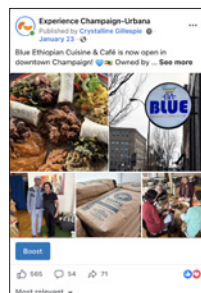
638.8K views | 158.9 viewers
6.4K interactions



9,970

followers

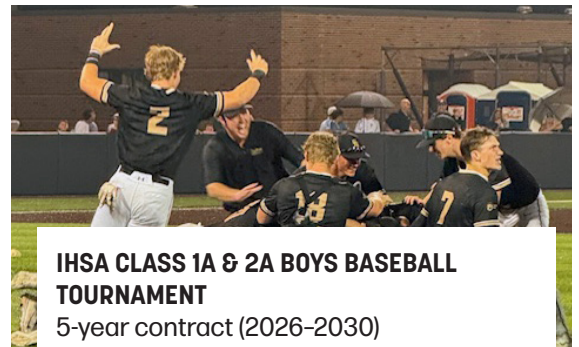
237.6K views | 23.5 reach
3.9K content interactions



HOT TOPIC

Preview of Blue Ethiopian Cuisine & Café
73.3K views on Facebook & 5.1K views on Instagram

BOOKED BUSINESS



IHSA CLASS 1A & 2A BOYS BASEBALL TOURNAMENT

5-year contract (2026–2030)
1,000 hotel room nights/year

HORTICULTURAL INSPECTION SOCIETY CENTRAL CHAPTER CONFERENCE

October 2026, 45 attendees

SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS ANNUAL MEETING

May 2028, 500 attendees



OUR MISSION

We promote a welcoming destination experience for visitors to strengthen economic opportunity and enhance the lives of residents.

PARTNERS

DESTINATION FOUNDER

Illinois Office of Tourism
City of Champaign
University of Illinois

DESTINATION LEADER

Busey :: Village of Rantoul :: City of Urbana

DESTINATION BUILDER

Carle Health :: Champaign County :: Village of Savoy

DESTINATION BACKER

Ameren Illinois :: Parkland College :: Champaign Park District
Urbana Park District :: Illinois American Water
Champaign County Forest Preserves :: Village of Mahomet
Village of St. Joseph :: Robeson Family Benefit Fund
Heartland Coca-Cola :: Maatuka Al-Heeti Emkes LLC :: Lynne Barnes :: Zach Sehy :: Max Mitchell :: Jayne DeLuce

REGIONAL PARTNERS

Arcola Chamber of Commerce :: Simply Arthur :: City of Tuscola
Sullivan Chamber & Economic Development
Make It Monticello :: City of Paxton



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EXPERIENCE CHAMPAIGN-URBANA TEAM

- Jayne DeLuce**, President & CEO
- Terri Reifsteck**, Vice President of Destination Branding & Development
- Gina Scarpetta**, Vice President of Sales
- Jan Troutt**, Director of Administration
- Mark Brown**, Director of Event Services & Film
- Cristy Gillespie**, Director of Marketing
- Kimberly Keniley-Ashbrook**, Digital Content Manager
- Clarissa Amundsen**, Visitor Experience Coordinator
- Robert White**, Heritage Trail Manager
- Leslie Lundy**, Finance Manager (contracted)



EXPERIENCE CHAMPAIGN-URBANA FOUNDATION



2025-2026
EXPERIENCE CHAMPAIGN-URBANA
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